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Caption: "The Eternal Jew", Image 1

Image ID: 12197376

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The Eternal Jew.

The concentration camp of Ahlem was built on a hillside overlooking Hannover. Barbed wire surrounded it. And as our jeep travelled down the street skeletons in striped suits lined the road. There was a tunnel in the side of the hill where the inmates worked 20 hours a day in semi-darkness.

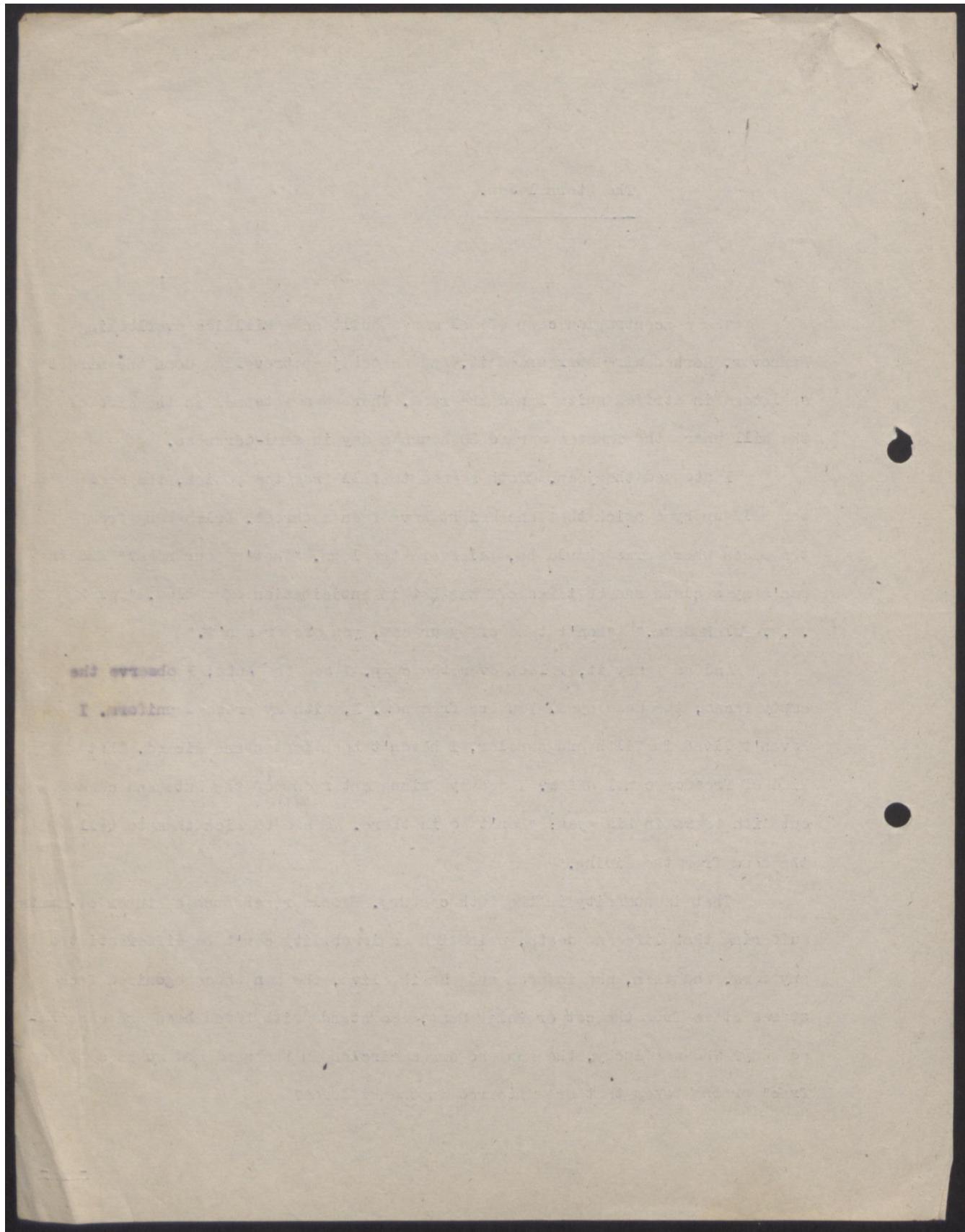
I stopped the jeep. Cloth seemed to fall from the bodies, the head was held up by a stick that once might have been a throat. Poles hang from the sides where arms should be, poles are the legs. "What's your name?" And the man's eyes cloud and he takes off his hat in anticipation of a blow. "Folek . . . Folek Sama." "Don't take off your hat, you are free now."

And as I say it, I look over the camp. I see the huts, I observe the empty faces, the dead eyes. You are free now. I, with my pressed uniform. I haven't lived in filth and squalor, I haven't been beaten and kicked. What kind of freedom can I offer? I see my friend enter one of the huts and come out with tears in his eyes: "Don't go in there. We had to kick them to tell the dead from the living."

That is humanity in the 20th century. People reach such a stupor of ~~misery~~ suffering that life and death, animation or immobility can't be differentiated any more. And then, who is dead and who is alive, the man whose agonized face stares at me from the cot or Folek Sama, who stands with bowed head and emaciated body? Who was lucky, the man who draws circles in the sand and mumbles "I am free" or the bones that are interred in the hillside?

Caption: "The Eternal Jew", Image 2

Image ID: 12197377



Caption: "The Eternal Jew", Image 3

Image ID: 12197378

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Folek Sama, your foot has been crushed so that you can't run away, your face is 40, your body is ageless, yet all your birth-certificate reads is 16. And I stand there with my clean clothes and make a speech to you and your comrades.

Folek Sama, humanity stands accused in you. I, Joe Smith, human dignity, everybody has failed you. You should be preserved in cement up here on the hillside for future generation to look upon and take stock. Human dignity, objective values have stopped at this barked wire. What differentiates you and your comrades from animals. Why do we in the 20th century countenance you?

Yet, Folek, you are still human. You stand before me and tears run down your cheek. Hysterical sobbing follows. Go ahead and cry, Folek Sama, because your tears testify to your humanity, because they will be absorbed in this cursed soil, dederating it.

As long as conscience exists as a conception in this world you will personify it. Nothing done for you will ever restore you.

You are eternal in this ~~exquisitely~~ respect.

Caption: "The Eternal Jew", Image 4

Image ID: 12197379

