



Katzman Contemporary

kontort project space

Ido Govrin

*I knew, but didn't believe it and because I didn't believe it, I didn't know*

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A few days later the ambassador tells me: “Johnny, now you're going to see Justice Frankfurter. He will come here.” Again, he gave me his briefing. “Now, Johnny, again be careful.” He always would brief me. “Now, all knowledgeable people consider this man the most brilliant man in the administration.” As a justice of the supreme court, the institution is very important. But next, “For years he is a confidant of the president. All America knows about it.” Now he says: “Johnny,” now “he is a Jew, so be sure he will be interested in your report.” All right, so I wait again carefully. On the appointed hour – as a matter of fact I even remember it was between breakfast and lunch, before lunch in the morning hours, on time – I was sitting in the living room, salon... ambassador comes from the first floor with Justice Frankfurter. Justice Frankfurter, a little man. He did emanate some brilliance, very alive, his eyes... unimpressive physically, a little man, Jewish looking. Very friendly, friendly, smiles, towards me all the time friendly, several times he called me “young man” during our conversation. Well, I introduced myself, we sat down. He in front of me, Chehanowski on my left. Justice Frankfurter starts: “Mr. Karski, I had been invited by my very good friend, your ambassador, to come here to see you. I was also advised that I should see you. Apparently, you have some information that I should know. What do you have to say?” My answer: “Sir, I don't know what you're interested in. Could you ask me some questions? It will be easier on me.” Frankfurter: “Young man, do you know that I am a Jew?” “Yes, sir, Mr. Ambassador told me about this.” “Well, tell me about the Jews. We have here many reports, what happens to the Jews in your country?” Now I become a machine again, I give my stack. The man sits. I remember he looked like... smaller and smaller, somehow... like... looking at the floor, but listens, he doesn't interrupt me. I report, as you know from this film, usually it lasted 15 to 20 minutes. I tell him, Jewish leaders, Ghetto, Belzec. 15 to 20 minutes passed and I stopped. Now, Justice Frankfurter, he sits, looks at me still at this moment, and tells me the following: “Young man, as I mentioned, I had been informed about your activities. I was told that you came out of hell, and I was told that you're going back to hell. My admiration for people like you.” And then now: “Young man, I'm no longer young, I'm judge of man. Man like me, with a man like you, must be totally honest. And I'm telling you I don't believe you!” Chehanowski breaks in: “Felix! What are you talking about? Well, you know about him, he saw the president, he was checked and rechecked ten times, in England, here, Felix! What... he is not lying!” Frankfurter: “Mr. Ambassador,” formally, “I didn't say that he is lying, I said that I don't believe him... these are different things. My mind, my heart, they are made in such a way that I cannot except it... No! No! No!” I mumbled something; that is a shock for me.