



Following her lengthy ocean voyage, the three thousand miles from New York to San Diego were not easy for Gołda. She was spent and debilitated. A profound sadness and a feeling of loneliness seized her when she boarded the carriage, as if she had been left all on her own among the unfamiliar towns, which she saw fleetingly through the carriage window. She was utterly unable to take in the beautiful American landscapes of fields and woods, which were revealed before her eyes.

She felt uncomfortable due to her clothes. She was wearing a winter jacket, which she had received as a gift from America when she had still been back in Poland. She knew it was unsuitable for the warm Californian climate. The further she travelled, the hotter it became all around. Travelling on the train, she had a feeling of this sunny land's eternal summer. The beautiful outside was by no means in keeping with her gloomy mood.

During her entire journey on the train, she sensed the eyes of the passengers on her. She saw no Jew with whom she could converse - only Americans. They saw her as a foreigner and looked at the small, white tin badge she was wearing on her garment, with the inscription USNA [United Service for New Americans¹]. People smiled at her.

The nearest neighbour sitting next to her, a man with a fine, elongated face and grey hair, attempted to hold a conversation with her. Smilingly, he said something in English, but Gołda only smiled back and shrugged her shoulders. The man perceived she did not understand. He made hand gestures and continuously threw out his friendly, smiling words, but to no avail. Nonetheless, this American gentleman constantly showed his politeness to Gołda, and when a man selling food - sandwiches, coffee, ice-cream and other sweets - appeared on the carriage, the man with the grey hair pointed at the chest with food and asked something.

Gołda now understood what he meant, and nodded "yes" with her head. The result was that Gołda received a sandwich, and a cold drink, to boot. With a smile, wordlessly, she thanked the gentleman for his friendliness.

The train stopped every couple of stations. Workers, who were evidently on their way home after work, boarded the carriage. One of these labourers, dressed in his work clothes, looked at the little, white tin badge on Gołda's garment and immediately inquired of her, in Czech, "Do you come from Europe?".

Gołda comprehended his question, because Czech sounds almost like Polish. The worker [then] bombarded Gołda with questions, and she replied to everything. He later told the other passengers who Gołda was - that she was one of the hundreds of "DP refugees". Gołda

¹ [TN: Aid organisation founded in 1946 to help Jewish refugees from Europe, survivors from the camps and the War.]

understood this word when the Czech was speaking in English - she could guess what he was talking about.

In everyone's faces she saw smiles of commiseration directed at her. This moved her to tears. Such kindness on the part of strangers, who were not Jewish - this was America! The American is unsophisticated and friendly, as it is indeed said in Europe. He becomes immediately close with you, without any artifices.

Upon alighting from the carriage, each of the passengers bid Gołda farewell and said to her, "Good-bye! Good luck!²", and each one of them found it necessary to leave her something – one an apple and another [some] cigarettes. Gołda thought America was certainly a wonderful country, and that it was really true what they said, that America was the land of the chased and persecuted.

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Gołda began leafing through a Polish book which she had taken along to read on the journey. But the letters jumped about before her eyes. She closed the book. She was suddenly reminded of her brother Mordche. Hopefully, he would come here, to the free country, as soon as possible. Her thoughts were now racing quickly, quickly, with the light sounds and bumps of the carriage wheels. She was reminded of Josef. What would happen? What was the future concealing in her dark cloak?

And now she thought of her father's friend of his youth, Alkona, who was living in Los Angeles - he would definitely meet her in San Diego, her destination. She sighed, looked at her valise, opened her handbag and counted out the few dollars that had been given to her by the HIAS for her expenses along the way. Once more, she felt hungry and made her way to the restaurant car.

A tall, smiling black man showed her to a small table. He smiled with his gleaming white teeth and asked her in English what she wished to eat. Gołda stammered, not knowing what to say, and lost, looked at her neighbour in front - an elderly man with a gentlemanly, well-dressed appearance. This was Mr Nirenberg, the chief of the train's restaurant. The couple of words Gołda said in reply to the black attendant were half German and half Yiddish. The chief smiled and began speaking to Gołda in German. "*Was möchten Sie haben?*" [What would you like to have?] Gołda was revived. They later ate together at the same table.

It became easier on Gołda's heart. As it turned out, this elderly gentleman was a German Jew, who had come from Germany to America years before, as a child. He was touched by Gołda's speech and her experiences, and he did everything for Gołda during those couple of days, to make her railway journey easier. Mr Nirenberg provided Gołda with a place to sleep on the train. She would be able to rest during the few nights she had to travel. The chief told her he was travelling to Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, his son would arrive with a car and drive him home. He would see to provide everything, until her friends came to meet her.

² [TN: In English in the original.]

When the train stopped in New Mexico, Mr Nirenberg even attempted to procure light summer clothes for Gołda, so that she should feel better upon alighting in San Diego's warm climate. However, the shops in town were regrettably closed - it was a Sunday. And the twenty minutes he had were not enough for him to be able to search the side-streets, where the shops were actually open.

Gołda thanked Mr Nirenberg heartily and told him she was safe because, as soon as friend Alkona received the telegram, he would come to the terminal in San Diego to meet her.

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When the train arrived in Los Angeles, Gołda saw, through the open window, familiar Jewish faces. A young woman ran up close to the window, looked at Gołda and cried out, "Is that you, Gołda?". "Yes!", replied Gołda, astounded.

As it turned out, Alkona had not been in Los Angeles at that time, when Gołda's telegram arrived. Alkona's cousins and his daughter Chawa had come to the terminal at the appointed time to take Gołda from the train, that she should not have to travel all the way to San Diego. Besides the Leinov and Lewkowicz cousins and Chawa, Alkona's daughter, many friends, *landsleit* from Warta, and a delegation of the Jewish Labour Committee in Los Angeles also came.

Gołda had not expected such a reception. No, she was no longer alone in the world. Gołda was now the guest of the Warta *landsleit* in Los Angeles.

"We are fortunate", said the representative of the Warta *landsmannschaft* society, "to have you with us, and that we have lived to see one of our own, from our Warta. After all your experiences, you will stay with us in Los Angeles, and not in San Diego".

Gołda made her way to [the house of] the *landsmann* Josel Berliner, an old friend of Josef's from Warta. Berliner had corresponded with Josef and was aware of Gołda's arrival, her close friendship with Josef and the letters they had written to one another. Standing at the doorstep of his beautiful and comfortable house, Berliner said to Gołda, "Gołda, this is your home now! You'll stay here until your brother Mordche arrives, and until the two of you are settled with your life and your future here".

Tears of joy ran down Gołda's eyes. The California sun was truly shining for her and dispelling from the sadness from her heart.

