

## Package from the West [*Westpaket*] (March 22, 1970)

### Abstract

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During the Cold War, Westerners sent packages with coveted goods, such as chocolate or coffee, to friends and relatives on the other side of the Iron Curtain. This practice helped Germans maintain emotional ties across the border. It also showcased the growing prosperity of the Federal Republic.

### Source

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Dear Frau Anneliese,

Your lovely package arrived on Thursday, and I send my heartfelt thanks for it. Another lovely warm bedsheet, and the nightshirt! It's been a long time since I've had one this nice, and I already look forward to the warmer days and nights when I can wear it. Yes, it really does seem to be at least the beginning of spring, and one is happy and thankful for the longer days and the occasional rays of sunshine, though you wouldn't notice much in the garden yet, still no sign of the snowdrops, the top layer of snow is slowly melting, but underneath everything is still hard and frozen solid. But one does not want to be entirely devoid of hope. And I'm also very happy about the rest of the contents, which we will enjoy eating. – How are things with you? I often think of you and Oskar and your sons, and it is good to think that the young people among you can grow up with a little more hope. Here, things keep getting worse for the young people. [...] It is distressing that the young people don't even notice what they are missing. Even if the more intelligent among them don't take everything at face value, they can't even imagine what should be possible. History lessons start with 1848, and almost the only thing left in literature is one or two things of Goethe's, a lot of translations from Russian, and samples from living or recently deceased Communist writers, poets one hardly wants to call them.

Today I'm ashamed again. Because unfortunately I'm going to vote, even if I'm going to cross out everything. But I have to go, you can't win. After all, I have to earn a living, and I was told that my work permit will be revoked if I don't go. My husband is more consistent and more courageous and has not been going for years. Another reason I have to go is that I would like to visit my niece in Neumünster [in the Federal Republic] in the summer, before I'm too old for the long and strenuous trip. And I won't be given a permit if I don't go to the so-called election, which is no such thing. There are a few very decent people on the list as well, but they can't get anything done; we all have to submit to the whip. You have to hang your head in shame. – It appears that a great many letters and packages from the West no longer arrive here now. My husband's niece, Frau B., wrote to some mutual acquaintances here, asking what was going on with us, since she wasn't getting a response to her letters, but we didn't receive any letters at all. However, as far as I can tell, everything of yours has arrived. We're going to be all alone on Easter, my sister is going to Leipzig and Waldheim with Michael and Matthias. Gottfried's second daughter, Barbara, is going to be baptized in L., and in Waldheim, Matthias, who is off a little longer, wants to help in the garden, he's learned quite a bit about these things. Gottfried still has nothing for when his contract runs out. Because, as I think I've already written, he has nothing politically positive to show. I'm very worried about him. And they are now also after the two youngest ones more so than they used to be; they want to do a thorough communist job especially with the more talented young people. Really the only thing to say is, God help us. And I thank you once again very, very much for everything. The quick-wash apron is also quite fabulous, a wonderful present and a great help.

Yours with love,  
Marie P.

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Source: Marie Louise P. from Zittau to Oskar H. [actually to his wife Anneliese] in Meckenheim, March 22, 1970; Briefsammlung, Museumsstiftung Post und Telekommunikation. Republished with permission. Available online at:

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