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“What Do I Need to Know about Soli Packages?” (1947)

Packages with donated goods from abroad played an important role in alleviating hardship in postwar Germany. CARE packages from the private American aid organization CARE (Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe) began arriving in the Western occupation zones at the end of 1946. Residents of the Soviet occupation zone were able to receive SOLI packages if friends or relatives living abroad paid the required sum to a Swiss office. These packages were not delivered by the postal service, but rather through the SED welfare organization “People’s Solidarity” [*Volkssolidarität*], founded in 1945. Distribution was thus under the party control.

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SOLI packages are shipments of foodstuffs sent by foreign donors, primarily from Switzerland, North, Central, and South America, except for Canada, to addresses in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany via “People’s Solidarity.”

SOLI packages can be received by anyone in the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany for whom the corresponding sum was paid by friends or relatives living abroad in Switzerland or in the states of North, Central, and South America, with the exception of Canada. In order to receive a package, one writes to one’s friends or relatives abroad, gives them the exact address of the Swiss transfer agency: CSS, Centrale Sanitaire Suisse, Zurich, Birmensdorfer Straße 1, the desired package type, the price to be paid, and one’s exact address. In Switzerland, the amount is paid into giro account VIII 38040 of the company Tracont A.-G., Zurich 1, Fraumünster-Straße 15. In the states of North, Central, and South America, one pays the donated sum to the overseas representative of Tracont A.-G., Mr. Karl J. Gause, Accountant and Auditor, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. From those countries, only package type G for 12 dollars and package type K for 19 dollars are taken on commission. The SOLI packages are delivered in four different types, namely: Package A: 0.5 kg coffee, 0.5 kg sugar = 9.50 Fr.; Package E: 1 kg coffee, 1 kg cacao, 1 kg sugar = 20.65 Fr.; Package G: 1 kg bacon, 1 kg butter, 1 kg hard smoked sausage, 1 kg sugar, 0.5 kg milk powder, 0.5 kg coffee, 0.5 kg cacao = 35.85 Fr.; Christmas Package K: 1 kg butter, 1 kg bacon, 1 kg coffee, 1 kg cacao, 2 kg sugar, 1 kg cheese, 0.5 kg hard smoked sausage, 0.5 kg malt extract, 0.5 kg powdered milk, 1 kg crisp bread, 0.5 kg dried vegetables = 58.00 Fr.

The SOLI packages are imported from abroad in closed transport via land or sea and taken to Berlin to the warehouse of the central committee of the “People’s Solidarity,” where they are inspected, sorted, and passed on to the local committees via the state, provincial, and district

committees. Every package is announced to the recipient through a postcard from the district or local committee. The SOLI packages are not delivered by the postal service.

War criminals and Nazi activists who can be shown to have committed criminal acts are excluded from the receipt of SOLI packages. Only the district committee can decide not to hand over a package. In each case, a protocol must be sent to the central committee of the "People's Solidarity." Undeliverable packages must be immediately returned to the central committee of the "People's Solidarity," which also decides on their further use.

For distributing the donations of the SOLI packages, the "People's Solidarity" additionally receives 50% of the value of the packages it transmits. These additional foodstuffs are not taken from the addressed packages, but are provided to the "People's Solidarity" by the Centrale Sanitaire Suisse independent of the relationship between donor and recipient in order to be distributed to those in special need.

The prerequisite for the sending of additional packages is that the recipient of the first package sends a letter or postcard to the sender immediately and confirms the receipt of the first package.

The recipients of SOLI packages can make monetary donations to the "People's Solidarity." The amount of the donation is to be entered on the receipt form and is left entirely at the discretion of the recipient. The monetary donation is entered into the books separately and reckoned against the central committee of the "People's Solidarity" via the state committees, without any deductions. The "People's Solidarity" has nothing to do with previous packages sent from abroad.

Source: "Was muß ich über die Soli-Pakete wissen?" ["What Do I Need to Know about Soli Packages?"], in *Volkssolidarität*, no. 3, January 1947, p. 12; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann and Georg Wagner, *Das gespaltene Land. Leben in Deutschland 1945-1990. Texte und Dokumente zur Sozialgeschichte* [*The Divided Land. Life in Germany, 1945-1990. Texts and Documents on Social History*]. Munich: C.H. Beck 1993, pp. 78-79.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap