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AND THE
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OF
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TESTAMENT

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TROTSKY AND THE SUPPRESSION OF
LENIN'S TESTAMENT

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LENIN'S FIGHT AGAINST STALINISM

LENIN'S TESTAMENT marked an important stage in his proposed war against the Stalinist degeneration of the leadership of the Russian Communist Party. The bureaucratic centralization of power in Stalin's hands that had become considerable by the end of 1922 evoked from Lenin the proposal to remove Stalin from the post of General Secretary which is embodied in the Testament of December 1922-January 1923. To Lenin, even though hampered by an illness that was soon to cause his death, it was apparent that Stalin with his tendency toward bureaucratic usurpation of power in the first Workers State was a profound menace to the success of the proletarian revolution. Trotsky, who was in close contact with Lenin during this period in the early months of 1923, stated in 1923, long after these events:

"Thus it would be no exaggeration to say that the last half year of Lenin's political life, between his convalescence and his second illness, was filled with a sharpening struggle against Stalin." (The Suppressed Testament of Lenin, p. 29.) *

Accordingly, Stalinism became for Lenin a dangerous opportunist foe in the working class ranks that had to be destroyed if the proletarian dictatorship was to be saved from destruction:

"Lenin was now preparing not only to remove Stalin from his post of general secretary, but to dis-

* Trotsky dates the end of Lenin's political life as March 5-6, 1923.

qualify him before the party as well. On the question of monopoly of foreign trade, on the national question, on questions of the regime in the party, of the worker-peasant inspection, and of the commission of control, he was systematically preparing to deliver at the twelfth congress a crushing blow at Stalin as personifying bureaucracy, the mutual shielding among officials, arbitrary rule and general rudeness." (L. Trotsky, "My Life," p. 480-1.)

This much Lenin, though mortally ill, observed:— the objective fact of a bureaucratic centralization of power in Stalin's hands along counter-revolutionary lines dangerous to the progress of the revolutionary struggle. Had Lenin lived longer, he would have learned the complete story of the criminal conspiracy formed by the leading section of the Party's Central Committee, those persons comprising the Political Bureau of the Party, to entrench themselves permanently in power by bureaucratic, "Tammany Hall" connivings. Lenin would have realized that these leaders, corrupted by the great power they held during the Civil War days, were now engaged in an opportunist scramble for the retainment, enlargement and permanence of this power; that this opportunism drove them to set themselves against the march toward Socialism which carried with it the gradual withering away of all forms of power.

Unfortunately, Lenin's illness removed him from the political scene

before he could expose to the masses the entire Stalinist conspiracy. Lenin's war against Stalinism could therefore be buried by the renegades from Bolshevism who constituted the Party's Politburo.

The concealment of Lenin's Testament by the entire leadership of the Bolshevik Party was only one aspect of the treachery of the Stalinist renegades. Since Stalin was one of the principal participants in the plot of

the members of the Politburo to make permanent and supreme their personal power, it was necessary for the traitors in the Politburo to protect him against Lenin's attacks. We need not elaborate on the criminal machinations of Stalin himself and of his original direct allies like Zinoviev, Kamenev, Dzerzhinsky, Molotov, Bukharin and Ordzhonikidze. It is the role played by Trotsky in this Stalinist renegacy that needs clarification.

TROTSKY'S BETRAYAL OF LENIN'S LINE

Paradoxically enough, it was a non-Marxist, Max Eastman, who first revealed the facts about Lenin's Testament and the double-dealing maneuvers of the Stalinist degenerates in his book, SINCE LENIN DIED, published in 1925. Eastman, friendly toward Trotsky and under the illusion that Trotsky was somehow trying to combat the Stalin gang, revealed the criminal frame-up of Trotsky being perpetrated by the conspirators of the Troika in their effort to cast him from his place in the bureaucratic leadership. The Stalin clique was exposed by Eastman as a crew of malicious, sabotaging swindlers who were poisoning the Workers State. Clearly, the facts Eastman presented, despite the false political conclusions he drew from them, could have become a powerful weapon in the hands of honest, revolutionary workers for it gave them their first insight into the renegacy of the Politburo of the Bolshevik Party. Why did this exposure of the Stalinist conspiracy fail to take root? Why was it buried along with Lenin's line, so that Stalinism remained free to develop to its present monstrous bounds? Is it possible that not one sincere revolutionary worker remained alive by 1925 who could seize on Eastman's revelations, add to the workers' knowledge by independent investigation and thought and undertake a battle to crush Stalinist opportunism?

The answer to these questions lies in an understanding of the role played by Trotsky in the Stalinist conspiracy. History proves that it was precisely Trotsky who blotted out the light cast by Eastman on the dev-

elopment of Stalinism, who destroyed the value of the knowledge Eastman imparted to the workers, who protected Stalinism and left it free to grow to gigantic proportions.

Soon after Eastman's book appeared, Trotsky published a ferocious article against it, a document which in the history of political treachery is unsurpassed for its criminality. Slandering the facts Eastman exposed about Stalinism, Trotsky utilized his still immense prestige amongst the revolutionary workers to whitewash the degeneracy of the Stalin gang.

When Trotsky actually first learned about Lenin's Testament has not been established at this writing, but it is certain that on May 23, 1924 the Testament was read in his presence:

"The first official reading of the testament.....occurred not at a session of the Central Committee... but in the council of seniors of the thirteenth party congress on May 23, 1924...It was here that the oppositional members of the Central Committee first learned about the testament, I among them." (L. Trotsky, "The Suppressed Testament of Lenin," pp. 11-12. Our emphasis.)

Therefore, there can be no doubt as to whether p r i o r to the appearance of Eastman's book in 1925 Trotsky knew of Lenin's Testament.

In his attack on Eastman published in September 1925, Trotsky recapitulated Eastman's accusations against

the Stalinist conspirators gathered in the Central Committee of the Party:

"Eastman asserts in several places that the Central Committee has 'concealed' from the Party a large number of documents of extraordinary importance written by Lenin during the last period of his life. (The documents in question are letters on the national question, the famous 'will,' etc.)" (L. Trotsky, *Imprecorr*, September 3, 1935, p. 1005.)

Eastman's charges were perfectly true, for naturally the Stalin clique, or the "Central Committee" as Trotsky euphemistically called it, never published Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents. Zealously coming to the defense of the Stalinist plotters collected in the "Central Committee," Trotsky wrote of Eastman's accusations: "This is a pure slander against the Central Committee of our Party" (*Ibid.*). This statement of Trotsky's was a pure slander against Eastman and an invaluable assistance to Stalin and his henchmen. Piling deception upon deception, Trotsky deliberately and with malice aforethought talked Lenin's Testament out of existence:

"Comrade Lenin has not left any 'will'.... All talk with regard to a concealed or mutilated 'will' is nothing but a despicable lie.... It suffices to ask: 'If we assume that the malicious characterization of our leading Party comrades given by Eastman is only partly correct, how is it possible that this Party should have emerged from long years of illegal struggle, how could it stand at the head of masses of millions, carried through the greatest revolution of the world, to further the formation of revolutionary parties in other countries.' There

is no sincere worker who will believe in the picture painted by Eastman." (*Ibid.*, pp. 1005, 1006.)

This, of course, was music in the ears of Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and the other criminal conspirators. Those renegades had been alarmed by Eastman's exposure of them and had to have some authoritative "front" to defend them. Who could do this better than Trotsky himself? Branding Eastman's truthful and valuable revelations as a "malicious characterization of our leading Party comrades," Trotsky applied a much-needed coat of Bolshevik paint to these "leading Party comrades," to Stalin and the other degenerated scoundrels of the "Central Committee."

Blinding the workers to the truth about the renegacy of the Bolshevik leadership, Trotsky paralyzed them. How could any use be made of Eastman's revelations when Trotsky himself denounced them as a "despicable lie"? Moreover how could the revolutionary workers, far removed from knowledge of the plotting going on in the "Central Committee" and deluged with a sea of Stalinist demagoguery, realize the treachery of the Stalinist renegades? Bound hand and foot to the Stalin gang by Trotsky, even those workers who were already subjectively anti-Stalinist were hamstrung and incapable of resisting successfully the depredations of the rapidly growing Stalinist monster. "There is no sincere worker who will believe in the picture painted by Eastman," thundered Trotsky, the "mouthpiece" of the Stalin clique. And yet, this was precisely the picture that the workers had to know, the picture of the Stalinist degeneration of the Bolshevik leadership. Eastman, unfortunately, omitted a very basic detail from this picture, namely, Trotsky's role of co-worker of the Stalin gang.

TROTSKY'S ALIBIS

Up to the end of 1927, the whole leadership of the Stalinized "Bolshevik" Party concealed Lenin's Testament. Sometime after Eastman, Stalin himself, peculiarly enough, revealed publicly the existence and authenticity of this

historic document. During the last period before Trotsky was kicked out of the Party, Stalin, already firmly entrenched in the saddle, came out openly with an admission of Lenin's Testament and its proposal to remove Lin

from the post of General Secretary. Desiring to squelch once and for all the rumors that had gotten about concerning Lenin's Testament, especially since Eastman's book, Stalin boldly admitted the existence of the Testament and at the same time distorted the whole matter to his own advantage. Stalin even permitted his admission of the Testament to be printed in the "Comintern" press (see *Imprecor*, November 17, 1937.) By the end of 1947, Lenin's Testament and the anti-Stalinist line it represented had been so completely buried by the entire Politburo that for the time being Stalinism was supremely and even recklessly self-confident.

Stalin's admission of the Testament forced Trotsky into the position of having to explain away his own denial of it. Trotsky had to make some sort of plausible-sounding excuse for his vicious assault on Eastman. This he did in a letter to one of his followers, Muralov, dated September 11, 1948. Trotsky pleads that this slanderous attack on Eastman was made under pressure from the "majority in the Political Bureau," i. e., from the Stalin clique:

"In the autumn of 1945 the majority in the Political Bureau foisted upon me a statement concocted by themselves containing a sharp condemnation of Max Eastman," (*The New Internationalist*, Nov. 1934, p. 125.)

Trotsky would like to have his readers believe that the Stalin gang forced him to make this outrageous attack on Eastman, that somehow he was helpless and had no choice in the matter. If it were true that Trotsky was under inescapable compulsion, then his followers might conceivably accept some excuse for his action, however despicable it was objectively. Closer investigation of Trotsky's statement, however, reveals that this was not at all the case, that he was acting in complete accord with his own policy.

Trotsky himself makes it clear that his slander on Eastman and his whitewashing of the Stalinist conspirators was an organic outgrowth of his

political line. In the letter to Muralov, Trotsky states:

"In any case, my then statement on Eastman can be understood only as an integral part of our then line toward conciliation and peace-making." (*Ibid.* p. 126. Our emphasis)

We see, therefore, that Trotsky attacked Eastman so as to conciliate and come to terms with the scoundrels whom Eastman had exposed. Is conciliation so bad, the reader will ask? And the answer is: conciliate with whom, on what terms?

Let us consider this last factor first in Trotsky's "conciliation" with the Stalin gang. On what terms did Trotsky try to "conciliate" the Stalin conspirators? On Stalin's infamous terms! On the basis of whitewashing the Stalinist conspiracy, of betraying Lenin's line! To Trotsky "conciliation" with Stalin meant slandering Eastman who exposed to the workers the nature of Stalin's renegacy. I want peace with you, said Trotsky to Stalin. On what terms, asked Stalin. On any terms you name, answered Trotsky, be they however criminal, however in your favor, however injurious to the masses. If you want me to camouflage your villainy, to paint you as a Bolshevik, to protect you against Eastman's exposure, I'll carry out your line. Only let's have peace, this is my line; name your price, and I'll pay it.

Once the fact is grasped that Trotsky's "conciliation" with Stalin was on Stalin's criminal terms, the real nature of this sort of "conciliation" is understood. There is a more accurate expression for such "conciliation." It is known as "working in cahoots." And this was precisely the nature of Trotsky's "conciliation and peace-making" with Stalin. This sort of "conciliation," it must be observed, was not an accident on Trotsky's part. No, it was "an integral part" of his line toward the Stalin gang. Lying to the masses on Stalin's behalf was part and parcel of Trotsky's line.

In answer to the question, Is conciliation so bad, we raised the

question, Conciliate with whom? In Trotsky's "conciliation" it was Stalin who was the recipient of these amicable actions. What was the nature of this Stalin on whose terms Trotsky sought "conciliation"? Let Trotsky himself answer. Some years after these events we have been considering, Trotsky wrote:

".... Lenin in his maturely considered 'Testament' described Stalin as disloyal. That word is understood in all the languages of the world. It means an untrustworthy or dishonest man who is guided in his activities by bad motives, a man whom you cannot trust. That is how Lenin characterized Stalin, and we see again how correct Lenin's warning was." (L. Trotsky, *The Militant*, May 1-15, 1929, p. 6. Our emphasis.)

Disloyal, untrustworthy, dishonest, a man of bad motives — this was the Stalin whose terms Trotsky accepted. Trotsky's "conciliation" was with a political crook on the crook's terms. What, inevitably, was the outcome of this "conciliation"? Trotsky's pro-Stalinist slander against Eastman; Trotsky's pro-Stalinist concealment of Lenin's Testament; Trotsky's pro-Stalinist whitewashing of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Bolshevik leadership. Nothing else could be the outcome of Trotsky's sort of "conciliation" with Stalin.

Had Trotsky followed a policy of irreconcilable war against Stalinism, the bureaucratic conspirators could have "foisted" nothing on Trotsky. In fact, Trotsky has revealed that during the year 1925, the Stalin gang actually feared him. Stalin's henchman, Bukharin, in 1925 excused the bureaucratization of the Party on the grounds that the Stalin clique was afraid of Trotsky. This was natural because Trotsky was still a power amongst the masses and, had he so chosen, could have been a rival — instead of a co-worker — in the unscrupulous struggle for personal power into which the Bolshevik leaders had plunged. Said Bukharin to Trotsky in the year 1925: "We have no democracy because we are afraid of

you." (L. Trotsky, "My Life," p. 488.) Thus far was the Stalinist clique from being able to foist anything on Trotsky in 1925 when he came to Stalin's defense against Eastman's exposure!

Every time Trotsky dealt with his denial of Lenin's Testament he revealed more and more his essentially Stalinist character. During the hearings of the so-called "Dewey Commission" in 1937, the question of Lenin's Testament arose again. Trotsky was questioned by Stolberg, one of the "Commissioners":

"Stolberg: Mr. Trotsky, didn't you once disavow Max Eastman's statement that there was such a thing as Lenin's testament.

"Trotsky: Yes." (The Case of Leon Trotsky, page 429.)

Trotsky then elaborated on this point:

"I did not deny that there was a document, a letter from Lenin, but as a document which could be officially named a testament — in that sense I made a denial." (Ibid.)

This statement is worth pondering on, for it reveals to the core the Stalinist nature of present-day Trotsky. In his effort to conceal the fact that he deliberately lied to the masses on Stalin's behalf, Trotsky twists his denial of Lenin's Testament into a mere play on the words "testament" and "letter." Did he deny that Lenin had written a letter? No. He merely denied that Lenin had written something which could officially be called a Testament. And indeed, if this were the essence of the matter, Trotsky would be telling the truth, for Lenin did not label the letter in which he called for the ousting of Stalin from his post of General Secretary "My Last Will and Testament." It was "merely" a letter addressed to the Party proposing the removal of the disloyal Stalin. But this, the removal of the disloyal Stalin was the real essence of the matter. Whether it was a "letter" or a "testament" was of no consequence. Trotsky's denial of Lenin's testament, or letter, or what you will, was a denial of Lenin's attack of the

treacherous Stalin. Eastman had truthfully characterized the Stalin gang as a pack of scheming, bureaucratic friends and tricksters. Working politically with Stalin, Trotsky defended the Stalin gang. Eastman had truthfully revealed Lenin's written proposal to remove the disloyal Stalin. Trotsky protected Stalin by denying Lenin ever wrote such a document. Moreover, the point that Eastman called the letter of Lenin a "testament" was in any case irrelevant for Eastman's essential accusation was that the Stalin clique was concealing Lenin's documents directed against Stalin. It was this essential accusation that Trotsky attacked and not at all the point that Eastman had loosely referred to Lenin's letter as a "Testament." Trotsky, in denying the existence of Lenin's letter against Stalin, did not merely correct Eastman's terminology but protected the Stalinist conspirators against the truthful charge that they were concealing Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents. It is not as a stickler for words that history reveals Trotsky, but as a co-worker and supporter of the Stalinist plotters.

Trotsky's brazen trickery, his playing with the words "testament" and "letter" is by no means original with him. This chicanery is a shameful dodge he borrowed from Stalin. Stalin also threw dust into the eyes of the masses by denying that Lenin had written a "testament." It was only a "letter," cried Stalin:

"Discussing Lenin's 'Testament' at the Plenary Session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October, 1927, Stalin brought out the fact that the document was not a 'testament,' that it was a letter" (M. J. Olgin, "Trotskyism-Counter-Revolution in Disguise," p. 140. Our emphasis.)

Since Stalin had "merely" denied that Lenin ever wrote a Testament, and since Lenin never actually wrote a Testament, — it was only a "letter," you see, — how could anyone accuse Stalin of concealing Lenin's documents?

Trotsky, standing in Stalin's footsteps, pleads precisely the same way. No one can accuse Trotsky of denying Lenin's Testament for it was not a Testament; it was only a letter. Both Stalin and Trotsky are therefore exonerated!

It is entirely clear that Trotsky has given no legitimate excuse for his criminal deception of the masses in the case of Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents. He has only camouflaged his protection of the Stalinist conspirators — and with typical Stalinist fakery, to the bargain. If Trotsky had really remained an honest man under the brutal compulsion of all-powerful scoundrels, he would have merely said so. The use of Stalinist fraud as an excuse would not even enter his mind. When Trotsky utilizes Stalinist trickery to defend himself, he exposes his own guilt.

Let no one imagine that Trotsky's denial of Lenin's attack on Stalin, (i.e., of the Testament — no, pardon please, of the "letter" to the Party), has somehow been atoned for by Trotsky's later publishing the Testament. Trotsky's publication of the Testament, like all his "anti-Stalinism," is only a cover-up for his thoroughly pro-Stalinist line since the origin of the Stalinist conspiracy in 1931-1932. Trotsky admitted to the world proletariat the existence of the Testament only after Stalin did, i.e., only when the acknowledgement of the Testament could be made even by Stalin himself to his own advantage. When in 1937 Trotsky in dealing with the Testament perpetrates typical Stalinist trickery, he simply reveals his organic, inescapable and irrevocable nature as a Stalinist. Whether he denies the Testament in 1925 or admits it in 1937, Trotsky follows the inexorable dictates of the path he had chosen, the path of trying to cooperate with the Stalin clique on Stalinist grounds. If Trotsky failed in his effort to "conciliate" the Stalinist criminals and share their bureaucratic power, it was because of no lack of effort on his part. Trotsky failed to become a member of the Stalinist clique because they were unalterably bent on destroying this

most dominating figure amongst the bureaucratic conspirators elevating themselves to permanent, supreme, personal, bureaucratic power against the struggle of the masses for the elimination of all forms of power, i.e., for complete Socialism.

Trotsky cannot provide the masses

with a Leninist exposure and attack on Stalinism for the reason that, regardless of what angle this problem is viewed from, Trotsky remains a Stalinist. Trotsky can only continue to try to conceal his own role in the development of Stalinism, his role of co-worker and protector of the Stalinist conspirators.

WITH LENINISM AGAINST STALIN AND TROTSKY

To come to terms with Stalin on the basis of protecting the Stalinist conspiracy was, it is hardly necessary to state, far from being Lenin's line. And Trotsky knew it! Speaking of the period at the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1923, Trotsky says:

"Lenin's intentions now were quite clear to me; by taking the example of Stalin's policy he wanted to expose to the party, and ruthlessly, the danger of the bureaucratic transformation of the dictatorship." (Leon Trotsky, "My Life," pg. 484. Our emphasis.)

Lenin understood Stalin to be a political crook with whom no compromise whatsoever was possible for an honest worker. Trotsky, who in this period, while Lenin was still alive politically, was busy giving him the treacherous impression that he was opposed to Stalin and his gang, asked Lenin's secretary: "Then the thing has gone so far that Vladimir Ilyich no longer thinks he can compromise with Stalin even on the right line" (Ibid. Our emphasis). "Yes," answered Lenin's secretary, "he does not trust Stalin, and wants to come out against him plainly, before the entire party." (Ibid. Our emphasis.) No compromise with Stalin even on a correct policy, that was Lenin's line. Lenin understood, and so informed Trotsky, that to the renegade Stalin the verbal profession of a correct policy could be only a cover-up for his fundamental treachery. "Stalin will make a rotten compromise and then deceive us," Lenin warned Trotsky (Ibid.) In practically his very last political utterance, Len-

in gave to the workers in general and to Trotsky in particular the true Bolshevik line for the present period, the epoch of the Stalinist conspiracy: Annihilate Stalinism! Irreconcilable war against Stalinism!

This was the line that Trotsky betrayed in favor of an effort to "conciliate" the Stalinist scoundrels on grounds of their choosing. Lenin said, Remove Stalin. Trotsky said, "I am against removing Stalin" ("My Life" pg. 486.) Where Lenin said, "come out against him openly, before the entire party," Trotsky said, "I am for preserving the status quo" (Ibid.), a status quo which meant the existence of the Stalinist conspiracy which was already by the beginning of 1923 deeply rooted in the rapidly-dying Bolshevik Party. Where Lenin considered Stalin as the source of "the danger of the bureaucratic transformation of the dictatorship," Trotsky, more than two years later, when Stalinist criminality had already reached prodigious extents, told the workers that Stalin and his infamous crew were honest fellows who were being "slandered" by Eastman. It is no accident that in 1937 at the hearing of the "Dewey Commission" Trotsky had to resort to Stalinist fraud to conceal his pro-Stalinist deception of the masses. Nor is it any accident that today Trotskyism issues the pro-Stalinist slogan, "Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union," of which Trotsky says, "It means that we do not lay any conditions upon the bureaucracy." (Internal Bulletin of the S.W.P., Nov. 16, 1939, p. 5. Our emphasis.) Lenin at the end of his political life held the de-

ference of the Soviet Republic to be inseparable from an unconditional war against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Trotskyism gives the workers a line of "defending" the Soviet Union without first destroying the Stalinist bureaucracy, even without placing any conditions on it. Lenin's line of unconditional war on Stalinism is replaced by Trotsky with a policy of unconditional support to Stalinism. From the origin of the Stalinist conspiracy in 1931—1943 to the present day, Trotsky offers a front of fundamental support and protection of Stalinism camouflaged by deceptive demagoguery that looks like a fight against Stalinism. Trotsky's entire line since the start of the Stalinist plot to usurp power in the Workers State flows inevitably from his effort to be incorporated in the Stalin clique, an effort foiled because Stalin and his henchmen "double-crossed" him. Attached to Stalinism eternally by virtue of his participation in the Stalinist conspiracy, from which follows Trotsky's need to protect that crime to the bitter end, Trotsky has served as Stalinism's chief safety-valve, as the opportunist force that consistently paralyzed and misled the anti-Stalinist tendency amongst the workers. The principal obstacle in the way of creating a new

Bolshevik movement has been Trotsky with his pro-Stalinist line.

The Bolshevik line of today for the workers is this: Be with Leninism against Stalin and Trotsky. Break with every scoundrel who directly or indirectly has consciously fostered the Stalinist degeneration of the first successful proletarian revolution. Build a new Bolshevik movement over the political bones of all those who betrayed the masses in order to usurp bureaucratic power in the first Workers State. At the same time avoid ultra-Leftism which, binding the workers to the existing remnants of the economic conquests of the October Revolution, the system of state property in the means of production, calls for the defeat of the Stalinized Soviet Union in the face of an attack by the imperialists. The remains of the economic conquests of the October Revolution must be saved, but a necessary prerequisite for this is the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the establishment of a genuine workers democracy. Only along this line, the line of Lenin, can the remains of the first successful proletarian revolution be preserved, revived and developed to world Socialism.

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