

FOREIGN SERVICE BULLETIN



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AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Evaluation of the China Convoy

by BERNARD LLEWELLYN

The writer is an English member of the Friends Ambulance Unit who has recently returned to England after several years' service in China.

The work of the Friends Ambulance Unit China Convoy is divided into two main parts—transport and medical—which may be thought of as different aspects of a single purpose which is to bring medical aid and healing to the Chinese people who are afflicted not only by the ancient evils of disease, flood, ignorance, and poverty, but also by the ravages of an invading army.

From the Transport Director to the man who hands the supplies to the superintendent of the hospital is a long chain of personnel concerned with different problems of maintenance and agency work—indirect relief workers they might be called, the scene-shifters who set the stage for the doctors and nurses scattered all over Free China.

Our medical work is more direct, but even here, Unit medical personnel in the wards and operating theater are backed up by a strong supporting cast. Storekeepers, business managers, laboratory technicians, and many others stand between the China Convoy executive and the patient lying on his wooden-planked bed and crying "ai Ya!"

Instrument of Reconciliation

The Convoy has always regarded itself as something in the nature of an unofficial goodwill mission to China—a potential instrument of reconciliation and interpretation between two cultures. There is danger that our absorption in the immediate tasks which are always clamoring for attention we should forget the supreme importance of the end; for our attitude is more important and more lasting than our work.

In the past there has been danger that our familiarity with western standards of efficiency should make us impatient with the slower way of the Chinese. We have been helped in this essential tolerance by the many times we have come to admire the Chinese craftsman's ability to make do, to improvise and imitate with a surprising dexterity—to make a new hospital ward out of mud, straw, and bamboo.

Our first staff meeting emphasized and reiterated our original policy of working WITH the Chinese as well as for them. Our medical personnel were working for the most part in Chinese military hospitals and this entailed many problems.

On the other hand, our members on these teams met a few things to encourage them. Some i-kwans

(Chinese male nurses) and orderlies showed interest and enthusiasm and were willing to learn. Several of these later became indispensable to the hospital after the FAU teams had left to move on. Two of our Chinese members gave occasional lectures to the male nurses, and one of our doctors made one man into a reliable laboratory technician.

Our Objective

Our objective is more than bringing material help to China: it is the conveying of that help in a spirit of service. We remember that we came here originally not for what we could get in the way of experience, but for what we could give, and to do that giving in a way that was in keeping with the Christian spirit of service. Needless to say, we have failed very often.

The China Convoy is made up of men and women of several nationalities, American, British, and Chinese, and hopes shortly to be joined by Canadians trained by the American Friends Service Committee and perhaps by New Zealanders. In the time we have been living together we have got to know quite a lot about each other, and this knowledge cannot be discounted when summing up our failures and achievements. We hope that this working together is but the beginning of British-China-American cooperation in relief work, and that it will continue in China when the war is over.

* * *

CLEMENT L. WHITE

The American Friends Service Committee has learned by cable of the death of Clement L. White in China on January 8, as a result of a truck accident near Kunming. This is a tragic loss to the work of the AFSC.

Readers of the Bulletin will remember an article by Clement White describing the work of the Friends Ambulance Unit in China which appeared in the issue of November 1944. He had arrived in China in June, and in less than six months had won a unique place among his colleagues. At the time of his death he had but recently been appointed to serve as second in command of the China Convoy.

Many friends of Clement White have contributed memorial funds, to be used by the AFSC in its relief work.

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Letter from Paris

February, 1945

"By American standards, life here is incredibly uncomfortable. A newspaper man with whom we had dinner a week or so ago had been here just seven days and said it was the most depressing experience of his career. He was at a loss how to describe it to the world outside. The fact that we speak of 'inside' and 'outside' indicates that we know the bridges are slender.

The Life of the City

"Perhaps people outside still think of this as a gay city. No city and no country can be gay after experiences like these five years: It is enough if one can muster laughter despite the tears, if one can hang on through another hard and dreary winter; waiting for spring and praying for peace.

"Superficially, of course, the city is much the same. There are no yawning blocks of emptiness as in London, no easily recognized evidence of the violence of occupation. A few book stalls are open along the river. Shops in the smart streets show beautiful and impractical clothing at fantastic prices. Ladies in superlatively ugly hats mince along despite wooden-soled shoes. For the profiteers and the wealthy newcomers there are a few expensive restaurants which provide excellent food for a princely sum. That is how life seems to some and it is a little like the colored boxes in the shop windows which conceal the empty shelves in the shop itself. The boxes are empty, of course, but they make a pretty picture and mean nothing. It is the gilded cover that fooled a good many of the war correspondents the first days.

"The real life of the city is something else again. It is the unending struggle to get enough to eat and keep warm despite shortage and inflation. We say here that no matter where one goes or what the company one can be reasonably certain of the topics of conversation: food, how to keep warm, and prices. To get food for a household is a full time job. A morning's foraging may turn up some carrots or potatoes, a week's meat ration adequate for a single serving and bread. For the latter one has to get to the bakeshop early, for these days the bakers frequently run out of flour. At our staff canteen where we have our noon meal someone asked the other day what the menu was and the answer was given quickly and honestly: 'Pommes et autres pommes.'

Furniture for Fuel

"There is, of course, no coal for central heating and everyone struggles to have one heated room. Most people live like the concierge in one room, with washing drying before the fire. Now that electricity and gas are shut off from 8:30 to 6 each day, the gas and electric heaters we had purchased are of little use.

"A French friend of ours, standing in a queue the other day, heard two women discussing how they were keeping warm. One was burning a table; the second an old chest of drawers. That seems overdrawn, but it had reality for us one of the coldest days when the wood at the office gave out. That is when one finds oneself eyeing the furniture speculatively. Because of the cold, the water is turned off at night and we anticipate and fill the buckets with enough water for hot water bottles at night and for morning washing and breakfast.

"One gets into the habit of looking at people's hands, particularly women's which are usually red and swollen and with festering welts—chillblains. If one can keep one's hands out of cold water in cold rooms and keep them smeared with vaseline, they do not get red and raw. Most people have no choice. There are times when one shrinks from the universal habit of shaking hands.

The Hidden Wounds

"All this conveys nothing of the hidden wounds which only over a long period will heal. It says nothing of the strain of having loved ones among the deportees and prisoners, some of them gone these five years, most of them living under conditions which are such that one understands the Frenchman who came to ask if we could get news about his deported wife. 'It would be a comfort to know she no longer suffers, that she is dead.' Talk with any family and you will find that they mourn those absent ones.

"An elderly woman, who has always believed in peace between the peoples of the world, came to the office one day. She said she was quite unprepared for the horrors of occupation. She speaks of three occupations: the first very polite and correct; the second by the Military, hard and oppressive; then the terror of the last two years when the Gestapo and SS were loosed on the country.

"There is no point in recounting experiences which many have undergone. One listens because people need to talk in order to free themselves from the recollection. Sometimes after listening, it is hard to sleep at night, a commentary perhaps on too much imagination.

"One little woman, leader of a group which rescued parachutists, is the kind of person who has always lived a protected life among beautiful things and among people who loved and cared for her. She is still surprised that events provoked her to dangerous leadership and dangerous living. It brought her finally into the hands of the Gestapo and torture to which her only answer was, 'Je suis française.' Physically she is recovering, her broken jaw is mending. But it will be a long time before she can find the strength to rebuild the tranquil life she believes in. She was able to muster enough

strength for what she had to do; it is now that the pressure is removed that she knows she has spent more strength than she had.

"There are many stories: the eighty-year-olds at Gurs who volunteered for deportation so that mothers with young children could stay behind. A Quaker worker speaks of the terror of a car passing in the night and the long minutes of listening for it to stop.

Out of This Dark Valley

"All of the people have lived in danger and under strain and their nerves are stretched. Getting through another winter becomes an agony. They

do their best, and hang on any way they can, and hope. There is no time to indulge in the fine philosophical and political discussions with which the press tries to excite them. Until they are fed and clothed and have their loved ones back they cannot begin the long journey out of this dark valley.

"The wise political prophets may talk bravely but neither they nor anyone else can yet evaluate what spiritual strengths have been generated these years nor how defacing some of the demoralization of occupation may be for the young people who will be needed for the rebuilding. For the moment they have run their last mile and must pause to catch breath."

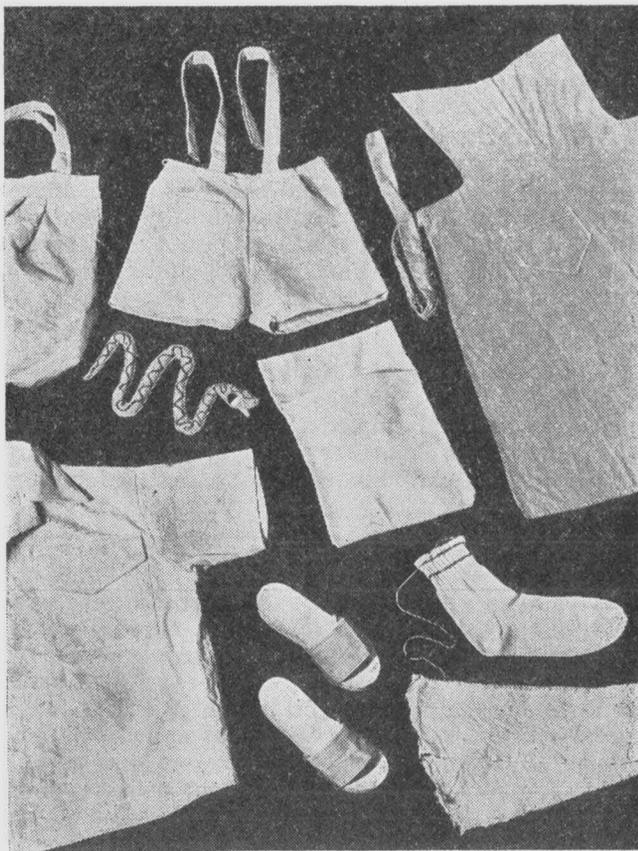
—Margaret Frawley, AFSC representative in France.

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Refugees in Italy

"The corollary of uprootedness is 'unreasonable' attachment to odd objects:

"That trunk. What does it contain? It contains everything I hold in all this world: my second suit, two shirts, a table cloth which saw my children grow, a photograph of the block of flats in which we lived, one of my wife, a blanket we used camping in the mountains. I was a textile importer before. I'm too old for Palestine, I couldn't work on the land. What should I do?"



"With the vast majority of the refugees, the past is hardship, the present, need, and the future, uncertainty.

"Interned? Yes, I've been in for the last eight years. Dachau first, of course. Clean it was, at least, but my arm's not been the same since. Then Buchenwald (that is where I got rheumatism, knees, you know). Then the usual run of those camps in France, a series in the north and then to the south. You know how they were, the hunger, the wet mud, and the rest.

"Then we managed to go underground in Italy, living from house to house, my wife and I. Last winter here was hard for the nuns and the friars, with so many of us hiding with them, and you know the food problem now.

"I'm now working as an interpreter. I was a bank executive before. We're all we have left, the two of us. Europe? What future is there for us? What do you advise?"

"The refugees have a degree of trust in the Quakers which is often shaking. One so frequently feels a sense of inadequacy, of not being able to fulfill their expectations. When one is forced to say, 'We just haven't the answer to your problem, how disappointing it must seem to them to receive a 'no' from the Quakers. One knows, of course, that some are being helped through one's efforts, and that the way one says 'no' is to some extent important."

—Howard Wriggins, AFSC representative in Italy, now in the United States for consultation

These articles were made from salvage canvas at a camp for refugees in southern Italy, as part of a demonstration occupational program under the direction of David Hartley of the AFSC and Sam Marriage of the Friends Ambulance Unit working under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees.

The above items, which can be seen in the Philadelphia office of the AFSC, include a shopping bag, boy's shorts, woman's apron, wall pocket, sock, wooden shoes, man's shirt, toy snake.

The sock was knit from yarn which had been unravelled from canvas such as that attached.

Quaker Relief in Normandy

CAEN

Service established January 1945, Director Helga Holbek, former head of the Quaker Service in Toulouse. This delegation is concerning itself principally with emergency care for the homeless families in the vicinity of Caen. Barracks for a community center are being erected in the town of Caen where it is hoped that workrooms may be established and a foyer provided where hot drinks can be served. Clothing distributions are being made to surrounding villages which have so far received no clothing. This distribution is being worked out in cooperation with other relief agencies to avoid duplication and to provide essential supplementing of stocks which other welfare committees have available. It is hoped that when additional personnel arrives from Great Britain and the United States, assistance can be given to householders in repairing their homes.

STOCKS ON HAND

- 7 tons of clothing and bedding now en route to Caen from Paris.
- 1 ton of bouillon from Marseille.
- 1/4 ton of sugar from Marseille.

STOCKS IN PROSPECT

- 6 tons of clothing now in England and proposed for distribution in Caen.
- 12 1/2 tons of clothing and bedding and workshop materials from the United States.
- 100 Kilos coffee from Lisbon.
- Small stocks of condensed milk, baby food, etc., for distribution on medical prescription to infants and the sick.

LE HAVRE

Service established January 1945, Director Fred Cornelissen, former leader of the Quaker Service at Montauban. This delegation will work chiefly with "sinistres" (victims of bombing) in the area of Le Havre. A community center is proposed where transients can be given hospitality overnight and where simple workshops are available for the making and repair of clothing and shoes. Clothing distributions will be made from Quaker stocks in cooperation with local welfare committees. Help to householders in repairing their homes will be offered when additional personnel arrive.

STOCKS ON HAND

- 4 tons of clothing and bedding now en route to Le Havre from Paris.
- 1 ton of bouillon from Marseille.
- 1/2 ton of sugar from Marseille.

STOCKS IN PROSPECT

These are similar to those in prospect for Caen.

TRANSPORT

Most of the trucks and cars owned by Secours Quaker have been in continuous service over pe-

riods ranging from five to eight years. Additional trucks have now arrived from abroad or are in prospect.

8 trucks purchased in Algiers and now in Marseille assigned as follows:

- 2 — 2 1/2 ton trucks to Caen.
- 1 — 2 1/2 ton truck to Le Havre.
- 1 — 2 1/2 ton truck to Marseille.
- 1 — 1 1/2 ton truck to Perpignan.
- 1 — 1 1/2 ton truck to Toulouse.
- 1 — 1 1/2 ton truck to Montauban.
- 1 — 1 1/2 ton truck to Paris.
- 2 small trucks from Friends Relief Service, London, destined for Paris and Perpignan.

6 three-ton Bedfords purchased in London and to be assigned on arrival. Tentative assignment provided for two for Caen and two for Le Havre.

* * *

Present Situation of Le Havre

"One-third of the city of Le Havre has been completely destroyed and about two-thirds of the remaining houses have been more or less seriously damaged. The first problem was the lodging of the population. This was solved provisionally through private means, practically everyone having found some family offering hospitality. Nevertheless, the situation cannot last, the remaining houses being overcrowded and health conditions becoming worse every day, not to speak of the psychological aspect of people being herded together in small lodgings, often with broken windows closed with cardboard or paper, leaky ceilings and roofs partly blown away.

"The reconstruction of the completely destroyed houses has become a governmental task, only the Ministry of Reconstruction being qualified to make plans and carry them out. Even the owners are not permitted to touch the ruins of their own houses.

"The Quakers could render great services in specializing in quick patching of damaged roofs with provisional roofing material, like tar paper or waterproof felt—what the French call 'la mise hors d'eau' (protection from water). Within a few days, a house can be saved from further damage by rain and made available to inhabitants.

Clothing — "The most acute need is for shoes of all kinds, for woolen jerseys, woolen underwear and overcoats. A month of snow has ruined most of the shoes which were already partly worn out, and it will be necessary to have as rapidly as possible shoes for all ages.

Food — "One had thought, at first, that the food problem would not be very acute, Le Havre having enjoyed, until liberation, a rather good food supply. Unfortunately, in the past two months, the general situation has become worse, and bad lodging, lack

of clothing and shoes, and the present cold wave have brought about an increase of sickness and made the situation of deficient children, old and sick people, more painful.

"It will be necessary to organize, at least for two or three months, some form of a daily "gouter" (light lunch), a distribution of supplementary food to a minimum of 500 under-nourished children selected through the channel of the medical inspection of schools. In close cooperation, also, with the Hygiene Department there will have to be distributions of food parcels to sick and aged people recommended by doctors.

Use for Trucks — "It would be helpful to use large trucks, when they arrive, to send them on a food supply errand into those parts of Normandy where it is actually possible to buy large amounts of butter, which is now being used as fuel for lamps by the peasants, because it is otherwise going rancid for lack of transportation. This butter, distributed to the underfed children in Le Havre would perhaps be sufficient to give them the necessary strength to go through the hardships of winter."

—Secours Quaker report, Le Havre delegation.

* * *

Jugoslav Refugees in Egypt

"For the first time I saw with my own eyes what children look like when they have almost starved to death. The worst ones, of course, died before they left Jugoslavia, or in transit, or soon after they got here; but there are still a number in the hospital who are so far gone that food seems to do them no good. You have seen pictures of them with large heads and stomachs, stick-like arms and legs, wrinkled rubbery skin, and thin old people's hands. I saw some of the originals of those pictures.

One side of war is the very genuine heroism, unselfish comradeship, and adventure that the Major almost wistfully told us about yesterday; another side is shrunken little children lying in hospitals, too far gone in starvation for food to help them."

"In the hospital at El Shatt is a baby of seven months who was born in a shipwreck while its mother was escaping from Jugoslavia. A nurse who escaped in the same boat told me about it: they were in the water for twelve hours. A little girl of ten seems to have lost her mind. She had seen both of her parents murdered, and then she had lived in caves for some time before she got out of the country."

—William Edgerton, AFSC report, UNRRA Balkan Mission, El Shatt, Egypt.

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AFSC IN NORTH AFRICA

The offices of the AFSC in North Africa have been combined in Casablanca. The Algiers office, first opened in 1943, was closed at the end of February of this year.

Ukrainian Refugees in France

"In the past two days, a new camp service has been added to our work at Montauban. On January 10, a telephone call summoned me to the Cabinet du Préfet to study with officials the reception and installation of the camp at Caylus of 350 Russian refugees who were expected by train an hour later. The first concern was to serve them a hot soup, and milk for the children whose number we did not know.

"These people come from the Ukraine where they saw their villages destroyed by the Germans. Afterwards they were deported to Germany and later to Strasbourg. They have already spent three years in two camps. The Germans had announced that they were returning them to Germany in three days, but two days later the Americans arrived and liberated them to be directed towards the interior of France. They were accompanied by American soldiers to Toulouse, but there were no guards when they arrived at Montauban.

"In collaboration with the Red Cross and the municipal restaurant, we prepared and served a hot soup and milk in the train, and arranged for transfer of the passengers to the autobus which took them to the military camp at Caylus.

"Later I visited the camp in company of the assistant chief of the Entr'Aide Francaise and one of our employees who speaks Russian, taking along some sugar to complement the unsweetened concentrated milk given by the French Red Cross. We were able to determine the needs of the sick and arrange for hospitalization of several patients.

"Despite a five-day train trip, these 350 persons of whom 120 were children, were surprisingly clean; and a day after arrival in the camp, the washing was already done. The first thing they asked for were receptacles to bathe the children. We have supplied some soap for their use until the Administration can procure their food cards and soap tickets."

—Secours Quaker report, Montauban, France, January 12, 1945.

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FOOD SITUATION DETERIORATES

A cable from Secours Quaker in France received in Philadelphia early in March says: REGRET INFORM: ENTIRE FOOD SITUATION MIDI (Southern France) SERIOUSLY DETERIORATED LAST FOUR MONTHS; HEALTHY BABIES, NURSING MOTHERS, MARSEILLE, NICE, SERIOUSLY ENDANGERED, LACK FRESH MILK, OTHER URGENTLY NEEDED FOODS.

* * *

SOME HELP ON WAY

The same week, a cable was received from Switzerland which told of AFSC purchases of food for France amounting to \$50,000. These purchases, made through the International Red Cross, included: 16½ tons unsweetened condensed milk, 12½ tons boxed cheese (¼ fats), 7½ tons cherry concentrate, 12 tons biomalt, and 4½ tons ovomaltine.

Rehabilitation in Bengal

The poverty of the peasantry in Bengal, a problem of long standing, is now severely accentuated by war conditions. In the rural areas, the destitute population at present may be classified as:

Widows and orphans with no means of support. Landless laborers whose meagre seasonal earnings are insufficient to provide subsistence at present price levels.

Artisans who for lack of capital, equipment and suitable trade facilities are unable to pursue their calling.

Smallholders saddled with debts on a holding too small to meet family requirements.

These groups with their dependents comprise a formidable total of the rural population of India who, formerly living in constant insecurity, have latterly been reduced to varying degrees of destitution as a result of war conditions.

Experimental Industrial Centers

The American Friends Service Committee is continuing to use its funds for the milk, vitamins and drugs urgently needed to combat the malnutrition and disease following on the heels of the Bengal famine. However, AFSC workers along with members of the India Section of the Friends Ambulance Unit have set up experimental industrial centers

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THE HUMAN FOCUS ON INDIA

One evening when I was riding on the crowded train from Calcutta to Madras in India, the intense heat of the day was abating and the sun had set behind the low hills in the far distance across the vast plain. As the train passed by village after village, I saw India preparing for the night—oil lights were being lit in the little mud huts or fires started to cook the evening rice. Across the rice paddies, as far as the eye could see, the bullocks were being driven home by thin, almost naked cultivators. The scene, as the train passed, was monotonous, drab, and limitless. When the train slowed a little and the noise grew less, I could hear the mournful note of the conch shells being blown by Indians reverently ushering in the night. I felt suddenly depressed and despairing and apart from all I was seeing.

What had we, sitting in our relatively comfortable second class compartment, in common with all this? For centuries before the railroads were built, before India was conquered, these millions had been finishing the day like this. I was weighed down by the depth of their ignorance, their superstition, their poverty. My mind flashed back to other twilights I had seen in India, and I imagined the scene before me multiplied thousands of times. I realized that four hundred million people, in similar conditions, as poor and as lowly as the earth and the plains, at this moment, all over India, were making ready to lie on hard dirt floors, or filthy city streets, to wait for another day.

for the rehabilitation of destitute persons by providing them with remunerative employment. The main occupations at these centers are hand-loom and frame weaving, rug and mat making, dyeing, needle-work and jute spinning. Proceeds from sales cover the cost of raw materials and workers' wages. Overhead expenses have to be met separately. At Contai, the FAU is also operating a program of village reconstruction at Hathiberya, providing homes for groups of formerly destitute persons.

In Dacca, destitute artisans are helped to obtain supplies of cane for basket making.

Building of Boats

Two members of the AFSC-FAU India team are working along with the government in organizing a boat building yard in Chittagong to provide boats for impoverished fishermen at lowest possible cost. The boats are the first to be seen since small craft in India were requisitioned and destroyed by government order several years ago in fear of a Japanese invasion. This project will have the dual benefit of restoring the livelihood of fishermen and increasing the food supply as well as improving transportation to deal more adequately with the malaria epidemic.

—AFSC-FAU report, Bengal, India.

The vastness of India and the greatness of her suffering filled me with a sense of futility. What could we few Quaker workers, with our few tons of supplies, do to help these millions?

And then, while there was still light, I saw one little boy just for a moment as the train passed. He had no clothes; he was thin and brown. His hand was stretched out toward us, and he shouted and smiled, hoping someone would throw him an anna. Then I realized at that moment that one little boy, who needed help, who shouted and smiled and asked for alms, was more important than all the four hundred million—he was a human-being, with a personality, with a name—he could be helped. He brought the whole great scene, and all of India, into focus for me, and I knew that our job was worth doing.

—Eric Johnson, AFSC report.

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MULTI-VITAMIN TABLETS FOR INDIA

The American Friends Service Committee has sent to India over 30,000,000 multi-vitamin tablets, and shipments continue at the rate of six million per month.

In addition to these, the AFSC has distributed over 3,500,000 multi-vitamin tablets sent to India by the American Red Cross. This figure was incorrectly quoted in the February Bulletin as 350,000,000.

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