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#117a notes	Notes from 10/18/67 - 7:30 p.m. meeting with Rusk, McNamara, Katzenbach, Rostow, Kissinger, Fortas, Taylor, Clifford [Sanitized NLJ 82-60] Top Secret 14 pp. open NLJ 82-60 7-26-99	10/18/67	A

## FILE LOCATION

Tom Johnson's Notes of Meetings, Box 1

## RESTRICTION CODES

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116

OCTOBER 20, 1967 - 7:30 p.m.

Secretary Rusk  
Secretary McNamara  
Under Secretary Katzenbach  
Walt Rostow  
Professor Henry Kissinger  
Mr. Justice Abe Fortas  
General Maxwell Taylor  
Clark Clifford

MEMORANDUM

Meet: Oct 18, 1967

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 20, 1967

11:15 a.m.

117

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EYES ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

<sup>Tom</sup>  
FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your Wednesday night meeting, Oct 20, 1967, in the Cabinet Room.

Those that attended were:

Secretary of State Dean Rusk  
Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara  
Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach  
Mr. Walt Rostow  
Professor Henry Kissinger  
Mr. Justice Abe Fortas  
General Maxwell Taylor  
Mr. Clark Clifford

The meeting began at 7:30 p.m. The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

Attachment.

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NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEETING

ATTENDING THE MEETING WERE:

SECRETARY OF STATE DEAN RUSK  
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT McNAMARA  
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE NICHOLAS KATZENBACH  
MR. WALT ROSTOW  
PROFESSOR HENRY KISSINGER  
MR. JUSTICE ABE FORTAS  
GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR  
MR. CLARK CLIFFORD

In the Cabinet Room

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SECRETARY RUSK: I am sure I speak for all of us in expressing appreciation and admiration of Professor Kissinger. He handled a very delicate matter in a very professional manner. I think we may wish to begin this discussion with Professor Kissinger's explanation of M and A.

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: M is a biologist with very little political judgment. He is similar to many American scientists who are carrying placards. His primary motive is to bring the war in Vietnam to an end.

A is probably a Communist. He is very aware politically. He has close relations with Ho. In 1946 Ho stayed at his home in Paris.

I have little confidence in M's judgment. I have greater confidence in A's judgment. If it served his purpose A might color his report, however.

My contact began last summer. I was attending a meeting in Paris of scientists. The Soviet and French representatives to that meeting expressed interest in sending two representative to Hanoi. M and A were sent to Hanoi. They saw some possibilities of movement as a result of their meetings with Ho and with Prime Minister Dong. We have been in touch with them since their return to Paris after their visit to Hanoi. There have been a number of exchanges with them and through Bo to Hanoi.

SECRETARY RUSK: The key paragraph of our outgoing message and their response sum up what has taken place.

The exchanges have been going on since August 25. We stopped bombing in the ten nautical mile circle of Hanoi and haven't hit inside that area since August 25.

DECLASSIFIED, N4582-60  
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5  
NSC Memo, 1/30/95, State Dept. Guidelines  
By yw, NARA, Date 7-19-99

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[1 of 14]

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- 2 -

Secretary Rusk then read the key paragraph of our message to Hanoi via the Paris channel. The paragraph follows:

The USG understands the position of the DRV to be as follows:

That upon the cessation by the United States of all forms of bombardment of the DRV, the DRV would enter promptly into productive discussions with the United States. The purpose of these discussions would be to resolve the issues between the United States and the DRV.

Assuming the correctness of this understanding of the position of the DRV, the USG is prepared, in accordance with its proposal of August 25 to transmit in advance to the DRV the precise date upon which bombardment of the DRV would cease and to suggest a date and a place for the commencement of discussions.

The Secretary said it was important to remember that the statement included an important assumption of August 25. This was that while discussion proceeded the U.S. government would assume that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation. This was directly related to prompt and productive discussions without taking military advantage of the bombing cessation.

The reply from Hanoi follows:

At the present time the United States is continuing the escalation of the war in an extremely grave manner. In these conditions words of peace are only trickery. At a time when the United States continues the escalation we can neither receive Mr. Kissinger nor comment on the American views transmitted through this channel. The position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is perfectly clear. It is only when the United States has ceased without condition the bombardments that negotiations can take place.

SECRETARY RUSK: There are two points to be made. The first, we have had nothing constructive from this exchange. They haven't said yes. They have taken no reciprocal actions for the restriction against bombing within the ten-mile limit of Hanoi.

Second, M and A think Bo wants talks to continue. There is a question whether this is a result of M's enthusiasm or Bo making it clear that Bo himself wants discussions to continue.

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- 3 -

All we have indicates Bo believes this to be an important contact.

Their message refers to "escalation." They are also more specific. They say "talks can start if there is a cessation of bombing without conditions." "Can" is more specific. The mood seems more definite.

But there is no assurance talks will start.

There have been no talks about the assumption that no military advantage would be taken of a bombing cessation. It seems to me that they're discussing a possible negotiate and fight strategy.

On the whole, their attitude seems to be fairly negative. Three Nobel peace prize winners who visited Hanoi ran into a very harsh position. They were pessimistic about the outcome. Norway thinks Hanoi is not interested in conversation. They say that Hanoi believes it would have to offer concessions so large as to persuade them that a better course is to wait for the result of the 1968 U.S. elections.

The Rumanian Foreign Minister who visited Hanoi said that if the U.S. stopped the bombing he thought "something would happen."

We have heard the same thing from Eastern Europeans. They have said such things as "the atmosphere would be improved .. we are confident negotiations would result."

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: As I have said, I attended a meeting of a group of scientists in Paris discussing the Middle East. The scientific meeting sent M and A to Hanoi. A saw Ho. Both saw Phan Van Dong. He saw them within an hour after they returned to Paris. At that point they knew nothing of the history of negotiations. He took down notes of our meeting and sent them to the department.

I have some indication of Bo's eagerness to keep the channel open.

At the last meeting Bo asked (through M and A) if I would be in Paris. He said he would be available all the time. He said he was willing to receive any communications.

We sent them three communications. There was some slight change in tone in the last reply.

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[3 of 14]

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- 4 -

When one looks at the whole record it shows that Bo is eager to keep this going. There has been a slight movement in their position.

SECRETARY RUSK: Is their eagerness attributed to the restrictions around Hanoi?

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: No, I do not think so. Our first message coincided with a major attack on Hanoi. Our second message coincided with an attack on Haiphong. We offered them the ten-mile circle. They did not ask for it.

THE PRESIDENT: What are your recommendations?

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: I prefer two options depending on which way you gentlemen decide to go.

If there is an intention to have a bombing pause it would be desirable to do this through the existing channel. I would recommend in this case that we interpret their last message under conditions of de-escalation and ask that they receive me or somebody else in conjunction with the cessation of bombing. I would notify them of the time and date of the beginning of significant de-escalations.

If there is no pause it becomes a question of how to wind up this channel diplomatically and publicly. Confronted with a termination they may yield. We could indicate that we can only construe their last message as a refusal. If it is not a refusal I would give them a chance to say why it isn't a refusal. I would give them ten days, the normal time required for turn around; if there is no response then I would resume full-scale activities.

THE PRESIDENT: As I see it there are these options:

- (1) An early bombing pause.
- (2) Close out the channel and resume activity.
- (3) Wait for further response.

SECRETARY RUSK: There are variations of those alternatives and others. I would say to M that it looks like the last message was refused. If not, we need a fast answer.

I am concerned about how far we go with M and A. There is a middle party whose actions are to be considered and whose judgments must be weighed and analyzed.

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- 5 -

It may be that we have to do it with intermediaries. But a lot is to be gained by the most official exchanges possible.

I see no need to close out the Paris channel. I would make it clear that the offer of October 9 remains open. The other side has refused this, it appears.

The most serious problem is the disinterest of Hanoi -- talking about not taking advantage of the pause.

In December we were in touch with them through the Poles. It appeared then that we could talk without stopping the bombing. We had a man ready in Warsaw to talk with the representative of Hanoi.

If we pause without an indication that something will happen we are in a very exposed position.

In my judgment we also will have to pause longer than 37 days to convince anybody. We did not gain much from it. Unless there is a serious effort by the Soviets and the British who are co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference.

Frankly, I am itchy for direct official talks. We need to arrange for a direct official exchange. Bo will not see Professor Kissinger.

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: Yes, I asked to see him and he would not meet with me.

SECRETARY RUSK: Bo knew that M was taking very detailed notes. We do not doubt the authenticity of this channel.

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: All of this does make a difference. We need to leave our options open. The thing which has most interest to me is that I cannot see any motivation on Hanoi's part unless it is considering some kind of talks. I cannot see the ten-mile circle as a rational reason for their position. They never asked for the ten mile restriction. They haven't asked for more.

It may be that they may not be able to make up their mind what to do.

THE PRESIDENT: My judgment is that they are keeping this channel going just because we are not bombing Hanoi. I know if they were bombing Washington, hitting my bridges and railroads and highways I would be delighted to trade off discussions through an intermediary for a restriction on the bombing. It hasn't cost him one bit. The net of it is that he has a sanctuary in Hanoi in return for

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[5 of 14]

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- 6 -

having his Consul talk with two scientists who talked with an American citizen.

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: I disagree with that very much. It does not seem worthwhile to go to Ambassador Thompson in Moscow and request that he talk with the North Vietnamese representative there. This would have no expectation of success in my judgment.

I do not know if this is going to get us anywhere.

THE PRESIDENT: Which alternative would you favor?

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: The pause does make more sense. It would bring together the ranks in this country and abroad. I would favor a pause in mid-November or early December.

THE PRESIDENT: Just pause, period?

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: Yes, I would say very loud and clear that we are ready. I would make clear through private channels that the assumption that they would not take advantage of the bombing still holds. If they attacked us along the DMZ I would respond immediately. If they were to begin a major resupply we should deal with that immediately.

THE PRESIDENT: Bob, how effective can you be in dealing out resupply?

SECRETARY McNAMARA: Mr. President, I believe I can show beyond a shadow of a doubt that bombing in Hanoi and Haiphong will not affect resupply in the South one bit.

If they take military advantage we should counter with military reciprocal action. If they unleash artillery across the DMZ, we should pound it. If they begin a step up in infiltration we should hit their lines of communication between North Vietnam and South Vietnam and in the pan handle.

I disagree with the analysis of the effects of the ten mile circle on the Paris channel.

World opinion would support our hitting back at them if we are hit during a pause.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you see the possibility of a pause longer than 37 days?

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: They have said in their communications with us three to four weeks. I would recommend 30 to 40 days.

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[6 of 14]

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- 7 -

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: They have said in their discussions with me "a few days."

THE PRESIDENT: As I see it you would wait 40 days and resume only on a tit for tat basis. Otherwise you would wait 40 days. You would tell other people that you would hit them if they hit us.

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: Yes, I would explain the "take advantage" clause. I would stop the bombing until they take advantage of it.

We should say publicly we are stopping the bombing and that we are ready for discussions.

Tell the world that we are waiting.

THE PRESIDENT: How does that differ with what Professor Kissinger has already told them?

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: It doesn't differ. They haven't accepted or rejected that either.

THE PRESIDENT: Read what they said again.

Secretary McNamara then read the text of Hanoi's response again. (See page 2.)

SECRETARY KATZENBACH: They did reject seeing him (Kissinger).

MR. ROSTOW: In Secretary Rusk's memo, the word "negotiations" was used. In my interpretation, the word "discussions" was used. We should make clear which interpretation is correct.

GENERAL TAYLOR: My reaction is that this is one of the few times we have had an authentic link.

What came back looks to me like a refusal. Our public stance to the world should be that we are sincere and willing to make concessions.

But we should remember that negotiations are not the end in themselves. Panmun-jom wasn't pleasant.

Any indication of weakness is viewed with contempt. On the trip Clark Clifford and I made to our Asian allies, they could not understand our not using force.

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[7 of 14]

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- 8 -

By showing weakness we could prejudice any possible negotiations.

I recommend that we accept this as a rejection. I would tell them that the channel is always open if they have anything further to say.

In my opinion, we should not have a pause without the principle of reciprocity.

If we have a pause, let Thieu request it. This would give us a better position and would not make it appear as another Washington proposal to Hanoi.

We cannot afford to be weak.

MR. CLARK CLIFFORD: As I see this, there are two questions to be considered. The first concerns the matter of the Paris contact. The second concerns the bombing of North Vietnam.

On the matter of the contacts, I want to make absolutely clear how this sequence of events developed. If I understand it, you (Professor Kissinger) went to a meeting of scientists. M was there. At the initiative of the Soviets and the French, the scientists decided to send a representative to Hanoi. M's purpose in going to North Vietnam was to try to end the war. This started as a Cyrus Eaton group.

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: That is correct. It is no longer a Cyrus Eaton group but an independent entity.

MR. CLARK CLIFFORD: They (M and A) went to Hanoi, saw Ho and Phan Van Dong, and then returned.

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: I saw them (M and A) at their initiative. I saw to it that their report would get to responsible American officials. They saw Phan Van Dong for two meetings. A saw Ho for an hour. They reported to me what they knew.

We then came back to them with our message of August 25. There have been no private discussions on my part. All of the messages and discussions I have had have been at the direction of the Department.

CLARK CLIFFORD: As I see it, there are five parts to their response:

- (1) They charge the US with escalation.
- (2) They charge the U.S. with trickery.
- (3) They will not receive Mr. Kissinger.

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- 9 -

- (4) The position of their government is clear.
- (5) It is only when bombing ceases that negotiations--  
or discussion -- can take place.

It looks like they are saying the same thing they have said before. It seems to me that a reply along these lines is indicated. We should tell them that we have seen nothing new out of this exchange and that we are prepared to terminate the dialogue. If they have a different idea about it, of course they are free to let us know what those ideas may be.

We should say that we assume from the language you have used that you feel there is nothing to be gained from a continuation of this dialogue. If you have a different view we would be glad to hear it.

There is talk that this channel may keep Bo informed. I believe they will use it for whatever purposes they choose.

I do not believe they will use this type of channel when they are serious about really doing something.

I feel there should be something solid in this. This is so subject to interpretation.

It is an unfortunate way for really serious progress to be made.

The channel in Moscow affords a direct means of contact with a fully authorized representative of this government.

On the matter of bombing, I see no basis for suspension or cessation.

I think it would be misinterpreted in Hanoi. It would be utilized to build up their supplies, just as they did during the four day TET holiday.

On the matter of suspension, this is the wrong time. I think the right time is after the election of the South Vietnamese assembly and after the formation and shake-down of their new government.

We need to get the government of South Vietnam as a functioning unit.

I would recommend the advantages of Thieu proposing a pause rather than the U.S. The U.S. and Hanoi are locked into their positions. With a new, stable government in Saigon, North Vietnam may feel different about their position.

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[9 of 14]

SERVICE 221

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- 10 -

I would have Thieu say "We have asked the United States for a suspension of the bombing." From the standpoint of world opinion, it might be much better for South Vietnam.

So I would recommend three things:

- (1) Watch
- (2) Wait
- (3) See how the situation develops.

We would have allies to be considered. There is a question as to the benefit of a pause after a Summit meeting with the allies.

In conclusion, I would have a sign-off on Henry's effort. I would go to a contact of a more formal nature. On the matter of bombing, I would show no weakening of resolve. I would not change the situation around Hanoi. It may lead to some development later on.

MR. JUSTICE FORTAS: What is important is how all of this comes out.

We aren't just concerned with how to get them to talk but with a total resolution of the situation.

It is important for us to keep this in mind. We have given fantastic credentials to a non-official effort by halting the bombing around Hanoi. The President has made an ultimately generous offer. Hanoi gave its own spokesmen no credentials. They did not let Bo even see Professor Kissinger.

I see no ray of hope out of this.

If we take into account all of this, we know there are words which could give a ray of hope.

Non-official discussions are for the purpose of testing perimeters.

I believe this non-official channel is now closed out.

Professor Kissinger should say, "thanks, it's too bad. You know you could have gotten somewhere if you had really wanted to."

We need to summon all our courage and strength from the Lord and maintain our position here.

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[10 of 14]

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- 11 -

With all of the pressures that are brought to bear on us, the temptations are strong to pursue an avenue which may in the end be more destructive and not constructive at all.

In my opinion, the next time you suspend bombing you have quit bombing.

The bombing pauses have intensified criticism in this country. I cannot see why they will not negotiate with the bombing but say they will talk without the bombing. This has always been incomprehensible to me.

A bombing pause will not reduce the pressure and clamor in this country. The pressure cannot be diminished by a cessation of the bombing. It would be sad if on the basis of what you have before you, you were to cease the bombing.

CLARK CLIFFORD: The attitude from the Asians with whom General Taylor and I spoke while we were on our tour was that North Vietnam could go on indefinitely without the bombing. They are not concerned about the losses which are being sustained in their young men. They believe men are servants of the state, and the loss of men is not a serious matter. The fighting all takes place in South Vietnam. Without the bombing, Southeast Asians feel there is no inducement for the North Vietnamese to seek peace. This thing could go on for twenty years.

If we stop bombing, they will build back up their industries, their transportation lines, and industries, their food supplies, and their communications.

In my opinion a bombing pause makes the possibility of peace much more remote. This is the unanimous opinion of the Asians out there.

THE PRESIDENT: While we would make it difficult for them with the bombing, the very fact that we hit Hanoi arouses 100 nations of the world. Many say that what we gain is not worth what we suffer in pilot losses and in the loss of support in other nations of the world.

The President then read a memo from McGeorge Bundy outlining Mr. Bundy's views on the war. The President did not identify this document as having been authored by Mr. Bundy. In short, Mr. Bundy said that bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area does not affect supply in the South. It does not affect the real conflict in the South. He said that the top brass and their political friends disagree. They are wrong on the evidence.

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[11 of 14]

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- 12 -

THE PRESIDENT: Hanoi has been off limits for two months. There are only twenty targets which have been recommended which are not now authorized out of about 416 strategic military targets.

SECRETARY McNAMARA: On the matter of the Paris exchange, I consider this to be an important dramatic change in attitude.

Their behavior is consistent with the way they should act under pressure. They have not been forthcoming in these exchanges. But my evaluation is that if bombing were to cease, talks will start quickly.

There is some possibility this will lead to a settlement.

I would not cut off the channel before February or March. It is a question of whether we should have a pause, a pause in the next twelve months.

We need to move toward settlement in the next twelve months.

On September 12 we asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff to give us the ways they saw to substantially shorten the war. Every action they recommended related to areas outside South Vietnam. I believe we need to probe this slight possibility to see if it can be productive. I do not believe we can maintain the support of our people in this country for twelve months.

I disagree with Abe (Fortas.) I do not believe that the pauses have led to more dissention and division in this country. I believe a pause would increase rather than decrease support.

A pause need not have military disadvantages.

We should not cut off the Paris channel. I share the view of whoever wrote the memo the President just read. The bombing cessation isn't affecting how the war is carried on in the South. I believe Thieu should be brought in to this.

SECRETARY RUSK: I recommend that Professor Kissinger go on to Paris as planned tomorrow. When he arrives there we will have a cable waiting for him saying that we have not had a satisfactory answer and give him what we believe he should tell M and A. Tell them we have had nothing back.

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[12 of 14]

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- 13 -

PROFESSOR KISSINGER: A is coming up from Rome. They may have a fall-back position once we give them this information

SECRETARY RUSK: I do not underestimate the value of informal contacts on any occasions. In the past, unofficial contacts have been very helpful. I remember the role of Mr. John Scali in helping us misinterpret a message from Krushchev during the Cuban Missile crisis. I do not think it wise to have Ambassador Thompson tickle his man in Moscow.

In our previous contacts, the other side knew how to say more than they have said in this.

They have been presented with a very serious, generous offer. This doesn't smell like much yet.

I would say to M in an uninstructed session that "my people back home don't think I've got anything." I would scare him. I would tell him that if he has anything he had better put it in right away.

MR. ROSTOW: I recommend that we keep the channel open and adopt the posture of waiting a signal from them.

When they are serious there is a way for them to say it.

The military situation in the South is weak. They are using their reserve across the DMZ to keep the war going. The major field of battle is no longer in the South or even I Corps but in American politics. We are slow seeing the war.

The question is would a pause destroy our strength with the hawks and the doves? Domestic politics is the active front now.

I would prefer a pause soon rather than late. I would put in all of the creative imagination of this government in order that we not lose the hawks and come out in support of the doves.

A pause would be no more than an exercise of domestic politics and international politics.

We should give to M a message indicating that we read their message as a dignified

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[13 of 14]

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- 14 -

rejection of our proposal.

I agree that a bad beginning now could very well prejudice the final outcome.

Therefore, , I would regret that they have taken no positive steps and leave the next step up to them.

After that, then we could see about a pause which would unite the country rather than divide it.

THE PRESIDENT: Professor Kissinger, we'll have a message for you there when you arrive. In my own mind, I see a failure on their part to indicate any desire to talk. I see no necessity of breaking off. Tell them our reaction. After we see what happens, then we can go on to another phase and discuss the possibilities of a pause.

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[14 of 14]

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