

Anti-Rajiv Movements in different States

Following the Bharat Bandh on 30th August, the Central Committee of our party called upon different State Committees to build up mass movement against the corrupt Rajiv Gandhi Government. Reports received so far are given below.

NEW DELHI

A massive rally was organised at New Delhi by the SUCI on 5th October last. Thousands of people participated in the rally with various economic and political demands including the demand for immediate resignation of the Rajiv Gandhi government.

The protest rally started from Jantar Mantar and went to the Akashvani Bhavan where the rally violated the Section 144 of CRPC. The rally was led by Com. Pritish Chanda and Com. Gyan Singh. About one thousand members of the rally were arrested. Those arrested were however released later on.

Earlier the rally was addressed by various speakers who highlighted the problem of communalism and attacked the role of the Congress(I), Vishwa Hindu Parishad and also of the BJP.

BIHAR

Patna, 30th September: Notwithstanding heavy downpour for several days in the State, agricultural workers, poor peasants, mine workers, teachers, students, youth and women from far off places joined the impressive demonstration to the Governor under the auspices of the SUCI to protest against price rise, unemployment, corruption and black Acts. Com. Amriteswar Chakraborty, Party State Secretary, led the party delegation to the Governor. Amidst rain a mass meeting was held there addressed by Com. Shankar Singh, member, SUCI Polit Bureau.

Bihar State unit of the AIKKMS also held demonstrations at different blocks.

KARNATAKA

Responding to the call of the Central Co-

mmittee of the SUCI, the Karnataka State Committee took up state wide movement. As part of this movement, dharnas were held in different districts, like Bangalore, Gulbarga, Bellary, Raichur, Tumkur etc.

Mass propaganda, poster, wall writing, discussions were conducted in the districts of Mysore, Hassan and Mangalore. All these movements created an atmosphere conducive to the State level 'Raj Bhavan Chalo' at Bangalore on 26th September.

Thousands of students, peasants, women, workers, youths, teachers, doctors... all sections of people from various districts of Karnataka arrived at Bangalore on 26th September to raise their voice of protest. They converged at Malleswaram playgrounds, Bangalore, from where the protest march began, led by the members of the Karnataka State Committee, SUCI.

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee's Call

Com. Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI issued the following statement to the press on 18.10.89.

"To ensure the defeat of reactionary, anti-people and corrupt Congress(I) Government in the coming parliament election we urge upon all Left, democratic and Opposition parties to contest the election by forming united combination on the basis of common minimum programmes and code of conduct.

The protest march culminated in a public meeting held at Cubbon Park, where the large gathering was addressed by Com. K. Radhakrishna, State Secretary and other leaders. Com. K. Radhakrishna, in his inspiring speech condemned the move of the Central Government for its undemocratic imposition of Presidential rule in the State, and the evil design to

further extend its term. He explained how, the Rajiv government, through its Black Acts, anti-people measures on the one hand and social democratic stances on the other, was trying to bring out allout fascism in the country.

Com. Sheela, member, Dist. Secretariat, Bangalore District Committee read out the memorandum which was later to be submitted to the Governor. Com. B. R. Manjunath, Incharge Mysore district, Com. K. Uma, Incharge Tumkur district, Com. Divakar Secretary, Gulbarga District Committee SUCI, Com. Simhadri, Secretary, Bellary District Committee, Comrade Suneeth Kumar, Incharge Raichur District, and Com. Prakash, member Bangalore District Secretariat, also spoke.

Later, a delegation led by Com. K. Radhakrishna, met the Governor's P.A., in the absence of the Governor, and submitted a memorandum consisting of 19 demands of the people of Karnataka, addressed to the President of India.

KERALA

People from different walks of life gathered in hundreds and thousands at Gandhi Park maidan on 26th September 1989 in a public meeting organised by SUCI, Kerala State Committee in which Com. Nihar Mukherjee, beloved General Secretary was expected to be present for addressing the gathering.

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Towards Alternative Education Policy

"Education is a lifelong process for an individual and a timeless process for mankind". Those who started their document with such profoundly significant words did not fail to add at the same time that for a particular country and at a given moment "there must be a formal and time bound framework of education to define aims and objects and the ways to achieve them." This is how the framers of the "Towards a People's Education Policy—An Alternative to NPE 1986" have introduced their document to the public at large.

In fact this is a long trekking journey, arduous and painstaking, a protracted struggle undertaken by the veteran members of the All India Save Education Committee "towards" fulfilment of a long cherished dream of the country's people — the dream of an education policy, truly pro-people. As the authors have indicated in the introductory paragraphs, theirs is not the "first formulation of an education policy in our country." There have been several ones adopted by the British rulers and after independence by the Congress governments at the Centre in different times. Men behind the policies were different; there was difference in the coinage and verbosity; figures related to achievements and fresh commitments were also quite dazzling. But every policy became more anti-people, inclined more to the interest of the ruling class than its preceding one. However, the so-called national policy on education (NPE) 1986, the latest one, appeared to most of the people as a stunning blow, a major onslaught on the very fundamental concept of the pro-people democratic education system and it therefore evoked strongest of protest from all

corners of the country, from amongst all sections of the education loving people in defence of our education and culture. As a result, a mighty wave of movement developed in the country—Save Education Movement. The most significant aspect of the movement is that it adopted a two-fold programme in course of its development: (1) to oppose the policy of the Government, expose its anti-people character in its true colour from the standpoint of people's interests and the principles of democratic education, and mobilise stronger and stronger public opinion to pressurise the rulers in scraping it; (2) to encourage and invite all sections of the academic communities as well as people concerned with education in suggesting alternative aims and objects, ways and means for a truly pro-people secular, scientific and democratic education system. Thus opposition to the Government's policy and exposition of an alternative one have become a twin programme of this All India Save Education Movement.

Originally it was a draft — Draft Alternative Policy on Education.

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It contained a precise statement of the basic concepts of secular scientific and democratic education system, certain recommendations as regards how to translate them into a programme of action as well as certain duties and obligations of the academic communities. It was released to the nation through an all-India seminar in September 1988 at Delhi. Unlike the autocratic Central Government, organizers of the Save Education Movement felt it a compulsion on their part to take this draft to as many members of the academic community as possible individually or through some forums of exchange, to gather their opinions, verbally or in writing for a considerable length of time. In the All India Save Education Convention at Madras in February this year where the basic dimensions of the Draft were largely endorsed, a decision was taken to collect more suggestions from the people till March (a press announcement was made to the effect in all Dailies published from State capitals) and the Secretariat was entrusted with the task to incorporate all such important suggestions and prepare a fresh text on the basis of the draft in the form of a policy document to be submitted to the Presidium for final approval. The members of the Presidium which met in Calcutta in the last week of May this year in its two-day meeting held elaborate discussions among themselves and gave shape to the final form of the document in which it has been presented to the public.

The members of the Presidium are, however, modest enough to acknowledge the fact, as Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, the President of the Committee said in the preface, that this document "is the labour of a fraction of the academic community through the interactions with a smaller segment of the people concerned with education" and it, therefore,

represents only the experiences gathered so far. They, therefore, preferred to entitle this document as what it is to indicate its character as an outline "to be improved and enriched" in future through gathering more and more knowledge and experiences of larger and larger sections of the people. On the one hand, it has thus been able to lay out the general view points of the Save Education Movement in quite definite terms, and, on the other, it will act as an inspiring stimulator of fresh debates and discourses on what an education system and an education policy should be. Another thing that clearly occurs to the mind of any careful reader is that this alternative policy differs from the Government's not only in its recommendations and particular measures suggested, but mainly in its fundamentally different approach to education, to its role and its aims and objects. Let us, in the following sentences, briefly enumerate some of the distinguishing highlights of this alternative policy.

BASIC OUTLOOK :

The Central Government in its preliminary document—the Challenge of Education (August 1985)—made a detailed and critical assessment of the educational picture prevailing that far. This alternative has also started with an elaborate criticism of the conditions now prevailing. Whereas the Central Government criticised the weakness of the prevailing system in its failure to restrict the scope of education, curb the autonomy and democracy in the field of education and introduce technical-oriented courses, the alternative criticised the system for its pronounced tilt towards these anti-people directions. The Central Government criticised the system for "unlimited" (?) expansion of education, for extension of democratic rights of the teachers, employees and

students as well as for education depending on Government fund. The alternative pointed out the palpable discrepancy in terms of access to education among the various sections of the people and in terms of facilities among the different educational institutions of all levels — primary to higher. It criticised the growing attacks of the Government on the autonomy, democratic functioning of the institutions as well as the rights of the teachers, employees and students over the years since independence. It further exposed the ever declining contribution of the Government to the fund for education for the necessity of maintenance, development and expansion at all levels and spheres. It has also shown how the scientific and secular principles of liberal education have been sacrificed by misinterpreting secularism as a multi-theocratic policy. At the same time it has pointed out the sources and reasons for the growth and spread of corruption, malpractice, neglect of duty, demoralisation at different levels of education among all concerned with very few exceptions.

However, the alternative policy framers feel that the problems of socio-economic development and advances in all branches of knowledge will continue to pose new challenges before the education system. It, therefore, requires continuous improvement and upgradation both in the content as well as in the pedagogical method. Taking all these factors into account they felt the need "to think of a new education policy with a view to introducing a comprehensive change in the existing system."

The parts 2 and 3 of the document deal with the basic outlook with which the Save Education Movement has developed and is going to suggest its alternative : "Education is an indispensable and necessary component for the overall development of every

individual of the country as well as the greater social, economic, political and cultural development of the country in general" (Art. 2.1). Starting from this premise they have pointed out the need to inculcate and perfect "the necessary humane qualities in man". Moreover it rightly points out : "The wider the scope of education, the freer the scope of research, the speedier the opening of new vistas for development and the surer the potentialities of economic development." (Art. 2.3) It is quite noteworthy that whereas the Central Government thinks in terms of restriction of general education and vocationalisation of the entire education in the name of economic and technological development this Alternative correctly observes that "education for mere production clips his (man's) wings, delimits his power and constricts his vision" (Art. 2.4) far from "developing creativity and fostering a harmonious personality in every man". (Art. 2.5). The document did not fail to point out that "education is a part of the superstructure built upon a given socio-economic formation". Various social forces and groups having different points of view, necessities and interests will naturally have their own respective ideas and attitude about the formulation and implementation of the education policy. So this document cautions the progressive forces "to identify and counteract all the pressures and constraints exerted by the various elements" in the society "in the mutual conflict to shape education according to their respective perceptions" so that the pro-people policies and measures can be adopted and protected from attacks and erosion.

In continuity with the national education movement of our country that developed during and as a part of the national freedom struggle the alternative policy document declares as its

prime objective the democratic education system. (Art. 3.2). This means first of all "the right to education for all irrespective of caste, race, language, religion, sex, region, etc." and the document wants that "there should be no restriction on this right—neither in the horizontal direction nor in the vertical." This has a profound significance in our country where expansion of education has always been counterposed to the fall of educational standard which thereby has been made a plea for restriction of education, particularly higher education. It is known to all and the document also observes that majority of the students who complete school education usually do not, and for many reasons, cannot continue higher education up to the last irrespective of any restriction or otherwise. As a result the restriction of education will virtually mean first of all restriction of this right to education even for the little fraction of the people for whom it exists now. But no civilised government can deny its people this right to education. And secondly, it will deprive the country of the necessary educated man power — necessary not as the need is felt by the shrinking capitalist economy, but the real needs of education, progress and scientific development.

Secondly, it implies fulfilment of the three fold object of education namely, "(a) To cultivate, assimilate and enhance knowledge, inculcate a scientific and critical outlook, reasoning faculty, quest for truth and logical bent of mind in order to free the students from all impacts of supernaturalism, superstition, bigotry and mysticism ;

"(b) To foster a secular and democratic approach to life, society and man whereupon an educated person may rise above the caste-communal-linguistic and other parochial prejudices, religious presentiments and intolerance to others' beliefs—religious or athei-

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"(c) To develop social awareness, a correct perception of the role and dignity of labour in human existence, a sense of social obligation, moral values and higher standard of character among the students." (Art. 3.6).

In the present context of our country—both social and political, the importance of pursuing these goals through the arteries of education can be hardly overemphasized.

The concept of autonomy and democratic functioning has always provoked nothing but repugnance from our rulers and in the latest 1986 policy, it has been totally thrown to the wind to make room for the framework of a country-wide multi-level bureaucratic structure to control education. As against this, this alternative document defined the "three pillars of freedom" to sustain a really democratic education system : (i) institutional, meaning the existence and function of autonomous bodies to conduct education at different levels, with their corresponding areas of jurisdiction ; (ii) individual, namely, the democratic rights of the teachers, students and scholars to pursue academic activities without fear and compulsion in an environment of freedom, and the "unfettered right" of the teachers, students, scholars and employees to voice their protest against any injustice inflicted on them ; (iii) decision-making, which implies the participatory process in formulation of policies and implementation of decisions "with active involvement of all section of the people." (Art. 3.8).

This alternative stands for bringing education back to State List, not from the technically federalist viewpoint but as a recognition of the wide diversity in the make up of the people of different States and to fight out the trends of centralised regimentation. That is

why it demands autonomy of education not only from the grip of the Central Government, but also from the State Governments.

This document seeks to bind the Governments—both Union and the State—in financing education and viewing this as one of the priorities in their budget. Any kind of privatisation and commoditisation of education—overtly or covertly by taking capitation fee, donation, or high rate of fees—shall be banned and violation shall be subject to criminal procedures. Even for researches on any specific purpose, the fund should be deposited to the Government or Universities and utilised through the latter.

MORAL VALUES AND OBLIGATION

The PEP did not, however, shower rights without obligations. On the contrary, it laid utmost emphasis on the question of inculcating higher moral values through the education system and devoted an entire chapter, Part IX for this purpose and simultaneously charted out, in the last chapter the seven obligations to be developed among the teachers, students, employees and all sections of the people concerned with education towards fulfilling their assignments.

On the question of morality, it did not confound religious values with moral values and noted that religious people, atheists and agnostics may have different kinds of moral norms and values derived from their respective philosophies of life or ideological standpoints. So instead of a policy of "encouragement to all religions"—as the Government pursues and boasts of doing so—which seeks to impose the moral concepts of the believers on the other two groups of people, this document stresses the need to adopt a truly secular approach which is "aimed at extracting"

the common elements of all the three shades of moral concepts "setting aside the personal and subjective elements." This can be done only by making religion—both in belief and practice—a private affair of an individual, "divorced from all state and public affairs so that the believers, non-believers and agnostics may find themselves completely equally poised in all social and public matters including education." (Art. 9.1).

This document, therefore, forbids any indulgence in or inculcation of any religious belief and practice in the field of education and requires the courses of study in all subjects, to "be freed from any religious, communal and parochial bias" (Art. 9.5). But the framers of this policy do not intend to preclude the study of religions as an area of sociological interest and so underpins the necessity to study "the lives and works of great religious preachers from a human and historical point of view minus the halo of myths and revelations" surrounding their names. (Ibid)

The question how to cultivate moral values among the students without the mediation of religious precepts did not also elude the attention of the Save Education Committee. Hence they affirmed : "with a view to promoting higher values, the lives and struggles of the great men of renaissance and freedom movement of our country together with those of other countries too will be made familiar to the students in a planned and graded way through text books, literature, history as well as other media." (Art. 9.3). This is quite understandable and plausible an idea if we keep in mind the argument of Tagore that "man can learn only from man." And in fact the history of mankind's civilisation is a history of inheritance not only of advance in the scale of material wealth, experience and knowledge but also of spiritual—enthusiasm, that is, ethical and

moral values by each generation from its preceding one, and then of advancing further. Otherwise the whole idea of cultivating moral values becomes vague.

Now, in our country, the history of freedom movement is being taught in a distorted manner, undermining and even omitting the role of the uncompromising revolutionary trend, showering all credits of winning independence on the heads of Gandhiji and the Gandhites. The history of many peasant and popular anti-British uprisings have also been left out of academic texts. This policy has therefore rightly declared the decision to rewrite the text books on both national and cultural history of our country as well as its freedom movement. (Art. 9.9 and 9.10). It has also proposed to set up a new Commission "to enquire in to the present conditions, study and draw upon all necessary sources and suggest a textual framework of a comprehensive history of the country." (Art. 9.12). These are all reflections of the recognition of some long-felt needs and long-raised demands of the progressive and democratic minded people of our country.

LANGUAGE ISSUE

The question of language policy is a very sensitive issue in our country and it is very difficult to reach a common agreement by all linguistic communities. Moreover, the unscientific and unobjective way the Central Government or the Indian Constitution had settled the question by confounding the two separate and independent problems : one of official language and the other of language teaching, has led to many interlinguistic strifes and hostilities. The three-language formula of the Central Government which seeks to impose Hindi on all non-Hindi communities without bothering for their sentiment as well as to undermine the learning and teaching of English for all has been sharply criticised by all well meaning people throughout the country. How-

ever, this criticism did not necessarily follow from, or entail, any counter fanaticism against Hindi as a language.

The earlier draft had proposed a two-language formula, English and mother tongue for all Indian students. But the present document, the PEP which has stated its stand in this regard only inasmuch as it concerns language teaching only a student to learn three-languages—although with totally different sense and emphasis than the Central Government's formula. The apparent identity in form notwithstanding, it seriously differs from the Government on the points that Mother Tongue and English are made compulsory for all students ; secondly, a third language is made compulsory, but the choice is left to the discretion of the students ; and thirdly, the "first", "second" or "third" order of languages mentioned in the relevant Article refer to a spatial sequence and not the order of importance, for all languages are required to be taught with necessary seriousness so that "the students have a command over the languages and are able to express their thoughts correctly in those languages." (Art. 10.4). The idea behind this proposals has been briefly stated in Part X of the document. Mother Tongue should be obviously "the medium of instruction upto whatever level" a student "desires" (and we may add—as higher as practicable) as well as be taught as his "first language". The object of teaching English is to "help further higher studies, larger intellectual interaction across the language barriers and wider international communications". In view of the present pro-Hindi and anti-Hindi language exclusivism, engendered by the Central Government's policy, the Save Education Committee thinks, learning of another Indian language on free optional basis, "will help the students to promote the understanding of each other's language,

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culture and literature, break the walls of linguistic fanaticism and seclusionism, enhance inter-language exchange and intercourse, and thereby, the area of overlap in matters of vocabularies, styles, idioms and expressions." (Art. 10.2).

The debate on "three" or "two" may, and in all probability, will surely continue even in future. And the more there will be attempts on the part of the Central Government to impose its wrong policy, the more there will be opposition to "any" third language. But the problem can and ought to be looked at "with a sober and dispassionate approach" giving up any rigid immutable line of reasoning. We shall expect that the Save Education Committee also will not force its stand on any body or community on this issue unless they accept it voluntarily and happily and that this possible area of divergence will not hamper the conduction and spread of the movement it is leading.

TWO CLASSES, TWO OUTLOOKS

There are many other salient and valuable aspects in the PEP. So our evaluative review of the document is bound to be incomplete and far from exhaustive. We have touched upon only some of the most urgent issues involved. But before conclusion, we want to make a brief comment on a very pertinent matter.

Readers of Proletarian Era know, our party the SUCI lays utmost emphasis on the problems of education and has taken a serious and keen interest in developing education movement whenever the ruling class has launched attacks on education. Why, we must understand. Applying Marxism-Leninism on this question, Comrade

Shibdas Ghosh, our beloved leader and teacher showed us that since education belongs to the superstructure of the capitalist economic base of our country, the capitalist class which is in control of all the means of production also exercises absolute control over the education system as such. (A Scientific Approach to Our Educational Cultural Problems). So this class uses the system and its institutions as the instruments to generate, propagate and cultivate the class outlook, class values, class philosophy of the bourgeoisie among the people to perpetuate the exploitative system, to rear a batch of educated serfs every year who can run this system for the ruling class with unwavering loyalty. Now, in this circumstance it is true that under capitalism a truly pro-people education system is next to impossibility. Unless and until capitalism is overthrown and socialism established, the educational problems cannot be radically solved.

But does it mean we should sit idle and make no serious effort to reform education system until we can establish the socialist order? No. "On the contrary", Comrade Ghosh taught us, "the democratic forces of our country should resolutely fight for bringing in educational reforms not only to make education cheap, universal and secular in the truest sense of the term but also to democratise the entire education system to conform to the democratic principles of life." (Ibid). He also pointed out that the struggles that will develop centring round educational issues need not demand a socialist education system—realisable only under a socialist society, but the demands for fulfilment of those slogans which the bourgeoisie had placed on the agenda during the early days of bourgeois democratic revolution and

freedom movement and which the bourgeoisie, after coming to power left unaccomplished, as soon as they found that spread of education among the greater masses, their enlightenment with scientific knowledge may endanger the capitalist exploitative system itself.

In this context, Com. Ghosh showed us, the plan, policy, programme and measures of educational reform cannot be based on a single unified and common approach to the problems. The ruling class approaches the problems from their own class angularity whereas the progressive and democratic forces view the educational problems and the plan, policy and measures for reforms from the standpoint of people's interests, that is, for complete democratisation of society. That is why he said: "...there can be no single approach to the problems of national interests, national unity, education and educational reforms... In a class divided society, educational reforms and all educational problems can only be posed from two angularities from two world outlooks. One, reflecting the world outlook of the bourgeoisie, the ruling class, the exploiters, aims at tuning, patterning and manning the education system in such a way as to develop certain traits of mind which are inimical to social progress, namely, neglect of duty, professional egocentricism, complete indifference to the social and political problems of the country, to develop a mental faculty which is not bent on logic and science but naturally bent on belief in religion and all sorts of obscurant ideas and finally to develop contempt for social action. Another is to approach all these questions with a revolutionary outlook, that is, proletarian class outlook to open the gate for reasoning, scientific understanding, for a scientific faculty of mind, a bent of mind, which will in-

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The announcement of visit of Comrade General Secretary to Kerala and his addressing public meeting at Trivandrum had instantaneously captured vast attention and generated keen interest throughout the State.

But at the eve of the meeting Com. Mukherjee became seriously ill and he could not proceed to attend the meeting. People however heard in rapt attention and listened to the penetrating analysis of the party, which was impressively and effectively presented by Com. Krishna Chakraborty, the C.C. member of the party, upto the end. It is exceptional that general people remained to listen to public meetings after 9.30 p.m. But this meeting with translation of Com. Chakraborty's speech into Malayalam and presidential address by Com. James Joseph lasted upto 10.30 p.m. and general public remained upto the end. Such is the great interest and respect evoked in the people by this party.

Earlier a memorandum containing various

variably be conducive to the growth and development of the revolutionary movements of the country..."

The formulation of the alternative policy on education from the platform of the Save Education Movement now confirms this great historic truth of Comrade Ghosh's analysis to the letter. We feel that now, a movement is developing in the country which will more and more blast the myth of "common educational policy", "national educational policy" etc. and provide a correct orientation towards the questions involved in order thereby to defend the people's interest in the field of education and culture with firm determination.

demands was presented to the Govt. of Kerala.

TAMIL NADU

Hundreds of people, including a large number of women and children, participated in the procession organised by Tamil Nadu State Committee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) on 29th of September. The procession was part of the countrywide programme, taken throughout September by the SUCI to mobilise the people on the burning issues of their lives and to protest against the corruption and the anti-people and undemocratic policies of the Rajiv Gandhi led Congress(I) government at the Centre.

The procession, colourfully decorated with banners, and demand placards, started from Panagal Park at 10-30 A.M. and wound its disciplined way, raising slogans, down South Usman Road, Taluk Office Road upto Saidapet Court where the police stopped the marchers.

A deputation led by Com. Narayanasamy member, State Secretariat SUCI then met the Governor of Tamil Nadu at the Raj Bhavan and handed over to him the memorandum of demands to be submitted to the President of India.

WEST BENGAL

Calcutta, 3rd October: Under the auspices of the W.B. State Committee of the SUCI a demonstration was held at the Esplanade East demanding resignation of Rajiv Gandhi Govt. and redressal of burning problems. Thousands participated enthusiastically from all over the State. It was addressed by different leaders including Com. Fatick Ghosh and Comrade Manik Mukherjee, State Secretariat members. A delegation led by Com. Provash Ghosh, Secretary, W.B. State Committee went to Raj Bhawan to submit the memorandum.

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