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## **DISSEMINATION OF TRUTH ABOUT THE HOLODOMOR AFTER OFFICIAL RECOGNITION OF THE USSR BY THE USA GOVERNMENT**

The author analyzes the publications in the press of the Ukrainian diaspora, especially in *Svoboda* newspaper, which were printed after the USA government had officially recognized the USSR. Establishing of international relations between these states in October 1933 caused a new wave of articles about the Holodomor of 1932–1933. The Ukrainian diaspora tried to convince the government and the President of the US that the Communist Party, led by Stalin, had organized an artificial famine in the Ukrainian SSR and the Kuban in order to destroy the Ukrainian farmers. Most publications were printed in English, as their target audience was American public and political figures who could influence international relations or the actions of Congress. The articles explained the causes and course of the Holodomor, used excerpts from memoirs and notes of foreign journalists who traveled through Ukraine and Kuban.

**Keywords:** the Holodomor, the Ukrainian diaspora, international relations in the 1930s, Ukrainian farmers, press of diaspora.

In October of 1933, the USA started to establish the relations with the USSR. Such actions caused outrage among the Ukrainian diaspora; therefore, Ukrainian community organized meetings of protest and called on President F. D. Roosevelt to pay attention to the Holodomor, artificially created by the Communist Party authorities, led by J. Stalin. From the end of 1933 and 1<sup>st</sup> half of 1934, the articles in the diasporian newspapers were aimed to demonstrate real situation of Ukrainians in the USSR to American political elite. A number of such reports caused concern among some congressmen, who began to demand explanations from Soviet representatives in the US. As a result, a dispute began; it was actively covered in *Svoboda* newspaper. The articles in diasporian press of the Holodomor years need detailed study, because only some newspapers were considered in the works of Papuha <sup>1</sup>, Kovalchuk <sup>2</sup>, and Marochko <sup>3</sup>. That is why the aim of this paper is to analyzed the reports in *Svoboda* newspaper and reveal the purposes of these publications.

On May 10, 1934, *Svoboda* published the report about the meeting of the Committee for Aid to the Starving <sup>4</sup>. The authors of the article Dr. N. Prokopovych (Head of the Committee), P. Avramenko, Yu. Yarema, S. Abrahamovska, Z. Lysiuk, E. Kuziv, M. Hrebenetska, and A. Zyblykevych stressed that Ukrainians needed the food at the moment, that this was their last hope. Committee appealed to every indifferent to make an effort and collect food at least for those who are still alive. Congressman Hamilton Fish (Roosevelt's main opponent) also joined the initiative. He proposed offered Soviet government food aid for the starving. Hamilton Fish introduced a resolution in the US House of Representatives. The appeal was published on the first page of *Svoboda* on June 2, 1934<sup>5</sup>. Congressman wrote that the USSR government had used famine as a tool to exterminate Ukrainians and killed millions. Traditionally, the US defended human

<sup>1</sup> Папуга, Я. (2018). *Змова мовчання. Ставлення Заходу до Голодомору*. Київ, 228.

<sup>2</sup> Ковальчук, О. (2009). Голодомор 1932-1933 рр. в УСРР і українська діаспора Північної Америки: інформативні аспекти. *Україна ХХ століття: культура, ідеологія, політика*, 15, 377-400.

<sup>3</sup> Марочко, В. (2003). Зарубіжні документальні видання. *Голод 1932–1933 років в Україні: причини та наслідки*. Київ: Наукова думка, 72-81.

<sup>4</sup> Допоможим голодуючим на Великій Україні (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 112, 14 травня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>5</sup> Resolution relative to famine in Ukraine (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 128, 2 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

rights and freedoms, so Fish proposed to appeal to the Soviet Union and call on the communist government to help to fight hunger and prevent obstruction of receiving the famine relief aid from abroad. The House of Representatives forwarded the Resolution to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Back in October 1933, Hamilton Fish received a Memorandum from the Association of Ukrainian Organizations in America, which became the basis of the Resolution<sup>1</sup>. Representatives of the diaspora tried to draw attention to the Holodomor, because at that time diplomatic relations with European countries had been established.

In 1934, American politician actively replied to the reports about the Holodomor. For example, Herman P. Kopplemann (Representative from Connecticut) reacted to the pamphlet of Ukrainian National Women's League (based on the Memorandum of Ukrainian Organizations of the United States). He sent the pamphlet to the commissar for foreign affairs M. Litvinoff. He replied,

"...thank you for drawing my attention to the Ukrainian pamphlet. There is any amount of such pamphlets full of lies circulated by counter-revolutionary organizations abroad, who specialize in the work of this kind. There is nothing left for them to do but to spread false information or to forge documents. However, I am instructing Mr. Skvirsky in Washington to supply you with data on the real situation in Ukraine."<sup>2</sup>

A month later, Congressman Kopplemann received a letter from the USSR Consul in the USA Skvirsky. The latter wrote, that the population of Ukraine is 30 million (during the recent year of the five-year-plan, e. g. during 1930, population number increased for 2%), the death rate is lower than in the times of the Russian Empire, the number of children in schools tripled. Ukrainian language is used in schools, theatres, literature, which was forbidden in Tsarist times. Consul Skvirsky stressed that pamphlet of Ukrainian National Women's League does not contain enough facts. He claimed, that it was better to believe the correspondent of *The New York Times* in the USSR – Walter Duranty, who wrote, that three to four million people died not only in Ukraine, but also at the territory of Northern Caucasus and Lower Volga. Duranty also claimed, that the harvest had been lesser, but there was no famine. Along with these publications, there also was the John Bichum's article, where he refuses the famine; however, he had never been to Ukraine. Skvirsky noted, that the authors of the pamphlet used the information from *Dilo* newspaper, based in Lviv, and at that time Lviv was not Ukraine, but the territory of Poland. Also, according to Skvirsky, bourgeois representatives, former wealthy landowners used the newspaper for propaganda of their ideas. The USSR Consul called on Kopplemann to believe two authoritative journalists, and not one bourgeois newspaper<sup>3</sup>. Both Litvinoff's answer and Skvirsky's reply denied the Holodomor. They presented Ukrainian National Women's League and Memorandum of the United Ukrainian Organizations in the United States as counter-revolutionary sentiments. By bribing journalists, spreading false information about the food situation in the USSR, and accusing the Ukrainian diaspora of being the bourgeois counter-revolutionary elements, the Soviet authorities denied and concealed the truth about the Holodomor. To refute Litvinoff's and Skvirsky's letters, on June 10, 1934, *Svoboda* published the article about folding of Ukrainization, extermination of Ukrainian intelligentsia. It explained, where and why is now Lviv, who published *Dilo*, why the number of schoolchildren in the USSR had increased (because Communist ideology had been mainly taught at school, and "obedient to law" citizens had been educated)<sup>4</sup>. Many Ukrainians who lived outside the USSR wrote letters or articles into the newspapers to help their relatives or average Ukrainians, as they died en masse from famine. Of course, Ukrainians from Western Ukraine, which was a part of Poland, reacted immediately. Main sources of information were the testimonies of those who managed to escape, letters to the relatives who lived abroad, notes of foreign correspondents who traveled across Ukraine. First civil committee for aid to the Starving was created in the Western Ukraine. Afterwards, this idea became popular among Ukrainian immigrants to France, Germany, USA, and Canada. Later, the Metropolitan of the Greek Catholic Church Andrey Sheptytsky wrote an appeal, where he described the horrors in Ukraine. Ukrainians from all over the world called on to organize the aid for hungry people – it was their common goal. In the largest cities of the US (Boston, New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Syracuse, Cambridge), anti-Soviet meetings organized

<sup>1</sup> Резолюція про голод на Україні (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 128, 2 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>2</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 134, 9 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

by Ukrainian diaspora were held.<sup>1</sup> The reports described, how European states tried to organize relief for Ukraine, and how the Holodomor question was raised in the League of Nations (for example, an appeal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway L. Mowinckel and the reports of the head of Congress of National Minorities Dr. Ammende). To prove the fact of the Holodomor, *Svoboda* published the excerpts from different US and European newspapers<sup>2</sup>:

– *The Montreal Daily Herald* (1933, April 25) described homeless children, who had escaped from the villages because of food absence and begged for food at railway stations:

– *Detroit News* (1933, September 2) published a letter which told, that Ukrainians had to eat absolutely everything (livestock, dogs, cats) because of food absence, and in fall people died en masse;

– *Le Matin* (1933, August 30, Paris) printed the story of the trip of two Ukrainians, who were the US citizens, to the Ukrainian SSR; after this article had been published, all French liberal press tried to study the life circumstances in Ukraine;

– *The New York Times* (1933, August 29) included an article about the same two Ukrainians, especially their reports about Kyiv, where they had seen swollen people who barely walked;

– *The Manchester Guardian* (1933, September 13) published the testimonies of the escapee from the Ukrainian SSR, who claimed that the famine had been artificial, and it had started in 1932, when the Soviet government took away all the grain from farmers;

– *Bund Mlodych* (1933, January 20, Warsaw) contained an article of Richard Wrah, who claimed, that 12 million people throughout the USSR had died, and about 3 million had been exiled;

– *Forwaerts* (1933, December 27, New York) published G. Lang's article "What I saw and heard in the villages of Ukraine", in which the author described devastated Ukrainian villages, half-abandoned because of the policy of the Soviet government, where traditional songs no longer sounded. He affirmed, that Soviet authorities had forbidden foreign correspondents to travel in the Ukrainian SSR;

– *Answers* (1934, February 24 and March 3, London) published the depiction of the trip of W. Williams (businessman and journalist) to the USSR. He read much about the Holodomor; therefore, he decided to go to the USSR himself. The article was called "Why Russia is Hungry". His article began with an explanation, why famine is impossible in the 20th century, and that all countries unite to organize the aid for the hungry. However, the situation in Ukraine, part of the USSR, which collected "the biggest wheat crop for fifty years" (as cited in *Svoboda*, 1934, June 13), is different. When W. Williams checked into a hotel, a chambermaid said to him, "Only the strong will see the next summer's sun." When he sat in a train, he talked to a German engineer from Kharkiv; the latter said that the famine is everywhere, but Williams did not believe him. Then they decided to ask a conductor; he answered, that his daughter died of hunger several months ago. At first, the author of the article could not understand why the world community does not organize the relief. Later, after travelling across all of Ukraine, he realized that the engineer had not lied to him, because everyone was talking about one thing: where to get bread. People died near the roads, swollen from hunger. In Donetsk, W. Williams managed to talk to a railway worker. This man said that he hopes to survive this famine, but he saw 20–25 dead bodies on the street of the neighboring village every day. During the conversation, the railwayman constantly looked around, so that no one would eavesdrop on them. The author mentioned that the state of workers at plants and factories was a bit better, but they received the amounts of food exactly enough to stay alive. A powerful memory of the traveler was a case in a restaurant, where a homeless girl was gathering the crumbs of food after one of the visitors. She was terrified and ran away immediately. At the city market, he saw a boy who was picking the eggshells from the dirt. A bands of homeless children appeared in the cities; the parents left them there on purpose, hoping they would survive there. According to the traveler, there were about 18,000 such homeless in Kharkiv only. GPU units were trying to catch them<sup>3</sup>. When W. Williams checked into a hotel, a chambermaid said to him, "Only the strong will see the next summer's sun." When he sat

<sup>1</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 135, 11 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>2</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 136, 12 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>3</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 137, 13 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18)

in a train, he talked to a German engineer from Kharkiv; the latter said that the famine is everywhere, but Williams did not believe him. Then they decided to ask a conductor; he answered, that his daughter died of hunger several months ago. At first, the author of the article could not understand why the world community does not organize the relief. Later, after travelling across all of Ukraine, he realized that the engineer had not lied to him, because everyone was talking about one thing: where to get bread. People died near the roads, swollen from hunger. In Donetsk, W. Williams managed to talk to a railway worker. This man said that he hopes to survive this famine, but he saw 20–25 dead bodies on the street of the neighboring village every day. During the conversation, the railwayman constantly looked around, so that no one would eavesdrop on them. The author mentioned that the state of workers at plants and factories was a bit better, but they received the amounts of food exactly enough to stay alive. A powerful memory of the traveler was a case in a restaurant, where a homeless girl was gathering the crumbs of food after one of the visitors. She was terrified and ran away immediately. At the city market, he saw a boy who was picking the eggshells from the dirt. A bands of homeless children appeared in the cities; the parents left them there on purpose, hoping they would survive there. According to the traveler, there were about 18,000 such homeless in Kharkiv only. GPU units were trying to catch them<sup>1</sup>. In the beginning, the author first thought that these children were placed at homes or into the orphanages, but his acquaintance told him that those youngsters were sent away from the cities, so they had not been able to return. He also told that once several wagons had been forgotten I the siding, and when they had been found, there had been no one alive in them.<sup>2</sup> W. Williams was not average tourist or journalist; that is why he saw what the Soviet government was covering. Due to his communication with locals, he received reliable information. Along with data about homeless children and mass deaths, the author heard about the cases of cannibalism.

The statistical data in the article by W. Williams should be considered separately<sup>3</sup>. He claimed that no one knows the exact number of the dead, as the doctors also worked for Soviet government; therefore, they either did not report about the dead, or wrote false death causes (the most popular formulas were “exposure” or “weak heart”). Officially, no one in the USSR died of hunger, but the Russians, who did not starve, were arguing about how many victims there were: 10 or 15 million. In his article, W. Williams concluded, that the famine was neither a catastrophe nor a cataclysm, but a man-made famine<sup>4</sup>. Despite in the last year (1932) the biggest harvest for the last 50 years was collected in the USSR, people were still afraid of hungry death. W. Williams noted that in 1933, the grain had not been collected from the fields, since many Ukrainian farmers were killed, some were deported. That is why workers from the cities were sent to the villages to work instead of farmers<sup>5</sup>. These workers were not fed enough, they were not given enough bread, because the “law of five ears of grain” was used towards them. It was forbidden to give the grain away; all collected harvest was sent to granaries. The Soviet government decided which percentage of grain they would return only after the harvesting. According to author’s data, grain was often rotting, as there were no horses to carry it (or they were killed during collectivization, or they were eaten during the famine). However, even the collected harvest would have been enough to prevent famine. The traveler heard the talks of locals, who claimed that to sell grain is more important to the Soviet government in order to get money for industry development. W. Williams spoke with the intelligentsia representatives the names of whom he did not mention. One of his informants said that whole harvest of 1932 was sent to meet the needs of the Red Army, but some Communists planned to continue famine in 1933; the other thought that the famine was indeed artificially created. British agricultural expert, whom the author accidentally talked to, believed that the famine is convenient to the Soviet authorities to make farmers think not about organizing of riots and rebellions, but about food searching. W. Williams agreed with both his informants and British expert<sup>6</sup>. Howsoever, he did not understand why the Soviet government had not taken any steps to alleviate famine and had even refused the relief international organizations proposed.

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<sup>1</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 137, 13 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18)

<sup>2</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 138, 14 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



In 1933, writer and traveler C. Wells published his book “Capoot”, where he described his trip through Ukraine<sup>1</sup>. During their journey, Wells and his wife did not hear the news about the Holodomor. Wells noted that Ukraine is granary of Russia, but the further they traveled, the less food there was. Everywhere people were wandering and watching the train go. The houses were ruined; farming tools laid everywhere. Fields were covered by weed. At the stations, the travelers saw little children eating grass. Mrs. Well noted in her diary, “Poverty, filth, disease and hunger everywhere!” She wrote about the women in rags who lay near the roads with their children in their hands, who sucked empty breasts of their mothers. The author described a girl or a woman whose body looked like she was ten, but her face looked like 30-year-old<sup>2</sup>. It was later when the couple understood that the famine was caused by the Soviet government policy.

Ukrainian diaspora asked to disseminate the text of the Memorandum, to send it to the senators of every state with the call to organize food aid, since some farmers were starving in 1934 as well<sup>3</sup>. Later “Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States” together with the US Congress Resolutions was published as a brochure. One was able to buy it for 25 cents<sup>4</sup>. It is important that the articles on the cycle “Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States”, published in *Svoboda* from June 9 to June 16, 1934, were printed in English, while other parts of the issues remained in Ukrainian. This proves that the target audience of these reports was the US citizens who did not know Ukrainian and did not know Ukrainian. Through such articles the diaspora tried to convey the truth to the Americans, who would be sympathetic to the fact that Ukrainians opposed the recognition of the USSR and the establishment of friendly international relations. The Memorandum collected key theses about the Holodomor, which were confirmed by articles by foreign travelers and journalists.

1934 was a key year for informing the world about the Holodomor for one more reason – at that time, American correspondent William Henry Chamberlin returned to the USA from the USSR, where he had been staying since 1922. There he worked for *Christian Science Monitor* and *Manchester Guardian*. The journalist went to the USSR as Soviet ideology sympathizer, but after having lived in the USSR for some time, he changed his mind, which is proven by his book *Russia's Iron Age*. It contains the chapter about the Holodomor, where it is stressed that the famine was a political tool the Bolsheviks intentionally used to break the resistance of the Ukrainian farmers to the system<sup>5</sup>. After he had returned to the USA, Chamberlin published a range of articles about the Holodomor in *Christian Science Monitor*. At the end of 1933, when the ban for journalists to travel through the USSR was lifted, the correspondent managed to get into the Ukrainian SSR. In his reports and book, he described what he saw then. The diaspora press, in particular the *Svoboda* newspaper of June 7, 1934, also published information about V. H. Chamberlin and his messages<sup>6</sup>. The article said that Chamberlin described the Soviet government's denial of the famine and its attempts to silence it. At first, they did not want to let the correspondent into the Holodomor territory, but later, under pressure from the world community, they let him travel, putting an attendant next to him. They tried to take the journalist to specially prepared village houses, where portraits of Kalinin, Stalin or Lenin hung on the walls. Their inhabitants claimed there was no famine. In Zhuky village (15 km to the north from Poltava), Chamberlin himself decided to enter one of the houses, where the attendant did not invite him to come<sup>7</sup>. In this house, a 15-year-girl sat alone. She told that her mother and four siblings had died from famine in winter, and only her father was alive then. After such Chamberlin began to visit peasants' homes on his own and communicate with Holodomor eyewitnesses. Due to the farmer's testimonies and analysis of the reports in the Soviet press, the journalist made a consequence that a man-made famine was created in the Ukrainian SSR and that it was organized by Soviet government. However, party leaders claimed that

<sup>1</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 136, 12 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Резолюція про голод на Україні (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 140, 16 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>4</sup> Меморіал у справі голоду на Україні (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 143, 20 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>5</sup> Онацький, Є. (1967). Чемберлен. *Українська мала енциклопедія: 16 кн*. Буенос-Айрес, 8, 2045

<sup>6</sup> Розкрита большевицька брехня про голод на Україні (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 132, 7 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

<sup>7</sup> Famine in Ukraine. Memorandum of the Ukrainian Organizations of the United States (1934). *Свобода*, ч. 140, 16 червня. *svoboda-news – електронний архів газети «Свобода»*. <<http://svoboda-news.com/svwp/pdf>> (2019, January, 18).

the cause of famine was disobedience of kulaks, who refused to work in collective farms. According to the correspondent, four to five million people died in 1932–33. He crossed the Ukrainian SSR from the southeast to the northwest, and at every station, he heard farmers' stories about the Holodomor<sup>1</sup>. Chamberlin did not consider drought or any other natural disaster as cause of famine, since collected harvest had been enough to feed everyone. Nevertheless, towing brigades were confiscating literally everything, even the grain the farmers tried to hide at home. Subsequently, the Soviet government provided "food aid", but individual farmers were left to fend for themselves in order to for fear of starvation drive them to work on collective farms, where public canteens were established at the end of 1933<sup>2</sup>. Chamberlin compared the situation of the Ukrainian farmers in 1921 and in 1932–1933 and came to the conclusion that in the 1920s, the farmers were the force strong enough to force the government to make concessions and move to a new economic policy, but in the 1930s, the Soviet government had a stronger position and managed to subdue the Ukrainians by famine<sup>3</sup>. Journalist W. Chamberlin was one of the few who tried to tell the truth about the Holodomor to the world, risking his career and status. He was not afraid to publish articles about what he saw while traveling in Ukraine.

Therefore, the hopes of Ukrainian diaspora for the USA support in the struggle with propagandistic campaign of the Holodomor denial failed. International relations of the 1930s dictated the new rules and divided the world into two camps. When Germany was strengthening its forces in Europe, and the danger of growing Japan influence, the USA had to get a support of the USSR Communist totalitarian regime. Such actions caused dissatisfaction of the part of the Ukrainian diaspora, as 1933 was a climax of the Holodomor, organized by the occupational authorities at the territory of Ukraine. Attempts of Ukrainian community to influence the governmental decisions regarding normalization of the relations with the USSR did not give any results. Nevertheless, organized meetings of protest in different states attracted the attention of the American press and the society in general, and had a positive impact onto the awareness of the genocide of Ukrainians. The establishment of international relations between the US and the Soviet Union prompted a series of new publications on the Holodomor in the *Svoboda* newspaper in the first half of 1934. These articles, unlike all previous, were published in English; their target audience were average Americans and the US politicians, for example, H. Fish and Herman P. Koppelman, who supported the diaspora and tried to organize the food relief or get the explanations of the Soviet leaders. These reports in the 1934 newspapers were more general; they summed everything up, briefly described the Holodomor and added the main theses of American and European newspapers, which wrote about it earlier.

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