

News at random

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1944)**

Heft 1024

PDF erstellt am: **30.04.2024**

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY P. F. BOEHRINGER.

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain.

EDITED WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE LONDON COLONY.

Telephone: Clerkenwell 2321/2.

Published Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

VOL. 26 — No. 1024.

LONDON, MAY 26th, 1944.

PRICE 6d.

PREPAID SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

(Monthly issue.)

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AND COLONIES	(12 issues, post free)	6/6
SWITZERLAND	One Year (12 issues, post free) Frs. 5.—	

(Swiss subscriptions may be paid into Postscheck-Konto Basle V 5718).



NEWS AT RANDOM

The Editor very much regrets that it has been found impossible to go to press at the usual time. Labour difficulties have been mainly responsible for the unavoidable delay and may seriously interfere again with the publication of the next few issues. The Editor also wishes to say that the news under this heading is believed to be reliable but for known reasons no means have been available to have them checked over from another source.

Federal

The "Financial Times," May 8th says: "Negotiations are reported at Washington to be in progress in London between Swiss and American representatives on the question of cutting Swiss exports to Germany of ball-bearings, chronometers, fuses, and precision instruments. The Swiss are also being asked to reduce their credits to the Germans. It is believed that our Government is not unwilling to make concessions in return for an extension of navicerts for raw materials needed in addition to the food and fodder so far imported."

The first of May was celebrated throughout Switzerland in a quiet and dignified fashion. In Berne an address was given by Dr. Max Weber while at Zurich and Schaffhausen several orators spoke to the workers. In the latter place the mayor emphasised the people's will to defend our independence and expressed their sympathy with the workers of all countries in their fight for liberty and social justice, especially those who had declined to capitulate to tyranny and dictatorship.

Dr. Edmund Schulthess, LL.D., four times President of the Confederation died at Berne on April 22nd. According to the obituary published in "The Times," he was born in 1868, educated at Berne University, and, taking up law, became a lawyer of distinction. He took a close interest in politics from the early days of his career and became a member of

Parliament in 1905. In 1912 he was made a federal councillor and during part of the period of the 1914 to 1918 war was head of the Department of Public Economy. He was president of the Confederation in 1917, 1921, 1928, and 1933. In 1935 he became president of the Federal Bank Commission and in 1939 president of the International Labour Conference. He did much to further the development of agriculture and the scheme for old age insurance.

* * *

The former secretary of the Swiss socialist party, August Hungel, died in Berne at the age of 67; he was a member of the National Council for many years.

Cantonal

The elections for the Grosse Rat of the canton Schwytz showed little change. The council is reduced from 103 to 99 seats which are filled by 53 conservatives (56), 30 radicals (35), 13 socialists and three independents.

* * *

The accounts for 1943 of the canton Obwalden exhibit considerable economies the deficiency of about Frs. 94,000 being less than half the figure estimated in the budget.

* * *

The cantonal accounts of Lucerne to end of December last show a deficit of over 1½ million francs.

* * *

A credit of no less than eight million francs is being sought by the Zurich municipality in order to make butter available to the population at a reduced price.

* * *

The voters of Winterthur have sanctioned a scheme offering a 15 per cent cash subsidy towards the cost of constructing 40 one-family houses.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les Membres sont avisés que la prochaine

ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu mardi, le 6 juin au Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, W.1, le dîner commencera à 6h. précises.

ORDRE DU JOUR:

Procès-verbal.

Démissions.

Admissions.

Divers.

Monsieur Geoffrey Crowther nous parlera au sujet

"Post-War Economic Policy."

Les Membres sont priés de s'inscrire par écrit pas plus tard que le 3 juin auprès de M. P. A. Moehr, Hon. Secr. Imperial House, Kingsway, W.C.2. Prière de s'absentir de téléphoner.

LE COMITE.

A deficit of nearly 1½ million francs is disclosed in the accounts for 1943 of the canton Fribourg, slightly more than was anticipated in the budget. A new fiscal law is under consideration so as to secure a more balanced return.

* * *

Federal President Stampfli and General Guisan attended the official opening ceremony of the Basle Fair on April 25th. The director of the exhibition referred to the continued extension which in no way clashed with the interests and utility of the Comptoir at Lausanne and the display at Lugano. It was his intention, he added, to give the Basle Fair an international character.

* * *

No less than 67 post offices in the canton Grisons will have to undergo some terminological changes or extensions as with the official recognition of Romansch their denomination will be bilingual.

* * *

According to a revision of the constitution which is likely to be submitted to the electorate of Solothurn in the near future the membership of the Grosse Rat is to be reduced by one sixth, i.e. there will be one mandate for every 1200 voters instead of every 1000 as heretofore.

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Heavy damage was caused by a large fire which destroyed several houses and workshops at Zofingen in the night of May 2nd; six families were rendered homeless.

* * *

The population of the town of Lausanne on the 1st of January last is stated to have been 49,000 including 8,000 foreigners.

* * *

The radio station at Lausanne (Soc. Romande de Radiodiffusion) is constituting a special museum which will contain apparatus and documents of interest with reference to Swiss Broadcasting from the beginning about ten years ago.

* * *

The Papal Nuncio in Berne, Archbishop Bernardini, led the Diplomatic Corps at the funeral of 37 people who were killed in the accidental bombing of Schaffhausen, during the recent raid. More than 20,000 people witnessed the Requiem Mass at St. John's Church and the subsequent burial.

* * *

The communal elections which took place at the beginning of this month in the canton Neuchâtel resulted in a distinct swing to the left a new labour grouping capturing some of the seats. At Neuchâtel the radicals and liberals lost four and three mandates respectively, the socialists one and the "travailleurs" gained eight. At La Chaux-de-Fonds the socialists through the loss of five seats were deprived of the absolute majority in the council the "parti ouvrier (nicolistes)" taking possession of six seats. At Fleurier the socialists collared three seats each from the radicals and liberals.

* * *

In view of a threatened housing shortage in Neuchâtel a resolution has been passed by the municipal council empowering the authorities to refuse residence to newcomers unless a demand can be supported by strong reasons.

A large conflagration occurred at La Chaux-de-Fonds about 150 years ago when amongst others the town of Schaffhausen had forwarded Frs. 753.- to relieve distress. The chaudfonnier town-fathers have now decided, after deliberations, to return this amount together with an additional sum that may be publicly subscribed in favour of the victims of the bombardment. (Presumably the latter is in lieu of interest).

* * *

Geneva is balancing its accounts for 1943 with a surplus of 27,260 francs.

* * *

The former editor of the "*Generois*," Denis Roche, died in Geneva at the age of 72; he was a collaborator and correspondent of several Swiss and foreign newspapers.

* * *

Geneva has presented a number of valuable paintings, amongst them the self-portrait of Hodler, to Schaffhausen in order to restock the local museum the contents of which were mostly destroyed by the bombardment.

Army

Unusual air activity was recorded over the northern part of our country in the night of April 25/26th. A German night fighter came down near Altenrhein empty the crew having baled out and landed on the other side of the Rhine and frontier. As many as 12 American bombers—the news are somewhat contradictory—are said to have come down mostly near

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Zurich; some of them were intercepted by our own machines and escorted to Dübendorf; one that seemed to have misunderstood the order to land being in a badly damaged condition was shot down by our own air force. With the exception of the latter the crews escaped injury.

* * *

A German plane that seemed to have lost its bearings over the Jura landed on an aerodrome near Basle on May 1st; the crew of three were interned.

* * *

A damaged American bomber found itself in difficulties on May 11th and the crew of ten baled out and came safely to earth in the region of Lützelfluh and Sumiswald.

* * *

Some fragments of the old mercenary spirit now and then catch light again though it seems unheard of that during war time the army authorities should allow 12 able-bodied young men to leave the country in order to join a foreign service. We have heard of these things being done clandestinely in normal times but the chivalrous adventurers generally have to face disciplinary measures when they return home. Man-power is a spectre that haunts all belligerents or quasi belligerents and even the Holy Father is affected by this worldly ailment; it will be a matter of tranquillising satisfaction to many in realising that the papal bodyguard has now been strengthened by twelve redoubtable Swiss. The ceremony of their induction is lucidly described by our contemporary

"Universe" May 12th as follows: Twelve recruits—10 German-speaking, two French-speaking—were sworn-in at the ceremony in the Belvedere Court, watched by many prelates of the Papal Court, Noble Guards, Palatine Guards and members of the Vatican police force.

Standing beside a banner bearing the arms of Pope Julius II, who founded the corps, and the present Pope, each recruit, holding up his right hand with the thumb and two fingers extended in homage to the Blessed Trinity, swore to "serve faithfully, loyally and honourably," during the whole time of his service, the Supreme Pontiff and his legitimate successors and, during a vacancy of the Holy See, the College of Cardinals; to promote as far as possible their well-being and to preserve them "from every hurt."

Each also promised obedience to the officers of the corps, to be diligent in his duties and not to join any secret society.

In the Belvedere Court is a tablet recording that 183 Swiss Guards perished in the defence of Pope Clement VII during the historic Sack of Rome in 1527. The invaders looted St. Peter's taking away even the candlesticks on the altar, and forced an entry into the Pope's private rooms.

For the greater part of a day the Swiss kept the invaders at bay when they were threatening the life of the Pontiff. Driven into the basilica, the defenders still went on fighting, while a few of their companions escorted the Pope to the Castle of St. Angelo.

Every single one left behind perished—including more than 40 Protestant members of the corps.

Traffic

In order to provide employment the sum of 6,000 million francs has been allocated for building activities. Of this amount 2,000 million francs are to be used for the general improvement of transport facilities such as roads and railways. The Federal Railways will receive 760 million, and, according to a brochure published by the board of directors, 300 million francs will be used for the replacement of rolling stock and 250 million for the doubling of single track sections. For the extension of railway electrification the sum of 50 million francs has been set aside. In addition to this plan, which will be spread over ten years, an immediate programme has been elaborated which will cost 230 million francs and aims primarily at a speedy electrification of several sections of railway.

* * *

The Swiss steamer "Chasseral" bound from Marseilles for Lisbon with a cargo of matches (?) was attacked and damaged by aircraft. Most of the Crew were only slightly hurt the exception being Maurice Jaccard, the engineer and the only Swiss on board who was killed.

Economical

The great power plant in the Hinterrheintal for which the concession was definitely refused by the Grisons government has been solemnly buried by the ringing of the church bells in the three mountain villages concerned; the villagers who were offered huge sums for their land carried off a noteworthy victory. Less delighted, for obvious reasons, was the German



SVB-10

periodical "*Das Reich*" which wails "this important project cannot be started as nobody knows how to break the wooden-headedness of the 430 inhabitants" to which we add three cheers for the Swiss "Steckgrind."

* * *

An article in "*Modern Transport*," April 22nd dwells on the prospects of a Swiss aircraft industry. The future does not look very hopeful as the home market is very limited and export unlikely; the production cost can hardly be expected to compete with countries able to organise mass production. Here is the article:

Prior to the war, the aircraft industry in Switzerland was relatively small owing in the main to the ability to purchase machines abroad mainly from France, Germany and the U.S.A. Foreign manufacturers ceased with the outbreak of war to be able to fulfil any substantial orders, and an aircraft industry of some size has developed in Switzerland. Factories are organised through the Association of the Swiss Aircraft Industry, with its head offices in Geneva. The companies belonging to the association employ in their assembly some 5,000 hands and about 650 engineers, technicians and other employees. Equipment, aeronautical instruments and weapons are also manufactured.

In view of the importance which the relatively new industry now occupies in the country's economic life, questions inevitably arise in connection with the industry's conversion to peace-time conditions. The Association of the Swiss Aircraft Industry has recently published a memorandum examining the case for the establishment of a national aircraft industry, in which it points out that the investments made in the course of a few years already represent a considerable national asset which should be nurtured. The maintenance and promotion of a national aircraft industry would have great importance in connection with the country's transport system owing to the fact that machines particularly suitable for Swiss climatic conditions and other requirements could be home-produced. The Swiss Air Force would, moreover, be independent of outside supplies.

The memorandum also points out that knowledge and experience gained in the construction of aircraft may be applied to advantage in other branches of mechanical engineering. The aircraft industry have already, for example, had a beneficial influence upon the construction of light vehicles for road and rail, of various motors and of electrical apparatus. The main difficulty regarding the creation of a national aircraft industry is the limitation of the domestic market. The memorandum emphasises that in order to survive, the Swiss aircraft industry has to expect State support. The association does not ask for State subsidies, but it requests that orders should be placed with domestic producers, provided they are able to make deliveries favourable in comparison with those of foreign competitors. A further requirement is the formulation of a definite construction programme for the industry as a whole. The association considers that the State should guide in principle, whilst the actual tasks of development and construction should be left to private enterprise. It recommends the formation of a special organisation in which the necessary powers for the fostering of a national aircraft industry should be vested. The board of the

proposed organisation should include representatives of State departments and members of the aviation industry, and it should have the assistance of scientists and of members of the Swiss Aero Club and other bodies.

* * *

Over 300 cattle breeders of the Gruyère held a protest meeting near Bulle insisting on preserving the traditional stock of spotted cattle and demanding the interdiction of cross breeding.

* * *

A general census of all trades and factories is to be taken some time next autumn; the date has not been fixed yet.

Rationing

The War Food Office has decreed a third meatless day as from the 2nd inst. for all hotels and restaurants; vegetarianism is therefore the order of the day on Monday, Wednesday and Friday fish and sausages excepted if available. Butcher shops are open only on Tuesday, Friday afternoon and Saturdays.

Humanitarian

The exclusive use for 18 months of the "Palais des Expositions" at Geneva has been secured by the International Red Cross in order to provide additional storage and handling space for the ever increasing number of prisoners of war parcels.

* * *

The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva has recently created a new department called "The Dispersed Families Service," which hopes to establish contact among family members who have been separated by acts of war and obliged to leave their domicile for an unknown destination.

* * *

An exhibition train displaying the activities of the International Red Cross is to tour Switzerland.

As many years must elapse before humanitarian work can be relaxed, the train will visit other countries after the war.

The contents of Allied prisoners-of-war food parcels, which have astonished neutrals by their diversity, are featured in the exhibition. There is also a cinema to show the many activities of the Red Cross in alleviating the lot of war victims.

* * *

About a hundred Swiss children arrived at Geneva from Paris and Bordeaux at the beginning of this month and found temporary homes in families of different cantons.

* * *

The board of the Swiss Schiller foundation has made the following awards: Frs. 1,000 each to the writers Charles Lambri of Lausanne and Marcel Reymond of Geneva; francs 500 each to Marcel Probé of Fribourg and Gottfried Bohnenblust living in Geneva.

—oo—

We are much indebted to a friend of ours who has sent us an article taken from the "*New York Tribune*" April 4th and contributed by Walter Lippman on the bombing of Schaffhausen; here it is:

For the tragic accident in which the Swiss town of Schaffhausen was bombed by our air forces, the regret in this country will be heartfelt and universal. We cannot, alas, make any reparation which will bring the dead back to life, or even make fully good the material damage. But what can be done to show our feelings and what can be paid to restore the city and to compensate the Swiss, our people will certainly want to see done in the fullest possible measure.

It is possible to do more than that. This would be a fitting occasion for the President to order a review and reconsideration of those policies of economic warfare affecting Switzerland which many think have been carried beyond the bounds of law, reason and military necessity. The President himself cannot know, the public has no means of judging, whether the regulations do not in many cases do more harm to the Swiss than they do good to the United Nations. There are grounds for suspecting that many of them may be excessive, that overzealous subordinates, intent on the total exercise of their powers, may often be failing to distinguish between the Swiss, who are true neutrals, and nations satellite to Germany.

Neutrality does not arouse much sympathy in nations who are desperately at war. But the neutrality of Switzerland is a very special thing, indeed unique. Only Switzerland in all of Europe has made no military concessions. Surrounded by the Fascist world, its neutrality has been much more than a policy of staying out of the war. The Swiss have maintained intact their democratic liberties because they hold them dear and because their hearts are stout. That is a great contribution to mankind. Through the darkest days of the war, when Hitler seemed about to sweep all Europe before him, the moral resistance of the Swiss has reassured us that once a nation has known liberty, it will never willingly surrender it.

Their example should never be forgotten and if there is anything this government can do to express not only its regret for the Schaffhausen bombing but its appreciation of the part Switzerland has played, it should do it. It should take the risk of giving the Swiss the benefit of the doubt as between the judgement of some official here and their honest representations. We shall be amply repaid if we come out of this war with the confidence and friendship of the Swiss nation.

Let us not forget the indispensable part which Switzerland has to play in the healing of the nations. By long historical tradition Switzerland is the seat, so to speak the capital, of mankind's works of charity and of mercy. We shall need Switzerland when the war is over. It will stand there, firm and free, in a sea of misery and hatred. We shall need the Swiss because they alone perhaps will be able to go everywhere, feared by none and trusted by all.

Realizing all that, we shall be wise if, jolted by this terrible mishap, we go beyond the obvious regrets and indemnities to larger actions which express our moral solidarity with this admirable people."

We cannot do better than repeat the comment of our friend who says: "I have not heard that the advice given therein has been listened to, or that there has been any relaxation in America of the measures which so severely affect Swiss interests without any corresponding advantage to the Allies. The article, however, shows an awakening to the seriousness of this problem."

It is seldom that we receive as much as a whisper hinting at the immense work that is being handled by the protecting power, but here is an incident which the "*Nottingham Journal*," May 1st deemed worth while printing: Most Englishmen who had property in Germany before the war have given up hopes of seeing it again. But I have met one official who, in Berlin when the war started, got away with only one suitcase. He has since heard that all his possessions have been destroyed in air raids, or rather, all but one.

The Swiss, the Protecting Power, moved his car to safety. This was an MG, for which, he tells me, the current price here would be about £400. He has just received an offer from Switzerland to sell it at £328. He did not hesitate. As he put it to me, a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, especially when it's a burning bush.

* * *

Curiously enough the "*Nottingham Evening Post*," May 2nd has a reference to the late Sir Arnold Theiler whom our contemporary describes as a "Great Swiss Benefactor." Sir Arnold was certainly unknown in his own country and although during a short stay in London he was entertained by one or two of our clubs he died forlorn and forgotten by his compatriots. At the cremation in Golders Green there were only three Swiss attending among the large gathering of high Colonial officials and distinguished representatives of Medicine and Science. This is what the "*Nottingham Post*" says: It is both curious and



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ironical how completely unknown to the public are some of the greatest benefactors of mankind. Well up in this list one would put Arnold Theiler, a young Swiss student at Zurich and Berne, who graduated brilliantly in veterinary science. Finding academic life too unadventurous, this young Swiss student migrated to South Africa, where his scientific ideas were repugnant to the Boer farmers. He had to earn his living as a farm labourer, and lost his left hand in a threshing-machine accident. It was Theiler who later, through the encouragement of the British Government and also of enlightened Boers like General Botha and General Smuts, made discoveries of far-reaching importance in the treatment of diseases epidemic in South Africa and other countries, and disastrous alike to human beings and animals.

Theiler's greatest achievement was the elucidation of the cause and treatment of East Coast fever, but there was hardly any disease of animals in South Africa on which he did not throw some light. The remedy of East Coast fever is inoculation against the germ-laden ticks which infest the grass. No doubt modern science was crudely anticipated by the native African practice of burning the grass once a year.

A NEW SWISS MINISTER.

It was officially announced on May 10th that the Federal Council has appointed M. Paul Ruegger Swiss Minister in London; he succeeds M. Thurnheer who last November was called to Berné to report to the Government and who was taken ill in Switzerland.

M. Paul Ruegger is a citizen of Lucerne, was born on August 14th, 1897, and after obtaining his legal degree at the University of Zurich entered our diplomatic service in July 1918. He became closely associated with the late Fed. Counc. G. Motta whom he accompanied to Geneva as secretary of the Swiss Delegation to the first meetings of the League of Nations. For three years to the end of 1928 he was assistant registrar at the Permanent Court of International Justice in the Hague. After spending a short time at Rome as Counsellor to our Legation he returned to Berne as chief of the Political Section, Division of Foreign Affairs. M. Ruegger was our Minister at Rome for over six years till Jan. 31st, 1942 since when he has been collaborating with the International Red Cross Committee.

M. Ruegger is said to speak English perfectly; his good lady is Italian by birth. Nothing has transpired yet as to the date when the new Minister will be allowed to present his credentials at the Court of St. James's. In the meantime our acting Chargé d'Affaires, M. L. A. Girardet, will continue to carry on at the Legation.

LES DIFFICULTES DES NEUTRES.

De nouveau, depuis quelques semaines, la notion de neutralité se trouve discutée. Ce n'est certes point la première fois que cela nous arrive. Mais les critiques ne sont pas toujours les mêmes. Ce sont des belligérants, bien qu'ils n'appartiennent pas toujours au même camp. Au fond, si l'on considère les choses avec un certain recul, on pourrait dire que les puissances en guerre ont une très vive compréhension pour notre statut international, quand les dangers les menacent, mais que cette compréhension s'atténue et s'estompe, dès que la fortune des armes semble leur sourire.

Nous autres Suisses, nous avons de la peine à saisir les raisons de ces revirements. La neutralité est pour nous une notion claire et précise qui ne souffre guère d'interprétations extensives ou limitatives. Nous n'avons jamais admis que son sens, sa portée et sa valeur puissent varier au gré des événements. Nous n'en connaissons que la rigueur. Nous nous y soumettons volontiers. A cet égard, nous n'évoluons pas. Nous restons fermes sur nos positions. Nous éprouverons toujours de la peine à admettre que la pareille ne nous soit pas rendue.

Ces derniers temps, divers événements sont venus nous prouver que la notion de neutralité n'est pas toujours comprise et que certains belligérants voudraient la nuancer, l'adapter aux exigences de leur politique. Il y a tout d'abord eu le discours retentissant de M. Cordell Hull, ministre des affaires étrangères des Etats-Unis d'Amérique et grand spécialiste du droit international, lequel a déclaré tout soudain que les Alliés ne pourraient plus admettre à l'avenir que les neutres fournissent à leurs ennemis des denrées, des marchandises, des matières premières ou des articles manufacturés qui peuvent, directement ou indirectement, revêtir une valeur militaire. Il a ajouté—et c'est ce qui n'a pas manqué de réveiller l'attention des neutres—que les Alliés ont pu souscrire à des compromis à l'époque où ils ne disposaient pas de moyens de coercition suffisants, mais qu'ils ne sauraient plus y consentir, maintenant qu'ils ont atteint un degré de puissance suffisant. Il faut bien le dire: c'est cette thèse qui paraît inquiétante, en ce sens qu'elle n'est pas compatible avec une notion rigoureuse de la neutralité et qu'elle paraît admettre tout au contraire que cette notion peut évoluer en fonction des exigences de tierces puissances. Or, nous avons toujours bien précisé que nous sommes les seuls interprètes autorisés de la neutralité helvétique, parce que nous l'avons proclamée librement, parce qu'elle ne nous a pas été imposée par d'autres, parce que nous en sommes, en dernière analyse, les seuls gardiens.

Certes, nous savons bien que, depuis lors, des apaisements nous ont été donnés, tout au moins de façon officieuse. La presse anglo-saxonne n'a point manqué de souligner la situation tout à fait particulière, tout à fait originale de la Suisse. En outre, le discours de M. Cordell Hull a été suivi de l'envoi de notes diplomatiques qui ont été adressées à la Suède, à la Turquie et à l'Espagne. Quant aux autorités fédérales, pour autant que l'on soit renseigné, elle n'ont été l'objet d'aucune démarche de ce genre.

Cela n'est point fait pour nous surprendre. Il n'y a aucune commune mesure entre la neutralité helvétique et la neutralité d'autres Etats. La nôtre est intégrale, absolue, rigoureuse, permanente. Elle a fait l'objet d'un traité international qui est encore valable,

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