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## Russian-Armenian Agreement of August 10, 1920 and Military-Political Position of the Representations of the European Countries in Transcaucasia and the Republic of Armenia

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**Keywords:** Republic of Armenia, agreement, Russia, Entente, Turkey, allies, Treaty of Sevres.

The Russian-Armenian treaty of 1920 was a test for Armenia in relations with its allies. Not wanting to lose Armenia as a bulwark against Bolshevism, the Allies took this agreement is in shambles.

The policy of the Armenian government was twofold; its inclination towards the West was obvious, because on the same day the Treaty of Sevres was signed, which left its mark on the agreement of August 10.

In fact, the agreement of August 10, 1920 was one of the successful diplomatic maneuvers of the Soviet side, since with it the issue of “disputed” territories was removed from the sphere of diplomacy of the Western powers.

Actually, the European “allies” of Armenia, dissatisfied with the agreement of August 10, were interested in Armenia only as an anti-Russian shield. In such a hopeless situation, the government of the Republic of Armenia responded to the coercion of Bolshevik Russia by temporarily transferring those territories to Russia, since there was a somewhat naive hope of returning these territories in the future, which was completely excluded if they were captured by Turkey.

**1920 թ. օգոստոսի 10-ի ռուս-հայկական համաձայնագիրը և Անդրկովկասում ու Հայաստանի Հանրապետությունում եվրոպական երկրների ռազմաքաղաքական ներկայացուցչությունների դիրքորոշումը**

**Վանիկ Վիրաբյան**

*Պատմական գիտությունների դոկտոր, պրոֆեսոր*

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*Հիմնաբառեր*՝ Հայաստանի  
Հանրապետություն, համաձայնագիր,  
Ռուսաստան, Անտանտ, Թուրքիա,  
դաշնակիցներ, Սևրի պայմանագիր:

1920 թ. ռուս-հայկական համաձայնությունը փորձաքար հանդիսացավ Հայաստանի և նրա Դաշնակիցների միջև: Չցանկանալով կորցնել Հայաստանը որպես պատ-վար բոլշևիզմի դեմ, դաշնակիցները սվիններով ընդունեցին այն: Այն անակնկալի բերեց նրանց, համաձայնագրից դժգոհեցին հատկապես Անտանտի տերությունները:

1920 թ. օգոստոսի 10-ի համաձայնագիրը խորհրդային կողմի դիվանագիտական հաջող մանրամասներից էր, քանի որ դրանով «վիճելի» տարածքների հարցը արևմտյան տերությունների դիվանագիտության ոլորտից հանվեց և ընդգրկվեց բոլշևիկյան Ռուսաստանի և Խորհրդային Ադրբեջանի քաղաքական ու դիվանագիտական հարաբերությունների ոլորտ: Օգոստոսի 10-ի համաձայնագիրը ուժի մեջ մտնելուց անմիջապես հետո Հայաստանի զինվորական նախարարը հեռագրելով Դարալագյազում գտնվող Դրոյին, կարգադրում է տեղեկացնել Ղափանի գործերի հրամանատար Գ. Նժդեհին թողնել Ջանգեզուրը և առանց դիմադրության անցնել հանրապետության տարածք, որին վերջինս հրաժարվում է ենթարկվել, հայտարարելով, որ է, որ չի ենթարկվելու կառավարության հրամանին, մնալու է Կապարգողթում և շարունակելու է կռիվը: Իսկ ինչ վերաբերում է օգոստոսի 10-ի համաձայնագրից դժգոհ մնացած Հայաստանի եվրոպական «դաշնակիցներին», ապա Հայաստանը նրանց հետաքրքրում էր միայն որպես հակառուսական պատնեշ և ոչ ավելին, ինչպես 1918-1919 թ. նրանց որդեգրած հակահայկական ռազմավարության առումով Ղարաբաղ-Արցախի, Նախիջևանի և այլ հայկական տարածքների պատկանելիության խնդրում: Այդպիսի անելանելի իրավիճակում ՀՀ կառավարությունը ընդառաջ գնաց բոլշևիկյան Ռուսաստանի պարտադրանքին՝ այդ տարածքները ժամանակավորապես Ռուսաստանին հանձնելով, որից ինչ-որ չափով միամիտ հույս կար հետ ստանալու այդ տարածքները, ինչը լիովին բացառվում էր դրանք Թուրքիայի կողմից գավթելու դեպքում:

**Российско-армянский договор от 10 августа 1920 г. и позиция военно-политических  
представительств европейских стран в Закавказье и в Республике Армения**

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**Ключевые слова:** Республика Армения, договор, Россия, Антанта, Турция, союзники, Севрский договор.

Российско-армянский договор 1920 году стал испытанием для Армении в отношениях с ее союзниками. Не желая терять Армению как оплот против большевизма, союзники приняли данный договор в штыки.

Политика правительства Армении была двоякой; ее склонность к Западу была очевидна, потому что в тот же день был подписан и Севрский мирный договор, наложивший свой отпечаток на соглашение от 10 августа.

По сути, соглашение от 10 августа 1920 г. было одним из удачных дипломатических маневров советской стороны, поскольку с ним вопрос о «спорных» территориях был выведен из сферы дипломатии западных держав.

Собственно, европейских «союзников» Армении, недовольных соглашением от 10 августа, Армения интересовала только как антироссийский щит. В такой безвыходной ситуации правительство РА ответило на принуждение большевистской России временной передачей тех территорий России, так как была несколько наивная надежда вернуть в дальнейшем эти территории, что полностью исключалось в случае их захвата Турцией.

\* \* \*

**Introduction.** The Russian-Armenian agreement of 1920 was a test in the relations of Armenia and its Allies. Not wanting to lose Armenia as a bulwark against Bolshevism, the Allies took this agreement is in shambles. It was a surprise for them. The Entente powers were dissatisfied with the agreement. The topic has not been deeply studied, and even more so, the attitude of the military and political missions of the allied countries in Transcaucasia and Armenia towards the August 10 agreement, which only dealt with the condemnation of the RA government, demanding to continue a strict anti-Bolshevik position, but not showing any real military or other support, which led to the crushing defeat of the Republic of Armenia in the autumn of 1920, when Turkish-Armenian war led to the fall of the First Republic.

### ***The strategy of the RA government regarding the conclusion of the August 10 agreement***

The policy of the ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) government was twofold, its inclination towards the West was obvious, because on the same day the Treaty of Sevres was signed, which left its mark on the agreement of August 10 and on the unrest and disagreements of the Western countries-Russia-Armenia around it. The signature in Sevres was put under another treaty of the same name, by which Armenia connected itself with the policies of the western powers and allies with a new link. However, the Soviet government, taking note of the new step of the ARF government, unacceptable for it, but not at all unjust, continued in the person of B. Legrand's persistent and relentless efforts to take control over Armenia. And as later events showed, Russia was the first to break the agreement it had signed and the assurances given to the Armenian people and government, it found mutual consent with Turkey preferable, which led to the division of

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Armenia between Bolshevik Russia and Kemalist Turkey. This action also gave a share Azerbaijan - a state with which Armenia was in conflict.

In fact, the agreement of August 10 was one of the successful diplomatic maneuvers of the Soviet side, because with it the issue of “disputed” territories was removed from the sphere of geopolitics of the diplomacy of the Western powers and appeared in the sphere of political and diplomatic relations between Bolshevik Russia and Soviet Azerbaijan-Turkey. Immediately after the August 10 agreement came into force, the Minister of Defense of Armenia sent a telegram to Dro in Daralagyaz, ordering to inform the commander of Ghapan troops, G. Nzhdeh to leave Zangezur and pass to the territory of the republic without resistance, to which the latter refused to obey, declaring that he would not obey the government’s order, he would stay in Kapargoght and continue the fight. In this regard, historian Aram Simonyan is absolutely right when he concludes: “If Nzhdeh categorically refused to obey the order of the RA military minister arising from the ceasefire agreement of August 10 and was determined to continue the fight against the Red Army and the Azerbaijani forces, then he was only acting in the interests of Armenia and the Armenian people. Nzhdeh could not have done otherwise” (Simonyan A. 2000, 161).

The Armenian-Russian agreement of August 10 was an agreement imposed by Russia on the RA government in a harsh manner, which simply confirmed the fact of the reality, because Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur province, as well as Nakhichevan, were already occupied by Soviet troops before the signing of the August 10 agreement. This agreement cannot be considered a diplomatic success for Armenia, because it did not satisfy either Armenia, Russia and its allies (Azerbaijan, Turkey) or Armenia’s Entente allies (England, France). The reason for the dissatisfaction of the Republic of Armenia with the agreement of August 10 was the military occupation of all the Armenian-Azerbaijani disputed territories by Azerbaijan’s ally Russia. As for Russia, its decision was determined by the demands of its allies Azerbaijan and Turkey, which not only demanded the annexation of the disputed territories to Azerbaijan, but were also against giving Armenia the right to operate the Shahtakht station and the railway line up to Julfa.

And as for the European “allies” of Armenia who were dissatisfied with the agreement of August 10, they were interested in Armenia only as an anti-Russian barrier and nothing more, like in 1918-1919 in terms of the anti-Armenian strategy adopted by them, asking for the belonging of Karabakh-Artsakh, Nakhijevan and other Armenian territories. In such a desperate situation, the RA government met the compulsion of Bolshevik Russia by temporarily handing over those territories to Russia, from which there was a somewhat naive hope of getting those territories back, which was completely excluded in case of their seizure by Turkey. It was a false mentality that was inspired by Armenian social and political circles for centuries, which was a victory for Russia, and a foreign-political failure and military failure for Armenia (Khurshudyan L. 2017, 126). The subsequent negotiation process showed that the strategy of the Russian side, in terms of the fact of

fighting on two fronts, put the Republic of Armenia in front of the inevitability of capitulation. According to C. Galoyan, the Armenian-Russian agreement of August 10 (signed in Tiflis) was signed on the day of the ratification of the Treaty of Sevres, because the Soviet Russian government did not want to finally lose Armenia (G. Galoyan 1999, 256), which was also a countermeasure to the peace treaty signed in Sevres on the same day, and the strategic approach undertaken by Bolshevik Russia to reestablish itself in the Transcaucasian region, which the RA authorities mistakenly considered “temporary” and did pay much attention to it, continuing to connect all their foreign policy goals with the countries participating in the Treaty of Sevres. But all these hopes were broken when the disastrous Turkish-Armenian war started in the autumn of 1920, as a result of which RA renounced the Treaty of Sevres by the Alexandropol Treaty.

Regarding the agreement of August 10, S. Vratsyan writes as follows: “On July 20, Legrand and Khalil Pasha arrived in Baku and after consulting with the communists of Azerbaijan, he went to Tiflis, where, in early August, a conference was convened to stop the Armenian-Bolshevik fights taking place in Nakhichevan, Zangezur and Ghazakh. Representatives of Armenia A. Jamalyan, A. Babalyan and Legrand signed the peace agreement on August 10, by which hostilities between Soviet Russia and Armenia ended on August 10, starting at 12 o'clock. The Armenian troops would occupy the line passing Shahtakht-Khok-Aznaberd-Sultanbeg and then north of Kivki and east of Bazarchay, and in Ghazakh region, the line they had captured on July 30. The troops of Soviet Russia were supposed to occupy the regions of Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan. The final belonging of those provinces was not predetermined by that capture. That issue was to be decided by the treaty to be concluded between Soviet Russia and Armenia. The Shahtakht-Julfa railway was to be operated by the Railway Department of Armenia before the conclusion of the agreement” (S. Vratsyan 1993, 484-485).

Both the Treaty of Sevres and the agreement of August 10 were not implemented, moreover, Armenia, as well as its enemies and allies were dissatisfied with it. Armenia was unhappy because the disputed territories had come under the control of Soviet Russia. Azerbaijan was again dissatisfied, because it also wanted to occupy the disputed territories, and Turkey was dissatisfied, because according to the agreement, the right to operate the Shahtakht-Julfa railway was given to Armenia (Republic of Armenia 1918-1920, 2000, 248-249).

S. Vratsyan notes that the agreement of August 10 caused dissatisfaction among the allied representatives of Tiflis: “England’s acting commander Livk accused the Armenians that Armenia no more cooperates with its allies and should no longer be able to receive their support, while the French High Commissioner de Martel believed that the Armenians were joining the enemy’s army of the Allies. De Martel’s displeasure was also great because the Armenian government had refused to accept the weapons and ammunition offered by France on usurious terms. On August 31, Livk visited Yerevan, where he was solemnly received, and by communicating with the government and learning about the situation, he was assured his suspicions were groundless. At the same time, he presented to the Armenian government a draft of an economic agreement to hand over the ports and railways of Armenia to England and offered to sign it within three days, but the Armenian government refused” (S. Vratsyan 1993, 485). From this testimony of Vratsyan, it is clearly evident that Armenia was in a truly international and political impasse and in a hopeless situation, because

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the allied states were not sincere towards it. The “allied” states of Armenia viewed the signing of the August 10 agreement by the Armenian government as an open betrayal.

R. Hovhannisyan writes that the military and political representatives of the Entente in Transcaucasia were unaware of those negotiations. The observations of the Allies led them to the conclusion that Armenian-Bolshevik relations have softened and Armenia is looking for a new strategic solution, which was also natural and what the Allies did not want to understand, that the Armenians had a certain bonding with Russia, be it tsarist or Bolshevik. The reaction of Count Damien de Martel, the French commissioner in the Transcaucasia, was particularly sharp in this regard: he had scolded the RA representative in Tiflis, T. Bekzadyan, and said that Armenia can no longer be seen as an ally and is even considered to be in the enemy camp. De Martel also did not like the fact that the RA government had refused to buy arms and weapons from France for cash or in exchange with minerals, deepening the doubt about the change of orientation (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 607, sheet 29, S. T. Alikhanyan 1974, 128-129; R. Hovhannisyan 2016, Vol. IV, 113), and France exported cotton and other important raw materials from Armenia (NAA, fund 368, inv. 1, file 18, sheets 2, 8, 16-17, 23, 34), often ignoring Armenian interests. De Martel considered the Russian-Armenian agreement as “Armenian desertion” and claimed that the Armenians had gone to the negotiations without warning or consultation, but this was not so, because on August 8, Colonel E. Corbeil had reported that negotiations have been going on since August 6, about which Vice Admiral M. Bristol had also written from Istanbul to the American consul Charles Moser (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 607, sheet 29; R. Hovhannisyan 2016, Vol. IV, 113). Opinions were voiced in the French press that it makes no sense to talk about the creation of Armenia now, telegrams sent to Paris warned about the coup in Armenia, calling to cut Armenia from the sphere of Bolshevik influence, to encourage the Armenians to go to a mutual agreement with the Turks (M. Tumanyan, 2012, 330).

In deepening this state of panic, the spread of exaggerated information by a number of members of the American Committee for Aid to Armenia, who leaved Armenia heaving heard about the first news about Bolshevism, became essential (M., Tumanyan 2012, 330).

So, the allies were somehow informed about these negotiations, it was simply used to put pressure on the RA and keep the RA in the orbit of their geopolitical interests at any cost.

And naval commander Harry Luke, who was the high commissioner of Britain at that time in 1920, in a report sent to London on August 11, noted that Armenia had agreed to Soviet occupation of Karabakh, Zangezour and Nakhijevan, south of Shahtakht, and that these negotiations would continue in Yerevan. And even more, during the meeting with Bekzadyan and Babalyan, Luke said that they were surprised by this change, that the RA government agreed to the occupation of Nakhichevan by the Bolsheviks, which opens the way for them to northwestern Persia and Turkey. This was considered an almost treasonous move towards Great Britain and reprehensible at a time

when Armenia allegedly received a large amount of British ammunition (of poor quality, by the way - V.V.) and of which only 1/3 had reached Armenia, with a significant delay, which finally appeared in the hands of Bolshevik Russia after the Sovietization of Armenia. Luke said that the Armenian side had explained to them that this step was done due to the exhaustion of their resistance reserves, but promising and assuring them to maintain their loyalty to the Allies if the Bolsheviks did not respect their decisions. Luke warns about the approach of the British Cabinet to stop aid, about which he receives a letter from London confirming his position on August 19, although some officials of the same British Foreign Office in their views in this regard remembered that as early as 1918-1919 the British commanders in the Caucasus supported Azerbaijan's claims to most of the disputed territories (R. Hovhannisyanyan 2005, Vol. I, 113-114), and now they give themselves the right to criticize the RA government regarding its foreign policy strategy, and in the case when 2 months later, they leave Armenia at its most difficult moment.

On October 15, 1920 (N 15), Arzumanyan, the head of the Information Department of the RA diplomatic mission in Georgia, informs that on October 3, the British High Commissioner in Transcaucasia, Claude Stokes, will arrive in Yerevan from Tiflis, who will replace Commander Harry Luke. He held meetings upon arrival with the Prime Minister H. Ohanjanyan and Military Minister R. Ter-Minasyan and was informed that the Armenians have decided to fight against the Kemalists, that the decision of the Armenians to drive them out of the Kars region is quite difficult. He also the August 10 agreement signed between Armenia and Soviet Russia. Stokes openly says that England is powerless to provide real help to Armenia, bombarding or taking Trebizond has is really senseless, because England cannot bring out a lot of force against the Turks to move deep into the country, and only capturing the city and the port will not be quite effective. And from the perspective of Armenian-Georgian relations, Stokes concluded that Georgians are afraid to deal with Armenians, thinking that by doing so they are provoking the Turks against them. Stokes also expresses the belief that Armenians conduct an anti-Muslim policy and are always at war with Muslims, that it is necessary to put an end to this policy, that a federation should be created in Transcaucasia, which will put an end to such politics and take the path of reconciliation. Bekzadyan, responding, reports that the RA Prime Minister supports the point of view of his government. First of all many border disputes should be resolved, and then only there can be a federation, which Stokes strongly opposes. Giving clarification in response, Ohanjanyan considers the temporary agreement with Soviet Russia on August 10 to be a forced step due to circumstances, and the relations with Georgia and the importance of solving territorial issues as a prerequisite for a federal system. The meeting ends with the desired result for Stokes, because Ohanjanyan's government again shows readiness to confront both the Turks and the Bolsheviks (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 607, sheets 149-154; "Yaraj" ("Forward"), 1920, October 5-6, Yerevan).

Based on the created tension and the wish not to complicate relations with the Entente countries, the RA government is preparing a document in which counter-arguments justifying their move were brought, and in particular focusing on the aspirations of Turkey and Azerbaijan to unite against Armenia through the Red Army and the fact that the Armenian army was left alone, the government accepted a temporary arrangement in order to gain some time, but emphasizing that it would not give up its anti-Bolshevik position and would cooperate with Georgia and Maku Khanate

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(NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 607, sheets 30-31). On September 6, Luke sends this explanation of the RA government to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to which Dwight Osborne gives a very spectacular assessment, finding that the Armenians' justification of their agreement with the Soviets is convincing (R. Hovhannisyan 2016, Vol. IV, 114).

In Yerevan, Prime Minister Ohanjanyan also gave his clarifications to British representative John Gracie, Luke and French representative Emile Corbeil, considering Armenia's move as fair, as Armenia has continuously drawn the attention of the Allies to the relations between the Kemalites, Azerbaijan and Turkey, and Russia, and in that context emphasized the strategic importance of Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan, but the British commanders have helped Azerbaijan to take control of Karabakh and prevent the capture of Zangezur by the RA regular army, and many appeals of Armenia for assistance remained unanswered, also not receiving the British weapons on time, they were forced to go to a temporary Armistice (R. Hovhannisyan 2016, Volume IV, 115).

On August 24, 1920, representatives of the British and French military and political missions in the Caucasus, Colonel Corbeil, Consul Louis Neteman and a number of officials arrived in Yerevan to personally express their disappointment to the RA government regarding the Armenia-RSFSR agreement and Armenia's refusal to purchase rifles from France. In response, Ohanjanyan again gives clarifications, after which the allies believe that Armenia has not changed its political orientation, which became more obvious after the meeting with General Nazarbekyan, Gevorg E and other officials, although Corbeil advises to make an official statement: as if to dispel the suspicions and bad impression created in the Caucasus, believing that an important step will be taken with the creation of an effective Georgia-Armenia anti-Bolshevik union (NAA, fund 200, inv. 1, file 607, sheets 35-37). Leaving Lieutenant Charles Valadier in Yerevan, Colonel Corbeil informs his leadership that he does not see a betrayal of the Entente by the Armenian government, but a weakness that is fully explained by the difficulties of the political, economic and military situations, at the same time adding that in addition to Ohanjanyan and his several partners, the members of the RA government leave the impression of city council members rather than statesmen (R. Hovhannisyan 2016, Vol. IV, 116).

Luke, the representative of the British mission, coming to Yerevan on August 31, did not hesitate to scold Ohanjanyan about the agreement of August 10, considering it incomprehensible, that it had no justification, reporting about it to Lord Curzon. Luke also complained about the Bolshevik tensions in Lori Neutral Zone and advised in a dictatorial style to end the unnecessary anarchy and come to an agreement with Georgia to end the conflict by dividing the neutral zone among themselves. Opposing this, the RA Prime Minister focuses on the strict measures taken by his government against the organizers of the May Uprising as a proof of loyalty to the allies. Returning to Tiflis, Luke reports to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 2 that the RA government has urged him to support the justified claims of Armenia to Karabakh and Zangezur,



that they can occupy those regions if Moscow is forced to withdraw the troops from Azerbaijan. Luke reported that he rejected the demand on the grounds that the Allies reserve the right to intervene and demarcate the borders if direct Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations are aborted, to which the ministry gives an evasive response. Luke also said that Armenia was easy prey for Bolshevism, but the government had taken the harshest measures against domestic Bolshevism, suppressing the Alexandropol rebellion and refusing to bow to Moscow's threats, that ARF had many flaws, but its nationalism, anti-Bolshevism and courage were beyond reproach. On September 16, the head of the Eastern Department of the MFA, D. Osborne informed that His Majesty's government was unable to recognize the RA claims to the disputed territories (R. Hovhannisyán 2016, Volume IV, 116-117).

And so, in fact, by exerting pressure on the government of the Republic of Armenia, the "allies" thereby put under question the security of Armenia and the Armenian people. On the one hand, they refused to show practical help against the Turkish threat; on the other hand, they forbade Armenia to reach peace with Russia (A. Simonyan 2000, 165).

It should be noted that even after the explanations given by the RA government, England and France do not make any promises to provide assistance to Armenia. It can be assumed that Armenia was of interest to the Entente countries simply as an anti-Soviet country that they did not want to lose, otherwise they would have provided some minor aid at least to justify the fact of being "ally". Although, it should be noted, that despite all this, the RA government did not change its adopted policy and continued to be loyal to the "allies". Regarding the complaints of "allies" L. Khurshudyan writes as follows: "Such sentiments arose among the allies as a result of the fact that the Armenian government's negotiations with the Bolsheviks were conducted without informing the allies, and they had learned about the terms of the armistice from the press. That is why the wrong opinion arose that the Armenian government is changing its orientation" (L. Khurshudyan 2017, 127).

### **Conclusion**

In this regard, complaints were expressed regarding the inconsistent and unfriendly attitude of the allies towards Armenia. There were also opinions that the anti-Armenian position of the Anglo-French side on the issue of Zangezur and Karabakh pushed the Armenian government to sign an agreement with the RSFSR. Moreover, Prime Minister Hamo Ohanjanyan accused the representatives of the "allies", reminding the British government's overt patronizing behavior towards Azerbaijan in 1918-1920, claiming that England "stubbornly wants to give Karabakh to Azerbaijan, but they did not allow us to send troops to Zangezur and organize the resistance of local people". After long and detailed explanations, the representatives of England and France saw that, nevertheless, the Armenian government is faithful to the Entente and has an anti-Bolshevik position, which was fatal, because in the autumn of 1920, the allies simply left Armenia all alone.

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