Medical Delegation Denounces Apartheid Medicine

A delegation of U.S. physicians has called on the government of South Africa to end apartheid and desegregate all health facilities in that country. The delegation, which visited South Africa from 9 to 16 April 1989, will release a report on its findings in January 1990.

"Any measure short of shared and fully representative political power," the group said, "will fail to correct the grievous discrepancies in economic and social status, education, housing, access to health services, basic nutrition, and public health programs which create the marked differences in health conditions among the racial groups in South Africa."

While in South Africa, the six-member delegation examined the role South African health professionals have played in both helping and hindering the promotion of human rights. It also assessed the effect apartheid policies have had on the delivery of health care to all South Africans.

Sponsors of the trip were the Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the Committee on Health and Human Rights of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), and the American Public Health Association (APHA).

The delegates were Dr. Elena O. Nightingale (IOM and AAAS); Dr. Robert Lawrence (IOM); Dr. Jeanne Spurlock and Dr. Lawrence Hartmann (APA); Dr. H. Jack Geiger (APHA); and Kari Hannibal (AAAS).

A summary of the delegation’s observations and findings follow.

**Health Care Under Apartheid**

Decades of apartheid policies have adversely affected the provision of health and mental health care to many South Africans. At the time of their visit, the physicians found that most public hospitals were segregated, with the exception of Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, and that more government funds were allocated to those hospitals serving whites than those that treat blacks (i.e. mixed-race, Africans, and Asians). They also found that hospitals for blacks were generally overcrowded, while many hospitals for whites were underutilized.

According to the delegation, the multiplicity of health authorities, which includes 14 different ministries of health (one each for whites, Asians, mixed-race, all races, and the ten homelands), has resulted in the inefficient provision of health care nationwide. The delegation considers that stated government efforts to promote privatization and primary health care seem at odds with each other.

Health care delivery in South Africa is complicated by the migration of thousands of blacks who have left rural areas to seek work in urban centers. As a result, shantytowns have risen up on the outskirts of the black townships, where the infrastructure to support good health is strained. Access to water, electricity, adequate housing, hospitals, or schools is limited, and poor waste treatment and environmental pollution pose serious health hazards in these overcrowded townships.

In its report, the delegation points to some improvements in the health of all South Africans, including an overall decline in infant mortality rates in recent years. But, it says, the government has failed to give appropriate attention to combatting preventable diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, polio, cholera, and tetanus—all of
which affect blacks at higher rates than whites. Moreover, the delegation found that the government's efforts to collect and evaluate population and health data of blacks were often flawed, in part because births and deaths are not always recorded. These incomplete statistics prevent accurate measurement and assessment of the health and health needs of the largest racial group in South Africa.

The delegation met with several individuals and groups in South Africa concerned about health care, including the Progressive Primary Health Care Network, the Centre for Health Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand, the National Medical and Dental Association, and the South African Health Workers Congress. All of them had thoughtful recommendations for implementing a responsive and nonracial national health policy, particularly in the public sector. The pool of expertise that exists among these and other groups strongly suggests that South Africa has the capacity to eliminate the serious health problems that exist among the black population. But, in the delegation's view, the first step towards achieving that goal must be the abolition of apartheid.

Medical Education

The generally poorer quality of elementary and secondary education given to black children in South Africa and the governmental restrictions on university admissions of blacks has limited the number of blacks who graduate from medical schools. In recognition of this, the English-speaking medical schools and the Medical University of Southern Africa, with a primarily African student population, have initiated programs that provide educational assistance for black medical students. The English-speaking medical schools are also accepting increasing numbers of mixed-race, Asian, and African students. At the same time, some Afrikaans-speaking universities have begun to drop the color bar.

Human Rights

Security measures imposed since 1985 under the successive states of emergency have resulted in thousands of arrests and detentions without charge or trial, the frequent assault and torture of detainees, and the imposition of restrictions limiting the freedoms of South Africans. Health professionals told the delegation that these measures have created enormous physical and mental stress on the affected individuals and their families.

Some former detainees told the delegation that they had limited or no access to medical care in detention or obtained such care only at the discretion of non-medical prison authorities. Torture, both physical and psychological, repeatedly occurs in police cells and detention facilities in South Africa. Under the state of emergency, security forces are protected from prosecution and the burden of proof of ill-treatment is on the victim. While some South African medical societies have condemned the practice of torture and detention, aggressive measures need to be implemented to prevent assault, torture, and detention of adults and children, and to improve medical care in detention and prisons.

In the last decade, health professionals have formed several progressive health organizations in an effort to develop programs in the areas of health and human rights which they perceived were inadequately addressed by the government or the South African medical establishment. These organizations support and provide guidance to health professionals who work in difficult or ethically compromising circumstances. They offer medical and psychological help to persons who have been detained or tortured. They have also sponsored conferences on issues related to medical ethics and health care in South Africa (as have several medical faculties). Because of these activities, some of their members have been harassed, threatened, detained, and even murdered.

The delegation concludes that those South African health professionals and their organizations that peacefully oppose apartheid medicine and the repressive practices of the South African government deserve the support of their colleagues worldwide. In its report, the delegation recommends that when physicians and representatives of health organizations travel to South Africa, they should meet with members of these South African organizations so as to learn how they can best support their efforts to promote better health and a greater respect for human rights in South Africa.

—Kari Hannibal and Eric Stover

AAAS Sponsors Forensic Missions

The AAAS, through its Science and Human Rights Program, carried out several activities in the forensic sciences this fall. In November the program held a workshop in San José, Costa Rica on the application of the forensic sciences in investigations of violations of human rights in Central America. It also dispatched forensic scientists to El Salvador and Bolivia to observe and participate in human rights-related death investigations.

Medicolegal Workshop

The workshop was held at the San José-based Inter-American Court of Human Rights and drew some 25 persons, including lawyers and physicians affiliated with non-governmental human rights organizations in Central America. Several observers also attended the four-day meeting from Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador. The workshop was co-sponsored by the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Seven forensic scientists described to the participants the ways in which medical and scientific procedures can be used to diagnose physical torture, as well as determine the cause and, in some cases, the manner of death of victims of political violence. The scientists were Dr. Clyde C. Snow, a forensic anthropologist from Oklahoma; Dr. Robert Kirschner, a forensic pathologist from Cook County, Illinois; Dr. John Fitzpatrick, a forensic radiologist also from Cook County; Dr. Lowell Levine, a forensic odontologist from Albany, New York; Dr. Jorgen L. Thomsen, a Danish forensic pathologist affiliated with the Committee of Concerned Forensic Scientists; and Dr. Morris Tidball Binz and Mr. Alejandro Inchaurregui, both members of the Buenos Aires-based Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team. Other lecturers included Mr. Juan Meñárez, Executive Director of Americas Watch; Ms. Sonia Rosen, a staff lawyer with the Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee; Mr. Roberto Cuéllar, Adjunct Director, and Mr. Víctor Mata, Program Assistant for Non-governmental Organizations, of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights; Mr. Elías Carranza, Sub-Director of the United Nations’ Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders; and Dr. Juan Gerardo Ugalde Lobo, a forensic pathologist with the Medicolegal Department of the Judicial Investigative Unit in Costa Rica.

Proceedings from the workshop will be published in Spanish and English.

El Salvador

In the early morning hours of Thursday, 16 November, approximately 30 heavily armed men in military uniform entered the campus of the Jesuit-run University of Central America José Simeón Cañas (UCA) and murdered six Jesuit priests, their cook and her 15-year-old daughter. The following day, Dr. Clyde C. Snow, Dr. Robert Kirschner, and Dr. John Fitzpatrick traveled to San Salvador, at the invitation of the Jesuit order, to observe the Salvadoran government’s medicolegal investigation into the killings.

The scientists externally examined five of the victims and reviewed postmortem reports prepared by Salvadoran forensic doctors. In their preliminary report to the Society of Jesus in Central America they concluded that “all [the] victims died of multiple high velocity gunshot wounds. In this preliminary review we have not seen any obvious evidence of torture or postmortem mutilation.” The scientists also requested that officials in charge of the investigation forward to them all documents pertaining to medicolegal aspects of the case so that they may prepare a final report.

Those killed were Father Ignacio Ellacuría, a philosopher and theologian, and Rector of the UCA; Father Ignacio Martín-Baró, a psychologist and Vice-Rector of the UCA; Father Segundo Montes, a sociologist and head of UCA’s Human Rights Institute; Father Juan Ramón Moreno; Father Amando López, a philosopher; Father Joaquín López y López; and the priests’ cook, Julia Elba Ramos, and her daughter, Celina Ramos. Father Martín-Baró had worked with the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program in his capacity as the Central American coordinator of the Mental Health and Human Rights Network. He had a strong interest in the rehabili-
tation of torture survivors and the effects of war and repression on children.

**Bolivia**

In mid-October, Dr. Snow travelled to Bolivia under the auspices of the AAAS to assist in a court-ordered exhumation of several unmarked graves located on the grounds of a police-run rehabilitation center outside of the city of Santa Cruz. Joining the American forensic anthropologist were three members of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, Dr. Morris Tidball Binz, Mr. Alejandro Inchaurregui, and Mr. Luis Fondebrider. Together, the scientists unearthed four graves on a secret hillside cemetery at the *Granja de Espejos* center.

*Granja de Espejos* was established in 1967 as a work rehabilitation center for convicted vagrants, drug addicts, and petty thieves. In 1984, after local human rights organizations inspected the center, two lawyers filed a petition for *habeas corpus* on behalf of 87 inmates they had found there, eight of whom were less than 16 years old. According to the petition, none of the inmates had been brought before the courts. In 1988, the human rights organizations denounced the existence of a clandestine grave which they believed held the bodies of inmates who had died at the center in dubious circumstances.

Snow and his colleagues determined that the remains disinterred at the clandestine cemetery belonged to four young men between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two. Three of the four skeletons showed multiple fractures consistent with severe beatings prior to death. This finding supported accounts provided to the court by other inmates.

In late October, the investigating judge, Hernán Cortez, closed *Granja de Espejos* and suspended its superintendent, Colonel Luis Camacho, pending an internal police inquiry into the deaths and other violations of human rights reported to have taken place under Camacho’s authority. He and three other policemen were later taken into custody.

—Janet Gruschow

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**University Students Murdered in Guatemala**

Since August 1989, twelve students from the University of San Carlos in Guatemala have been “disappeared” or found dead in what appears to be an attack by right-wing death squads on the university’s student leadership. Many of the students were current or former members of the University Student Association (AEU). All of the dead bore signs of torture.

Three of the students, Víctor Hugo Rodríguez Jaramillo, Silvia María Azurdia Utrera, and Eduardo Antonio Lopez Palencia, were murdered in September. The bodies of Rodríguez Jaramillo, a political science student and his wife, Azurdia Utrera, a sociology student, were discovered some 200 meters from the University of San Carlos in Guatemala City on 10 September 1989. Another victim, pharmacology student Lopez Palencia, was found dead at the bottom of a ravine in Sanarate, El Progreso Department, on 18 September. Iván Ernesto González Fuentes and Carlos Contreras Conde, psychology students; Mario Arturo de León, an agronomy student; and Aarón Ochoa and Hugo Leonel Gramajo, political science students; remain “disappeared.”

During military rule in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the AEU was nearly wiped out as dozens of student leaders were abducted and disappeared. The association was able to rebuild its membership during the past several years, but the recent wave of killings has decimated its leadership. In early 1989, two newly formed death squads, Jaguar Justiciero (the Justice-enforcing Jaguar) and La Dolorosa (the Painful One), threatened some of the AEU leaders including several who have since been abducted. The *New York Times* reported in September that an unsigned letter was delivered to the AEU with the message “We will kill you one by one. We will begin with your families. ‘We know your movements.’”

Shortly after the killings, university officials canceled classes for a week and students demonstrated in protest of the abduction and murder of their classmates. Since then, the absentee rate has remained high at the university, particularly among students and faculty in the social sciences. The social sciences were especially hard hit during the repression of the early 1980s. In addition, science faculty members fear that foreign participation in scientific meetings will decrease if the violence continues.

Elsewhere in Guatemala, both the government and its critics blame right-wing extremists and dissidents within the military for attempting to destabilize the civilian government. The Embassy of Guatemala released a statement in Washington on 19 September 1989 expressing its sorrow over the deaths and “disappearances” of the students and reiterated that “the current administration is not a partner of the institutionalized violence and will not cease in its efforts to prosecute and punish those involved in criminal activities.” So far, the authorities have failed to identify and convict those responsible.

—Janet Gruschow

WPA Votes to Readmit Soviet Psychiatrists

On 18 October 1989, the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), during its meeting in Athens, voted to readmit the Soviet psychiatric association, which resigned from the WPA in 1983 rather than face expulsion over charges that political dissidents were forcibly interned in Soviet psychiatric hospitals. The decision to admit the All-Union Society of Psychiatrists and Narcologists is conditional on its acceptance of a visit to the Soviet Union by the WPA Review Committee in 1990. If the Committee finds any evidence of the continuing political abuse of psychiatry, the WPA will call a special session of its General Assembly to consider suspension of the Soviet psychiatric association.

Over the past two years, the Soviet psychiatric establishment has clearly been concerned about improving its image abroad in order to return to the WPA. Many of those committed to psychiatric hospitals for political reasons were released. In January 1988, the Supreme Soviet passed a new law which, among other things, allowed patients who were forcibly committed to psychiatric hospitals to appeal to the courts.¹ In March 1989, a delegation of U.S. psychiatrists was allowed to visit several Soviet psychiatric hospitals and interview patients who claimed they had been interned for political reasons. The delegation concluded that despite some progress, a number of political dissidents remained in psychiatric hospital without medical justification.

In the months leading up to the WPA meeting, some Western psychiatrists argued against Soviet readmission to the WPA on the grounds that the Soviet authorities had not admitted that there had been abuses in the past and had failed to dismiss those responsible, including Georgi Morozov, head of the Serbsky Institute of Forensic Psychiatry, and Marat Vartanyan, director of the All-Union Research Center for Mental Health. In the Soviet Union, the Independent Psychiatric Association, founded in March 1989, documented several recent cases of alleged political abuse. Several articles claiming that political abuse continues also appeared in the press.

During the debate at the WPA meeting, the All-Union Society issued a statement acknowledging “that previous political conditions in the U.S.S.R. created an environment in which political abuse occurred for non-medical, including political, reasons.” This statement, together with the Soviets’ agreement to the WPA Review Committee visit, persuaded many organizations which had previously opposed Soviet readmission, including the American Psychiatric Association, to support the Soviet application for membership.²

Dr. Anatoly Koryagin, who spent six years in a Soviet labor camp for his efforts to expose the political abuse of psychiatry, has resigned his honorary membership in the WPA in protest against the decision to admit the All-Union Society.

—Jane Cave

² The meeting also voted to admit the Independent Psychiatric Association to WPA membership

Soviet Scientists Form Independent Union

On 30 June 1989, over 500 Soviet scientists met in Moscow to form a new scientific association, the U.S.S.R. Union of Scientists. At the meeting, the scientists proclaimed the union independent of state and party bodies and declared that its main goal would be to eliminate political and administrative restrictions on scientific freedom.

The proposal to form a new union had been circulating among Soviet scientists for some time. But the event that finally triggered its formation came in early 1989, when officials at the Academy of Sciences rejected Andrei Sakharov, Roald Sagdeev, and other liberal Academicians as candidates for election to the Congress of People’s Deputies. On 2 February 1989, two days after the Academy announced its selection, three thousand Academy employees attended an open-air meeting to protest the slate of candidates. Speakers decried the fact that while Sakharov had been nominated by 60 of the Academy’s 250 research institutes, and Sagdeev by 35, some of the candidates chosen by the Academy’s leadership had not been nominated by a single institute. Several speakers pointed to the election decision as an example of the lack of democracy within the Academy. They also argued that the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of senior Academy administrators had had a highly negative impact on the quality of Soviet science, and urged their colleagues to join them in forming a new union that would push for reforms in the organization and financing of research.¹

On 11 February, some 70 scientists from 20 research institutes met in Moscow and established an organizing committee to produce a draft program for the union.

The program adopted at the union’s founding meeting in June reflects much of the criticism of Soviet science
voiced in the press during the past two years. The program begins by criticizing several aspects of Soviet science, including the “bureaucratic organization” of research, the “obsession with planning,” the low priority accorded to fundamental research, the fragmentation of the scientific community, the “ideologization” of science, the excessive scope of secrecy regulations, the international isolation of Soviet science, and the concentration of resources in defense-related research.

One result of this “bureaucratization,” the program says, has been the demoralization of the scientific community: many scientists no longer believe that their work will be judged on its merits; senior administrators frequently claim co-authorship of research results to which they have made no contribution and even appropriate outright their subordinates’ research; access to resources needed to conduct research depends on the “goodwill of the administrative-command system,” resulting in “a decline in professional and ethical standards, . . . widespread careerism, servility, and corruption, the formation of a powerful stratum of unproductive pseudoscientists, the spread of monopoly, and a decline in the prestige of scientists and public faith in the achievements of science.” The program proclaims the need to “democratize science.” This is to be achieved by: organizing research units on the basis of “self-management”; openness on all issues of science policy, including the allocation of resources; freedom and independence of research; allocating resources through open competition; ensuring equal opportunity to compete for these resources and to publish research results; and eliminating the disparities in working conditions between research centers and regions.

The union calls for an end to all “bureaucratic restrictions” on the form and content of scientific publications, and will press for the abolition of prior censorship and the elimination of all restrictions on access to information “not specified in law.” The union aims also to counteract the “monopolism” enjoyed by research institutes attached to various ministries by insisting that all research conducted by these institutes be subjected to independent evaluation. Similarly, the union will press for independent evaluation of major industrial investment projects in order to guard against environmental pollution.

The program places considerable emphasis on the need to revive high professional and ethical standards in the conduct of science, to defend the “honor and dignity” of scientists, and to raise the prestige of science in the eyes of the public.

The union calls for changes in secondary and higher education to allow for “pluralism” in the organization and content of teaching programs and a greater participation in teaching on the part of researchers in the Academy and branch sectors.

Finally, the union pledges support for the Vienna Agreement of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, stressing the need to develop international scientific contacts through participation in international conferences and exchange programs. The program declares that the union will “defend the right to exchange scientific publications . . . and the right to correspond with colleagues abroad,” and that it wishes to cooperate with scientific associations throughout the world.

Some union members report that the Academy leadership and Communist Party officials are disturbed by this display of independence on the part of sections of the Soviet scientific community. In June the union applied to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to register as a legally functioning body. To date, no official response has been received. For now, the Union of Scientists remains one of the thousands of “informal” organizations that have emerged in the Soviet Union over the past two years.

—Jane Cave


Awards

Chinese astrophysicist Fang Lizhi and the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF) received recognition in late 1989 for their courageous and outstanding contributions to international human rights.

Fang, an outspoken advocate of scientific freedom and human rights in China, was awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Human Rights Award in November. “As a scientist, Fang’s advocacy of democracy and human rights stems from his frustration with government imposed borders on the mind,” said Rose Styron, chair of the judges panel.

EAAF members Mercedes Doretti and Luis Fondebrider were selected as Associate Winners of the International 1989 Reebok Human Rights Award. Doretti and Fondebrider accepted the award in December on behalf of the seven-member team of Argentine scientists. For the past five years EAAF has sought to identify and determine the cause of death of the remains of persons killed and later buried in unmarked graves during military rule in the 1970s.
AAAS Annual Meeting

Symposia on Science and Human Rights

The AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility will present two symposia focusing on science and human rights issues at the Association's Annual Meeting, to be held in New Orleans on 15-20 February 1990. For more information, contact the office of the Science and Human Rights Program (202) 326-6790.

Health Professionals, Medical Ethics, and Human Rights in Prisons
Saturday, 17 February 1990, 2:30 p.m., New Orleans Hilton, Grand Salon 3
Arranged by Robert H. Kirschner (Deputy Chief Medical Examiner, Cook County, Chicago, IL and member, AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, Washington, D.C.) and Kari Hannibal (Co-Director, Science and Human Rights Program, AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy Programs, Washington, D.C.)

International Legal and Ethical Standards for the Medical Treatment of Prisoners
Representative (American Civil Liberties Union, New York, NY)

Care and Custody: Health Services Consistent with Community Standards
Kenneth P. Moritsugu (Assistant Surgeon General and Medical Director, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Washington, D.C.)

A Code of Ethics for Health Professionals Working in Prisons
Kim Marie Thorburn (President-elect, American Correctional Health Services Association, Washington, D.C.)

The Role of the Physician as a Medical Expert in Prison Litigation
Ronald M. Shansky (Medical Director, Illinois Department of Corrections, Chicago, IL)

Reforms in the USSR Academy of Sciences
Linda L. Lubrano (School of International Service, The American University, Washington, D.C.)

Recent Developments in US-Soviet Scientific Cooperation
Gerson Sher (Senior Program Manager USSR/EE, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.)

Political Reform and Scientific Freedom in the Soviet Union
Jane Cave (Science and Human Rights Program, AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy Programs, Washington, D.C.)

Reforms in Soviet Science: An Insider’s View
Maxim Frank-Kamenetskii (Institute of Molecular Genetics, USSR Academy of Sciences, Moscow)

Perestroika and Scientific Freedom in the Soviet Union
Monday, 19 February 1989, 8:30 a.m., New Orleans Hilton, Grand Salon 9
Arranged by Jane Cave (Science and Human Rights Program, AAAS Directorate for Science and Policy Programs, Washington, D.C.) and Walter Reich, (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C., and member, AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility, Washington, D.C.)

Releases

- Dr. Odhiambo Olel, a Kenyan government health officer and personal physician to a former Kenyan Vice President, was released from detention on 6 April 1989 after serving two years of a five-year sentence. Dr. Olel was arrested in March 1987 and charged with offenses involving links with Mwakenya, a clandestine opposition organization. Dr. Olel had been badly tortured in detention and is said to be in poor health.
- Said Asghen, a Moroccan teacher of history and geography imprisoned for his alleged membership in a subversive organization, was released in May 1989 following a royal pardon of at least 38 prisoners by King Hassan II. Mr. Asghen received a twenty-year sentence in February 1977.
- Michael Avidan, a South African medical student, was released from detention on 6 October 1989. He was arrested on 14 September 1989.
- Joyce Mabudafhisi, a South African librarian with the University of the North, was released on 9 September 1989 after spending three weeks in detention. Ms. Mabudafhisi is under restriction orders that limit her freedom of movement and association. Prior to this arrest, she was detained without charge from 28 October 1986 to 30 January 1989.
- Dr. Athula Sumathipala, a Sri Lankan physician arrested on 19 July 1988 and later accused of subversive activities, was cleared of all charges and released in early 1989.
AAAS REPORT ON SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The AAAS Report on Science and Human Rights (ISSN 0895-5999) is published quarterly by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20005.

The Directorate for Science and Policy Programs and its Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility monitor the actions of the governments of the United States and other nations which may circumscribe the freedom of scientists or restrict the ability of scientists to exercise their professional responsibilities, and report on developments affecting scientific freedom and responsibility.

The Science and Human Rights Program within the Directorate for Science and Policy Programs collects and disseminates information about foreign scientists, engineers, and health professionals who are victims of human rights abuses or who experience infringements of academic freedom. It also develops and applies scientific methods and techniques to the documentation and prevention of human rights abuses. The concerns of the Science and Human Rights Program are universal and independent of the ideology of any government or the individuals it attempts to aid.

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