

July 27, 1973
Memorandum of Conversation with Robert Galley,
July 27, 1973

Citation:

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Summary:

Transcript of a conversation between French Minister of Armed Forces Galley and U.S. officials, including Kissinger and Schlesinger. Galley says that the French are making progress and have benefited from their talks with Foster. Kissinger notes that the U.S. has a "cooperative spirit" with regards to French foreign policy. Galley notes the advances that have been made by the French and asks for aid with modernization of their forces to bring the French to the same level as the U.S., specifically in regards to missile hardening, underground testing, and submarines, among others. Kissinger notes that now that the French have missile technology, it is in the best interest of the U.S. that it be effective and not become irrelevant, but there is strong opposition not only from abroad but at home, as well. Kissinger wants to know how long the French can keep their advances a secret, and Galley notes that many things have already been kept secret and can continue to be kept as such. They end the discussion with talks about meeting again sometime in August.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Robert Galley, French Minister of Armed Forces
Jean Blancard, Ministerial Delegate for
Armaments

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
James Schlesinger, Secretary of Defense (later
in the meeting)
General Vernon Walters, Deputy Director of
Central Intelligence
General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to
the President for National Security Affairs
Mr. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, NSC Senior Staff
Miss Kathleen A. Ryan, NSC Staff Notetaker

DATE AND TIME: Friday, July 27, 1973
1:15 - 2:35 p. m.

PLACE: The Map Room
The White House

Kissinger: I hope you don't mind her [referring to Miss Ryan], Nothing ever leaves here. My staff are loyal.

Galley: If my English is bad, will you help me, General Walters?

Kissinger: I understand French. It is easiest for me if it is in English, but whenever you want to speak French...

I have asked Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. He is now testifying on the Hill. He is here as a White House adviser, not as Secretary of Defense.

Galley: First, I want to thank you for the reception. I also had had no opportunity to talk to my friend, Mr. Blancard and we had two hours in which to do so.

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M. Blancard: We discussed more in two hours!

Dr. Kissinger: Which cabin were you in at Camp David?

M. Blancard: Maple, it is a new one.

Dr. Kissinger: When Brezhnev was in Camp David the meetings were scheduled at eleven o'clock. Brezhnev wouldn't get up until noon, the meetings would start at one o'clock, and we would talk until five o'clock. Therefore, there was no lunch. I don't know what it did for personal relations.

I know about your discussions with Doctor Foster.

Minister Galley: From the beginning, I must mention we were very interested by the meeting and what we call the meeting of Foster-Blancard. The result of the meeting between Foster and Blancard and Foster and Galley as we approached it was very useful.

Dr. Kissinger: That is going well?

M. Blancard: Very well. We are building confident relations. It is about two years since we signed this agreement. We put forth many questions and we received information which has been extremely useful for us. Not only have you said to us that things are going well but that they are on the right road. I talk about the existing systems of missiles. I am speaking of these because our agreement was in regard to missiles, an agreement on existing missiles.

Dr. Kissinger: Missiles you now have.

M. Blancard: Yes, we have now got the technology on these missiles. We shall have a good situation on existing missiles.

We are asking now if there is any possibility of putting some of our materials in some [REDACTED] We have not received an answer yet; and we think an answer will be given in September or October.

[Mr. Sonnenfeldt places a call to see if Secretary of Defense Schlesinger is on the way.]

Dr. Kissinger: [To Sonnenfeldt]: Leave the impression that it is only I that is here.

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I start from the assumption that any stupidity that can be committed will be committed. How is Jobert?

General Scowcroft: And they are.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: He is in Yalta.

Minister Galley: You two are quite similar, Jobert will not speak about the same thing with the Russians.

Dr. Kissinger: I read his speeches with great interest. Unfortunately I am the victim of his humor. He compares me to a pyromaniac who then asks the victims to put out the fire. [Laughter] I would have loved it if he had said these things about someone else. [Laughter]

[Secretary Schlesinger enters and is introduced.]

Secretary Schlesinger: I think they are turning around.

Dr. Kissinger: About the bombing?

Secretary Schlesinger: About NATO, in the Senate.

Dr. Kissinger: Our basic approach, which the President mentioned to Pompidou and I mentioned to Jobert, is that we place great stress on close relations with France. We are prepared to discuss with you what can be done to bring about a most effective military establishment. This is our position. We do have some domestic and foreign policy difficulties, but our attitude is in a cooperative spirit.

The people here are all close collaborators of the White House. Sonnenfeldt has been working on European relations for me. Scowcroft is my deputy assistant. General Walters has dealt with the most sensitive things. And Secretary Schlesinger is here in the capacity as a close White House adviser. You can be very frank and open.

Minister Galley: I will try in English. There was a conversation between Schlesinger and _____ about three weeks ago. In the recent trip to Reykjavik, President Pompidou and Nixon talked about the possibility of increasing French missile systems.

I must tell you frankly we appreciate your attitude, which is definitely one of friendship. Naturally this was a surprise. In the light of the Foster-Blancard Agreement, all was very useful. It seems that you are prepared

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to go to an actual step. This is related to defense and the weakness inherent in the military. We understand that we would have a number of difficulties with the penetration [REDACTED] and the need for hardening of certain French weapons.

In the field of militarization we are aware that we have lag of about fifteen years. We understand these weaknesses and are determined to go forward to attain the same degree of reliability that you have. We expect to be successful to obtain the next weapon generation.

It seems that the first trigger test was particularly successful for the next level.

Dr. Kissinger: We have kept our bureaucracy from pronouncing on that subject [the French nuclear tests in the atmosphere].

Minister Galley: We know.

Dr. Kissinger: Our people tend to be especially eloquent about allies.

Minister Galley: We have a number of programs, such as to push IRBM development.

Dr. Kissinger: Is this the French move?

Minister Galley: We are decided and are also going forward with the programs in missiles in submarines and modernization. If we presume that we should go on to modernize based on the knowledge available in 1973-74. We believe that if we could modernize our forces to the latest developments, this would have an enormous economic advantage for us. With the economics of testing, we also realize that our last program will be in a state of paralysis soon, because of the present hostility and so forth. That is why we have been thinking about this and ask you if you are willing to assist us to bring our military and nuclear technology at a level somewhere near yours.

As we look at the situation, we would like to have the technology of the Poseidon. Would you be willing during a period of a year and a half to bring us to the technology of the Poseidon? This is why we come.

M. Blancard: As it relates to warheads as well as submarine missiles.

Dr. Kissinger: MIRVed warheads or single?

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Minister Galley: I will mention that in something like four or five years we are sure we will be able to make three hard multiple-reentry vehicles.

Dr. Kissinger: Like the Polaris.

Minister Galley: Like the Polaris. We will be able to put them on our submarines in three to four years. After that time the cost in four to five years will be very high and the weapons will have changed by 1982-84. By 1982 the French will be at the same technological point where the Americans were in 1969. You can see the dilemma.

General Walters: A time lag.

Minister Galley: A time lag of almost fifteen years. Our personal objective is Russia who will also have increased their weapons by 1982-84. The defense of the Soviets will be so profound; ours will be obsolete. This is the reason why we are asking, if you agree.

Dr. Kissinger: What you have said is correct. And that is our own judgment of your operative program. What you have just said can and will probably occur, especially for the targets in the 1980's. The Soviet Union wishes to defend itself.

Minister Galley: With a chance to penetrate.

General Walters: Reasonable.

Minister Galley: One, no penetration, and two, reasonable. At the same time I must mention to you, you can probably help us in many fields. For instance, by giving us some samples of small electronic pieces to show us how to modernize our electronic equipment. We are trying to change to underground testing.

Dr. Kissinger: Why will it take us until October to have an answer?

Secretary Schlesinger: I don't see why; it would take no more than ten days.

Minister Galley: That is not of importance.

Dr. Kissinger: I was only wondering.

Minister Galley: I have two more questions: The first is to help us in acquiring some measurement equipment for underground testing. In two years we will be forced to go underground. It will be very expensive. Can

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we buy them?

Dr. Kissinger: I sort of regret this. It was useful to have the sense of moral superiority of the [REDACTED] focused on someone else, and not on us. [Laughter]

Minister Galley: I can assure that we will have them complaining for some time!

We are also very anxious about the capacity and power of the submarine force. We have decided to begin with six, and afterwards we will probably have attack submarines in order to complete the force. We are very anxious to have some technological secrets. Maybe there is the possibility of detection. It is very dangerous to concentrate all on submarines. Like McNamara told De Gaulle, not to be in a situation for our submarines to be destroyed in the first hour of war.

Dr. Kissinger: Only yours, not ours. [laughter]

Minister Galley: Such reflection I understand perfectly.

Dr. Kissinger: You will have some on land?

General Walters: Yes, three groups.

Minister Galley: We have two groups now. The first thing is to have the new third complex completely modernized. Then we will work on the two existing groups. To modernize the old system we will use the special information you give us. It finishes up by being politically very important.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, without question. It is a very serious and very important matter. And we consider it a sign of confidence that you come to talk to us. We have to discuss it with the President, but we can go to some discussions now to clarify it.

First, let me give you our general philosophy. As the President implied to President Pompidou, and as I mentioned to Jobert, our belief is that it is very important for the West that the French be strong from a military, moral and political point of view. We think that if a major French military program collapses it would be very bad, because then the French alternative would be neutralism.

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Minister Galley: We have enough of neutrality with Germany, to our common sorrow.

Dr. Kissinger: Exactly. So for all these reasons we have never believed, contrary to previous administrations, that a French nuclear force is contrary to our interests. Now that it exists, it is important that it be effective and above all that it does not become irrelevant. And this is our general approach and why on one or two occasions our President has mentioned this problem to your President.

On the other hand I think it is important that we help you to understand our problems. The first is bureaucratic resistance. I would say that with the exception of the Secretary of Defense they all would be horrified only knowing that this discussion has existed, let alone that an agreement might follow. Because the general attitude of our bureaucracy has been that the French should be isolated and if possible should be penalized for their actions. I am speaking frankly.

General Walters: Such as for not being in NATO.

Dr. Kissinger: Such as NATO.

Minister Galley: It is because that we are not in NATO that we are able to concentrate on national defense. Because the French can pay taxes in France for their defenses and not for those of Norway.

Dr. Kissinger: We are interested in what France is capable of doing, not in the name of what is being done. The subject has never been raised with you, nor will it be.

Minister Galley: The President and you know perfectly that we are making gestures to cooperate and with good success.

Dr. Kissinger: That is not the problem. I am trying to explain to you about domestic problems. The problem is if we operate on any substantial scale, we will face massive opposition from the bureaucracy and a newspaper campaign.

Minister Galley: If it comes out publicly, Pompidou said he will deny it. He will say that the agreement doesn't exist. The newspapers are in a public place.

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Dr. Kissinger: If missile technology is exchanged that cannot be kept a secret. We will approach it with the attitude of overcoming them. But given the French Cartesian mind, when we proceed and difficulties occur, I have explained our position so that there will be no ill will or complicated moves. We will tell you what our moves are as we go through this. We have a bureaucracy problem and the McMahon law. It is an ambiguous law. There will also be considerable resistance on the part of Congress.

M. Blancard: It is ambiguous.

Dr. Kissinger: Theoretically you are as eligible for assistance as Great Britain is.

Minister Galley: We have the capacity of the H bomb.

Dr. Kissinger: As a practical matter there would be greater resentment against you. The third opposition might be that they are against these discussions at a time of the SALT negotiations. And while it will not affect the French situation directly, we will come under attack by the Soviet Union and domestic opinion. These are the objections. They are not irrelevant and they have to be imagined.

Let me ask you a question. I assume that you would prefer to deal bilaterally through us rather than through Great Britain.

Minister Galley: For one reason.

Secretary Schlesinger: I think dealing with Great Britain preceded the late serious trouble.

Minister Galley: We are technologically able and at a higher level compared to the technology of Britain. We cannot discuss the problem of reentry with the British.

Dr. Kissinger: Really?

Minister Galley: They have no idea of the technology of reentry. We prefer to discuss with you because you make sense. [laughter]

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: We prefer talking to the landlord rather than the janitor. [Laughter]

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Minister Galley: Jobert is more the expert on the political importance of this question of defense. What is important is that we came here to discuss and put things together.

Dr. Kissinger: In principle that is an agreement between us.

Minister Galley: We can help you. We know the McMahon law. Blancard is a good lawyer.

General Walters: He is the greatest French lawyer.

Dr. Kissinger: We could use some good lawyers here at the White House.
[Laughter]

Minister Galley: I am a product of the Jesuits.

General Walters: Me too.

Minister Galley: I was not actually but I like their thought process! In the Foster-Blancard accord there is one word, "existing" systems. We have just one word to change, "existing" to "in project." Suppose the French consult you on a project existing on paper at the time you give us the paper. It is of no difference to give us the information or to help the French systems in development.

General Walters: Not on our systems in project but the systems they have in project.

Minister Galley: It is very important, transfer of information.

Dr. Kissinger: One more thing. To go back to Britain. I am assuming that you will not discuss the fact of these discussions with the British.

Minister Galley: Not even with the French. Only five people in France know I am here today. That is including my wife.

Dr. Kissinger: So no other government will be informed.

Minister Galley: Never. It is not in our interest. If we are invaded the position of France is independent and we want to stay on the same line. If something appears in public we will deny that we have any contact with you. This is probably better for you.

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Minister Galley: We have now made a trigger which contained a small amount of plutonium. With a small weight. This opened a light-weight tactical weapon.

I think it is useful to make decisions on the progress in technology of missiles without the technology of weapons.

Dr. Kissinger: I just want to understand what would be required. What you need is technological information to speed up your development.

Minister Galley: Science and technology.

Dr. Kissinger: In warheads and missiles. So there is no massive transfer of hardware.

Minister Galley: You know better than I at what scale we would have to proceed initially.

Secretary Schlesinger: On warheads, any exchange aside from components, such as the reverberating missile side, has more latitude.

Dr. Kissinger: What would it take scientifically and technologically? We would have to start both simultaneously.

Minister Galley: In most cases warhead technology is more difficult than missile.

Secretary Schlesinger: With warhead components there are shades of difference. As in fuses.

General Walters: When we say fuse, we were referring to rockets.

Secretary Schlesinger: Let's take fuses for an example. It is easier to provide information on fuses than on design of nuclear components.

Minister Galley: There is a help. We progressed successfully to find out how to make an H bomb within five years after the A bomb.

From 1962-67 we found out how to make it. At that point there was a development in the Pacific. I was there. Afterwards we worked from 1968-73. It seems to us that we now operate a new technology. I am a scientist, an engineer. I think it becomes clear for us from that point that we can progress in weapons. If you are able not to give us technology but guidelines it would be helpful.

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General Walters: Show us the deadends.

Secretary Schlesinger: A fair amount of that has been with the British.

Dr. Kissinger: At this point let's find out what it is.

Secretary Schlesinger: That won't be easy.

Dr. Kissinger: On the missile side it is possible. When will it become clear in our bureaucracy about what we are doing?

Secretary Schlesinger: It depends on the pace.

Dr. Kissinger: This is a decision of a magnitude that I have to discuss with the President. You now have the Foster-Blancard discussions. Who will replace him?

General Walters: Curry.

Dr. Kissinger: Can they be carried on without becoming too visible?

Minister Galley: Yes, with the facility of the existing things in development.

Dr. Kissinger: We are talking about American assistance to French technology and science in missile and warhead design, and at some point in guidance systems. This can be achieved in a number of ways. You could therefore give information and guidance on the wrong and the right road.

Minister Galley: Exactly. Say the French have difficulties and have five ways, they consult and somebody tells us that is wrong, etc.

Dr. Kissinger: It doesn't make sense for an ally to spend large resources on something our enemy already has.

M.Blancard: When I worked on the agreement [Foster-Blancard] there were a certain number of points at the outset and closely held. The first was one point of contact in both countries. There was one person to which were channelled all requests and further information. The second point was, at no point do we bring engineers in from outside industry. One would never get in touch with engineers from Lockheed, etc. We have had contact with engineers and laboratories working for the U.S. Government. This system has functioned correctly. Foster did his job well. At a certain point he

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said he couldn't answer our questions because we were going beyond the agreement. I am speaking of missiles, not warheads. Speaking of missiles in the framework of our agreement, and modifications suggested.

We are concerned with MIRV multiple warheads. We have several ideas. In the course open to us, you could tell us: "This is way to do it, don't take this road, it will lead to failure, etc."

All this will cost a good deal of money. How do these projects come out?

Dr. Kissinger: The sort of cooperation you are proposing would enable you to speed up your progress. Even when this administration ends and a new administration comes in it would put you that much ahead. It isn't like a production problem, where there is a promise to produce missiles. If we do this, how visible and how quickly will the acceleration of your program become visible?

Minister Galley: We have had a success in the Pacific tests. We would thus be able to hide the fact that you are helping us. And second, it is very difficult to know the progress of the missile technology, except for the people that are working directly with it. For instance, the Russian ships know what has happened in the Pacific tests, but they don't know what we will do with our new knowledge.

Dr. Kissinger: We have to study this in order to be helpful. We would like to study in each category what is possible and how to do it in our judgment. Do we know enough about your missiles?

Secretary Schlesinger: Not enough.

Dr. Kissinger: Can we know?

Minister Galley: Completely. Everything is open to you.

Dr. Kissinger: Our representative is the Secretary of Defense.

Minister Galley: On our side is Blancard or myself. Jobert is not in this.

Dr. Kissinger: I will not discuss it with Jobert. In general it will be handled by the Secretary of Defense.

Minister Galley: One more point. I can come here any time.

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Dr. Kissinger: We may have to ask for some information just to make a judgment. We will see how in each category we can help and at what point. We have to be very careful not to do something that is discovered and would have to be explained. We will have to make a judgment at what point there is a probability we will be found out. For example, the suggestion of M. Blancard to change a word.

General Walters: Remove a phrase from the second paragraph.

Dr. Kissinger: This is the sort of thing we will study immediately. It will take two to three weeks to make a judgment.

Minister Galley: I propose to have a meeting the second fortnight in August. I have a good cover to come back here.

Dr. Kissinger: I will be in San Clemente.

Minister Galley: I will stop in Los Angeles then.

Dr. Kissinger: The Secretary of Defense could be out there, or are you on leave? [Secretary Schlesinger nods yes.]

Minister Galley: If not in August, the beginning of September.

Dr. Kissinger: That is reasonable. The four of us could meet again. It should be around late August or early September. We then can make more concrete arrangements. That we will do something is clear. You can tell your President that.

Minister Galley: Before that meeting there will be systems of tests, and it will be more easy for me to discuss on nuclear warheads.

Dr. Kissinger: How will we communicate?

Minister Galley: Through General Guay.

Dr. Kissinger: Okay.

Minister Galley: Yes, anything that way.

Dr. Kissinger: If you have any communications [to Schlesinger] go through Scowcroft and [to Galley] yours will be through Guay.

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Minister Galley: I have nothing to give you now.

Dr. Kissinger: After we do this study we will have a judgment.

Minister Galley: That is an important point -- missile cooperation. We have nothing to conceal; we ask you to help us make progress.

Dr. Kissinger: We may ask someone to come over. We will let you know. I will do it through General Guay.

Minister Galley: Very easy.

Dr. Kissinger: I just wanted to make sure that no one in your embassy knows anything.

Minister Galley: Even our ambassador doesn't know.

Dr. Kissinger: Our Ambassador doesn't know either. And we have to make sure everybody knows the same thing.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: I have a technical question. You are talking exclusively about sea-based?

Minister Galley: No, all types. We think in technology we expect to make a new progress in tactical weapons. Trigger technique is important for tactical weapons, and progress in trigger helps the tactical.

M. Blancard: It will be interesting to look at this list.

Dr. Kissinger: If you have it with you?

M. Blancard: I can prepare it very quickly.

Minister Galley: At the end of next week.

Dr. Kissinger: We had better send that through a pouch.

Minister Galley: At the end of next week.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt: Send a list without a title.

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Dr. Kissinger: Guay better bring it. We are discussing whether Guay should send a telegram or bring it.

Minister Galley: We can write it in English.

Dr. Kissinger: In English and we will have Guay bring it.

Minister Galley: We have to be very cautious.

M. Blancard: I want you to know that we will tell you exactly where we are.

Dr. Kissinger: This is a good relationship for allies to have, and we will approach it with a very positive attitude.

M. Blancard: In my agreement with Dr. Foster, all the information he gave was only in reply to our questions.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand that. We will make this study. We will examine at what point it will be impossible to keep it to this group and at what point to keep it within the bureaucracy. I will make an examination. We can certainly do something. That I will tell you now.

and

Minister Galley: Everything you make for us will be very useful/appreciated.

Dr. Kissinger: Let us aim at for another meeting at the end of August. [to Schlesinger]: Where are you going?

Secretary Schlesinger: I don't know.

Dr. Kissinger: You are not going to make special trips. I make the special trips. [Laughter]

Minister Galley: Maybe he is going to France.

Dr. Kissinger: I nearly hired him for my staff. Now he is good enough. [Laughter]

Secretary Schlesinger: I have a question or two. I wasn't sure, in the discussion of multiple reentry or independent warheads, if you are interested in the precision or accuracy associated with the Poseidon. The system is not necessarily too precise.

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Minister Galley: We are conscious that there are two types of technology. The first is the Polaristic technique; there are three different weapons on the same target. And we know some details about it. On this type of technique we are actually weak. It is on this technique. For the moment we are confident in independent reentry. This is another type of technique. This technique is not enough to be available to be a deterrent. You have to imagine one thing; the less number of weapons you have, the more performance you need.

Secretary Schlesinger: The point is that you want to be sure you penetrate, which means a certain amount of dispensing technology.

Dr. Kissinger: Why don't we save this?

Minister Galley: You have the second stage warhead and the difference after the probable orientation, and after you deliver this target on a different point.

Secretary Schlesinger: That is right. There is something in between these two.

Dr. Kissinger: Why don't we keep these?

Secretary Schlesinger: One other thing. We are eager to help and also eager to have assistance from you in regard to certain questions on European security.

Dr. Kissinger: Let's do that in August.

Minister Galley: I have one thing to propose -- a cooperation in acoustic submarines. The French have a certain number of techniques at a very high level. I don't know where you are. We have an instrument of very high technique.

Dr. Kissinger: The discussion between the President was not put on a "quid pro quo" basis. We will discuss with you in due time. The defense of Europe is your objective also. So let us know at the end of August. We will be in touch with you. [to Minister Galley]: Could I have a word with you alone?

Secretary Schlesinger: With regard to the acoustic proposal, we have to consult with the U.S. Navy, which is not under my control nor is it under Henry's control. There is an independent government there, in the name of Admiral Rickover.

[The meeting then ended and Dr. Kissinger stayed to talk to Minister Galley.]

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