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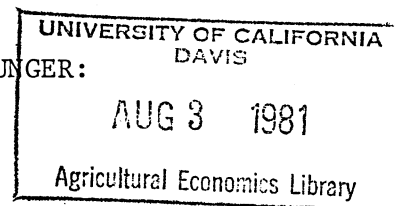
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STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH WORLD HUNGER:
POST-WORLD WAR II POLICIES

by

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Farmers, farm politicians, and agricultural economists have something in common. Their products, whether food, laws, or theories, are dependent upon the weather. This is obvious in the case of farmers. Their product depends upon many things, including the state of the arts in agriculture in a particular region or nation, the availability of credit, the costs of energy and fertilizer, and so on, yet the overriding variable, with only limited exceptions, is weather. If the monsoons are favorable in India, the frost holds off in the Soviet Union, and timely rainfall comes to Argentina, Australia, Canada, and the United States, there is a world surplus of grain. Conversely, if weather conditions are unfavorable in these areas, the world faces shortages.

If there are surpluses, politicians face the problem of establishing programs that will assure farmers reasonable incomes, reduce production, remove surpluses from the market and dispose of them, and bring about the retention of the politicians in office, all at little cost to the taxpayer. If there are shortages, the problems are still complex, with questions of export embargoes, high consumer prices, the maintenance of farm income, the stimulation of increased production that will ease shortages and not lead to surpluses, and the retention of the politicians in office, all at little cost to the taxpayer.

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The relationships between the weather and the agricultural economists is not so clear unless we accept and keep in mind the proposition that weather is the most important of all the variables in determining whether we have surpluses or shortages, or, indeed, whether we reach that golden mean where production equals effective demand. Thus, over the past 35 years since World War II, the dominant economic theory at any given moment has been, when surpluses were at hand, that they threatened to drag the economy down to disaster or, if there were shortages, that the world was threatened with starvation and wars over food supplies. Oddly enough, weather conditions, with their resulting surpluses or shortages, led some economists to make rather short and fast turnabouts. For the most part, though, it appears that economists belonging to two different schools of thought have taken turns at explaining their theories and making their forecasts as world weather has changed.

Since there is little we can do to bring about major changes in the weather, at least with present technologies, we will accept it as given so far as this paper is concerned. Our purpose will be, then, to look at the relationships between agricultural policies and programs as they relate to world food supply and to look at economic theories and forecasts since they have an effect on policies and programs. The programs and policies of many nations and of international organizations affect the world food supply, but our paper is limited to those of the United States, with some attention to the relationships of the United States to other nations and to international organizations.

World War II ended with American farmers reaching the highest levels of food production ever in 1945 and 1946, yet world shortages threatened many people with starvation. Vocal American consumers, because of high incomes and rationing and shortages during the war, were calling for the removal of all restrictions on consumption. Producers felt that price controls had limited their possible profits and were also urging the end of controls (Wilcox).

The Federal government had been discussing postwar relief in Europe and other parts of the world almost from the time of Pearl Harbor. By the fall of 1943, various proposals and discussions had led to an agreement to establish the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The agreement was signed on November 9, 1943, by the representatives of 44 nations. The Department of Agriculture played an important part in establishing and staffing UNRRA.

UNRRA was to be a temporary organization that would end with the completion of its mission. Even before it was established, a permanent international organization to deal with food and agricultural problems was being discussed, with an international conference held at Hot Springs, Virginia, in May and June of 1943. In July 1945, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations came into being. The Department of Agriculture had been the continuing force behind the establishment of FAO and contributed heavily to its staffing.

By the time the postwar food crisis hit the world, there were international organizations and sheaves of plans in the Department of Agriculture for dealing with it. However, there was not enough food to go around. The tremendous grain reserves had been turned into meat, dairy, and poultry

products to feed our armed forces, allies, and civilians. During the last months of the war, some policymakers had determined to leave a bare pantry, fearing that surpluses would soon return, as they had following World War I. The policymakers of various agencies and allied countries distrusted one another, each thinking that the other was hoarding large stockpiles of food. However, the stockpiles proved to be imaginary. The crisis was so severe that President Truman announced a series of emergency measures and appointed a Famine Emergency Committee and a National Famine Emergency Council both to provide leadership and obtain public support for the effort. Later a Citizens Food Committee was established to urge conservation (Baker).

The programs developed by the Committees and the Department of Agriculture were basically voluntary so far as the American people were concerned, with some controls over grain. From 1945 to 1948, the United States supplied more food to the hungry abroad than any other nation has ever done before or since. The question still remains as to whether or not our efforts were adequate. As might be expected, evaluations as to what should have been done and what was done vary. One well-known economist, Theodore W. Schultz, said in 1946: "The United States has on several major counts--seriously, in my judgement--mismanaged its food supplies...in the United States the average person's consumption has jumped to the unprecedentedly high level of thirty-three hundred calories per day...we should return to our wartime levels of food consumption, in order to stand by the European and Oriental peoples during this world-wide food crisis" (Moore, pp. 22-23).

The postwar planning effort in the USDA was led mainly by some of the Department's outstanding economists, including Howard Tolley, Leslie Wheeler, Roy Kimmel, Raymond C. Smith, Louis Bean, and Mordecai Ezekiel.

Soon after the outbreak of the war in Europe and long before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt had ordered each cabinet officer to produce a set of postwar projects. One objective of this exercise was to be prepared for a postwar economic slump. The economists in the USDA saw this as the opportunity to make some badly needed long term adjustments in the American agricultural plant. Plans were to be prepared for each major region of the country. The principle concerns were: (1) An adequate income and level of living for farm families; (2) Care of the soil, with consideration for the differences in soils and climates to insure a permanently productive agriculture, and (3) Production of those commodities demanded by the market with abundance but no large surpluses.

The postwar plans of the economists in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in retrospect, seem sound to us. Many of their objectives have been achieved, with or without planning. But when the content of these plans reached the ears of the public, the wrath of certain influential politicians descended on the Department. The responsible economists were forced to seek safe havens in the universities or in international organizations. Herein lay a lesson well noted by the professions (Rasmussen).

The postwar period of food shortages lasted from 1945 to 1952. On April 3, 1948, Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act, the authority for the Marshall Plan to revive Western Europe. Substantial shipments of food were made under the Plan. Amid all of the crisis activities a few economists began taking a longer look into the future. Frank A. Pearson and Floyd A. Harper, writing in the closing months of the war, held that food shortages were caused by demand for higher quality food and a world-wide shortage of arable land. They offered no hope of a rapid worldwide increase

in food availability and postulated that if a projected rapid increase in population materialized, diets would have to be downgraded if famine was to be avoided in some parts of the world. Albert Viton, chairman of the International Emergency Food Council, told the Farm Economics Association in 1947 that a new economic philosophy had emerged in the post-war period. This philosophy of "full employment" would lead to rapid economic growth, increased demand for higher quality food, a period of relative prosperity for agriculture and rapidly increasing agricultural output in both the developed and less developed areas. He cautioned, however, that there would be regional maladjustments and that the U.S. might see the return of surpluses by 1949 or 1950 (Pearson).

The first world-wide census effort, made under the auspices of the United Nations in 1950, showed that a population explosion was in progress. The world, by this time sorely divided by the cold war, faced an indefinite period of food imbalances and insecurity. The traditional bread basket of Europe was behind the iron curtain. The rice bowl of southeast Asia was torn by fratricidal warfare. A new group of economists at the USDA began to see longterm opportunities for American agriculture in foreign markets.

The message went out to American farmers: "Expect to fill a fifth plate at the dinner table." That is, agricultural exports were expected to take about one-fifth of our production. Farmers could maintain and even expand production without fear of price-depressing surpluses.

The euphoria was short lived. With the end of the Marshall Plan and the Korean War, surpluses returned in the United States. Although there had

been proposals for the establishment of international buffer stocks and reserves of food under consideration since 1937 and the subject had generated a good deal of heat at the Hot Springs Conference the economists, here and abroad, could only agree to disagree. Even the International Wheat Agreement ratified in 1949 made no provision for food reserves.

The Agricultural Act of 1949 provided the first authority for donating surplus agricultural commodities abroad through United States voluntary relief organizations. A significant step in technical assistance also came in 1949 when President Harry Truman as Point 4 of his foreign policy, stated that we must make our scientific and industrial advances available to underdeveloped areas. Special legislation provided for food donations to help the Greeks and Turks in their fight to repel communist take-over attempts in 1952 and to relieve famine in Pakistan in 1953. In 1953 the legislative hoppers were filled with proposals to get rid of agricultural surpluses by shipping them out of the country by one means or another. The prospect of large scale export dumping by the U.S. alarmed the other wheat exporting countries and some major developed importing countries. The 1953 session of the FAO Conference, after considerable discussion, directed its Committee on Commodity Problems to study the means and principles of international disposal of surplus agricultural commodities. The Committee met in Washington during February and March of 1954. It produced a set of recommended principles to be followed in the disposal of agricultural surpluses. From the language used in this document and the language which became U.S. law in the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, better known as P.L. 480, it is apparent that there was very close communication between the Committee on Commodity problems and those who drafted P.L. 480.

Mordecai Ezekiel reportedly drafted the "Principles" recommended by FAO (United Nations, Dec. 1954).

In spite of the language similarities, however, the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act did not result from FAO proposals. There were a number of surplus-disposal bills introduced in 1953, as noted previously, and there were a number of committees studying them. In a maze of bureaucratic wrangling, the interdepartmental committee on the surplus, established by President Dwight Eisenhower and chaired by Undersecretary of Agriculture True D. Morse finally agreed on an administration bill. It was a compromise between the proposals of the American Farm Bureau Federation and the desires of several Federal agencies to control the new program. The bill moved quickly through the Congress and was approved by the President on July 10, 1954 (Peterson, pp. 36-41). The law has remained a cornerstone of American programs relating to world hunger.

Public Law 480, as enacted in 1954, had four titles: Title I provided for sales of surplus agricultural commodities for foreign currencies which could not be converted into U.S. dollars. The disposal of these currencies was to be arranged through agreement between the receiving country and the U.S. State Department but a certain percentage was to be reserved for U.S. uses such as financing our embassies. Title II provided for donations of surplus commodities for disaster relief through U.S. voluntary organizations of friendly governments. Some limited donations could be made for economic development. Title III provided for the barter of surplus agricultural commodities for strategic and critical materials to be added to U.S. stockpiles of these materials. Title IV provided for long-term credit to finance dollar sales of agricultural commodities. Titles I and II cover the P.L. 480 functions that will be discussed in this paper.

Mordecai Ezekiel and Rodan Rosenstein were sent to India by the FAO to monitor the first use of surplus food. This landmark research provided the detailed economic rationale for the use of surpluses to help finance economic development. The study concluded that surpluses to be used for development should be tied to an equal amount of other resources and committed to designated projects. When surpluses are used to put unemployed men to work and they produce something that adds to the capital goods of the country, development is taking place (Ezekiel; Iowa, 1962, p. 278-301).

Although 48 countries accepted the principles set forth by the FAO on the disposal of agricultural surpluses, and these were reaffirmed when the Wheat Utilization Committee was established in 1959, they were more frequently honored in the breach than in the observance at least up until 1965.

The terms of surplus agreements under P.L. 480 in the late 1950's and early 1960's put more emphasis on protecting and maintaining "usual" commercial imports than on uses for development or preventing the concessional sales and grants from acting as disincentives to farmers in the recipient country. The subcommittee on Surplus Disposal of the Committee on Commodity Problems of the FAO continued to monitor surplus disposal. Studies in Japan and Pakistan showed that the program had worked along recommended lines in Japan but that in Pakistan and some other countries it had only supported increased consumption. Cheap food policies in many Latin American and Asian countries tended to stifle domestic agricultural production. Sudden cut-offs of commodities after countries had become dependent on them carried serious threats to vulnerable populations. In 1959, for example, the cut-off of supplies of dry skim milk was damaging to child-feeding programs in many countries (Davis; Shefrin, Iowa, 1962).

The FAO objectives of food for development proved very difficult to implement. The agencies with capital to disburse such as the World Bank and the U.S. International Cooperation Administration favored large capital-intensive, show-piece projects. Food-for-work inputs to such projects were a nuisance. Small labor intensive projects cost too much to administer. Furthermore, the voluntary agencies who disbursed a large part of the food-aid grants were oriented towards charitable, disaster relief types of operations and protested against the requirements that their deprived clientele be forced to work for food donated by the American people. Nevertheless, a few highly successful food-for-work projects were implemented during the 1950's. For example, Elmer Starch conceived and carried out a pioneering program of reforestation and small scale irrigation in Tunisia.

During the late 1950's much of the surplus food sold for local currencies went to technically advanced but food deficit countries: Japan, Israel, Taiwan and Korea. Each was densely populated with limited tillable land. Each of these countries concurrently invested in developing its own agriculture, perhaps not with the objective of becoming self-sufficient in food, but of developing a highly productive specialized agriculture. Each graduated from food aid dependency during the 1960's and has become a sometime-competitor, sometime-customer for U.S. agriculture. Surplus disposal had justified some of the original theoretical expectations but had opened up a whole series of new problems (DeBlois).

India was an example of food aid results at the other extreme. By 1960 the accumulation of blocked currencies resulting from P.L. 480 sales was so large that it was threatening the financial structures of the country (Purvis).

Surpluses were being produced in the exporting countries, particularly the U.S., faster than they could be channeled into consumption, regardless of the mode of payment or nonpayment. The original AAA of the United States program had been designed to control production but through political and economic pressures over the years it had put a premium on efficiency resulting in increasing yields and increased production. World prices of commodities were in a continuous downward trend from the early 1950's. This was the principle item on the agenda for the meeting of the Economic and Social Council in the summer of 1959 (United Nations, 1959). Obviously the large volume of U.S. exports, both commercial and concessional, had influenced the trend of world prices. Thus our exports had become a disincentive to the expansion of production. At any rate, it was necessary to negotiate in 1959 a P.L. 480 agreement of record breaking magnitude with India to fill her food-grains deficit during the ensuing four years. The morocco-bound volumes of a landmark study entitled India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet It were left to molder on the shelves of the library of the Ministry of Agriculture. (Ford) This study had been funded by the Ford Foundation and led to the rural development program of the Ford Foundation in India which in the short run did little to increase food availability. By 1965, when the monsoon failed, India was already a basket case.

But by 1965 the economists had provided the politicians with a whole new basket-full of economic theories and statistical data. John Kenneth Galbraith, having published American Capitalism; the Concept of Countervailing Power (1956), The Affluent Society (1958), and Economic Development (1963) and having also served as U.S. ambassador to India 1961-63, was advising and criticizing the administration in Washington from his dais at Harvard.

Walter W. Rostow, having produced The Stages of Economic Growth, a Non-Communist Manifesto (1960) was firmly entrenched in the inner policymaking councils of the State Department. Gunnar Myrdal having assumed the mantle of Thor with publications like Rich Lands and Poor, The Road to World Prosperity (1957), and Challenge to Affluence (1965), was writing the Asian Drama, an Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations (1968).

The period 1959-1965 witnessed an upsurge in publications on economic development, agricultural development and food and population problems. The views of Galbraith and Rostow dominated a study on foreign aid policies produced by the Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1959. This study suggested that food surpluses be committed over a period of years to enable countries to use their limited financial resources to push industrial development. It stated that many of the densely populated less developed countries could never hope that agriculture could supply an adequate level of living for their populations. Its policy repercussions are evident in the aforementioned P.L. 480 agreement with India and in India's second five-year plan which stressed industrial development.

Bruce F. Johnson and John W. Mellor began the counterattack with "The Nature of Agriculture's Contribution to Economic Development" published by the Stanford Food Research Institute in November 1960. A year later in the American Economic Review, they published "The Role of Agriculture in Economic Development." Johnson and Mellor postulated three phases in agricultural development:

Phase I: Providing the preconditions for agricultural development.

Phase II: The use of low-capital, labor-intensive technology results in increasing yields per acre and over-all production.

Phase III: Reinvestment of profits in the agricultural sector leads to more capital intensive technologies, reduced labor inputs and rapidly rising productivity.

The authors said that due to the availability of cheap land and the scarcity of labor, this development path was not followed by the United States. Japan and Taiwan were cited as good modern examples.

A session at the 1960 annual meeting of the Farm Economics Association featured a paper by Theodore W. Schultz on the "Value of U.S. Farm Surpluses to Underdeveloped Countries." Max Myers at another session said that public support for the use of agricultural surpluses to meet the food needs of food deficit countries was a dynamic movement in both the producing countries and the deficit countries. This was evident in public support for "Food for Peace" and FAO's "Freedom from Hunger" campaign launched in 1960. Don Paarlberg had left the Department of Agriculture late in 1958 to head a Food for Peace office in the White House.

A new thrust of research on world food problems began early in 1961 in the USDA. The initial product, entitled The World Food Deficit, A First Approximation was published in March 1961. This was followed in October 1961 by The World Food Budget 1962 and 1966. These studies led to a contract (called a PASA) with the Agency for International Development for the Economic Research Service to carry out a study of agricultural development in twenty-six developing nations. A study group headed by James P. Cavin was established by Willard Cochrane in the Economic Research Group in 1961. Its widely-circulated report, issued in March 1963, stressed the importance of agriculture to development.

Meanwhile, a young economist in the USDA was writing two monographs, Man, Land and Food, Looking Ahead at World Food Needs (1963) followed by Increasing World Food Output: Problems and Prospects (1965). Lester R. Brown, the author, acknowledges in the preface to the latter volume that he had attempted to apply W. W. Rostow's concepts of economic growth to the agricultural sector, substituting yield per acre for income per person in applying the takeoff concept. Politically, it was a coup as Rostow reciprocated by acknowledging the role of agriculture in economic growth. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman's objective of re-establishing the role of agriculture, and particularly of the USDA in the foreign aid program was advanced. Funding from AID for continuing research on agricultural development in the USDA was assured and the participation of USDA action agencies such as the Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the Rural Electrification Administration, the Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service, and the Agricultural Research Service in foreign agricultural development projects was gradually increased. A new agency, the International Agricultural Development Service was established to coordinate USDA participation.

Research on agricultural development was also expanding in the Land Grant Colleges and other institutions. A notable conference which brought together professionals from many disciplines to discuss the role of food and agriculture was held at Iowa State University in February 1962 (Iowa, 1962). A World Food Congress was held in Washington, D.C., June 14-18, 1963. It was jointly sponsored by the FAO Freedom from Hunger Campaign, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the USDA. The list of participants read like an international Who's Who. Arnold Toynbee and Orville L. Freeman expressed

opposing views on the future prospects of the world's ability to feed itself. Freeman, the optimist, said that the export of United States technology would produce a world-wide explosion in yields (Toynbee; Freeman, 1963).

The imaginative use of U.S. surplus stocks of grains to "buy time" while development programs increased yields in food deficit countries was also advocated by the Freeman administration. When the food crisis developed in India in 1965-67, it was thoroughly dramatized both in the U.S. and the rest of the world as a foretaste of things to come if the imbalances between food supplies and population growth were not corrected. A galaxy of specialists from many disciplines was sent by the USDA to India to help revamp her agricultural development program. Freeman took advantage of the desperate need for U.S. grains to prod the Indian government into implementing the recommendations of USDA specialists. Under the pressure of the Indian food crisis, amendments to Public Law 480 were pushed through the U.S. Congress. These amendments redirected the program from surplus disposal to use as a tool in promoting agricultural development in food deficit countries (Freeman, 1968).

In his Message on Food for Freedom, February 10, 1966, President Johnson directed his Science Advisory Committee to study the world food problem and recommend ways and means of increasing the world's food supply. The panel appointed by the Committee studied the problem for a year with the full cooperation of all of the applicable disciplines and institutions. The report, published in May 1967, concluded that hunger and malnutrition were not primary diseases of the last half of the twentieth century but were symptoms of a deeper malady, lagging economic development on three continents where nearly two-thirds of the world's people live (President's, V. 1).

Martin Abel and Anthony Rojko in the USDA asserted that over the long pull U.S. food production would be able to meet the market demand for food and that this should have primacy in USDA policy considerations (Abel). New, high yielding varieties of wheat and rice spread rapidly in the food deficit regions, normal weather returned, and surpluses began to accumulate again in the U.S. Public concern over the food crisis abated (Dalrymple).

The commitment of the Johnson-Freeman administration to agricultural development as the means of solving the world food problem continued for the duration of their incumbency. In 1968 Freeman urged major attention to international food development in his book World Without Hunger, but by this time the country was immersed in the Vietnam War. Conflict over the Vietnam War seemed to turn American public opinion inward. Foreign aid became equated in the minds of the public and the politicians with U.S. dollar imperialism or worse things. As long as the Vietnam War continued the U.S. Congress continued to be hostile to foreign aid. Between 1968 and 1972 the question of the future of foreign aid was studied by a number of prestigious groups, including The American Assembly of Columbia University (1968); a task force of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (1969); the National Planning Association (1969); The Committee for Economic Development (1969); the World Bank (Pearson, 1969); joint report by Clifford M. Harden, Secretary of Agriculture and John A. Hannah, Administrator of AID to President Nixon (1970); and a presidential Task Force on International Development (the Peterson Report, 1970). The recommendations of these study groups were diverse but there was a common thread of emphasis on agricultural development. The U.S. should increase its foreign aid expenditures; more emphasis should be placed on agriculture

and population programs; technical assistance and development lending should be funded on a multi-year basis; debt burdens of the less developed countries should be eased; and trade concesssions should be made for them. Despite this support, aid authorizations and appropriations were regularly shaved to the bone and even then were barely passed by the Congress.

The early 1970's saw American food policy influenced by devaluations of the dollar, the "great Russian grain robbery," "embargoes" on wheat and soybeans, the unprecedented increases in agricultural and food prices, the organization of OPEC, and the escalation of petroleum prices (Breimyer, pp. 3-5). Close on the heels of these developments drought in the Sahael brought on a new food crisis. There arose an outcry that the United States had no food policy--domestic or foreign. Meanwhile, Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz was saying that increased production would solve our problems and was urging farmers to plant "from fence row to fence row."

The U.S. Congress began to change its attitude towards foreign aid programs beginning in 1974. AID was directed to address its programs to meeting the basic human needs of the poorest countries. The dilemma in food is that those who do not have enough do not have the money to pay for it and those who produce more than they need can not afford to give it away.

The dilemma was stressed at the Meeting of the World Food Conference in Rome in 1974. A number of recommendations were made by the conference which may have had some effect upon national policies (U.S. Congress, 1975). However, the recommendations would, for the most part, still be appropriate today. One result of the conference of great value to economic analysis

was that it was the immediate impetus for the establishment of the International Food Policy Research Institute (Int. Food, pp. 3-5).

The World Hunger Commission promised a new assessment of current and future food problems when it began work in 1978. Yet, regardless of the findings and recommendations of the Commission, the United States will probably continue to be influenced by political realities, recommendations of agricultural economists, and the weather in making or changing its policies on world food supplies. We do know that total food production by developing countries rose steadily throughout the seventies but varied greatly by region (Int. Econ Div.).

Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has stated repeatedly that increasing farm exports is one of his major goals. He emphasizes commercial exports, but does not rule out shipments for disaster relief. There are problems associated with maintaining or increasing exports. The United States has become a residual supplier, which means that the prices farmers receive for exports may vary markedly from year to year. We may have surpluses or shortages from one year to the next, depending in large part upon weather conditions throughout the world. Maintaining high productivity for export may be reducing soil fertility and making the soil more subject to erosion. It has been charged that meeting world demand increases consumer prices in the United States (Cochrane, p. 274, O'Brien)..

On the other hand, we may be moving into a new state of equilibrium, as John Lee has suggested, with production and effective demand being in relative balance. But Don Paarlberg leaves us with a challenge: "Enough food? Yes, if we act wisely. If there is scarcity it will be because, with unwise policies, we have brought it upon ourselves."

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