

DOWN WITH THE PRISON WALLS!

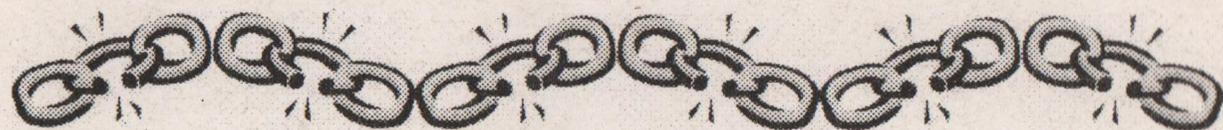


Laudelino Iglesias Martinez left prison on the 9th of August 2004 after spending more than 23 years in Spanish cells. He is one of the well-known social rebels and anarchists imprisoned in Spain, participating in the revolutionary organisation of prisoners who were refused amnesty by the state after the death of Franco, and continuing to struggle against isolation and against the many abuses of a brutal incarceration system. Laudelino spent many years suffering at the hands of fascist screws in the infamous FIES units but never stopped fighting.

In autumn 2005 Laude began a European tour to spread information about past and current resistance to the repressive state apparatus that is the penal system, and to encourage solidarity

with the many free and strong individuals who are currently behind bars.

This is a transcript of his talk at the 1 in 12 Club in Bradford, October 6th, 2005, where he was accompanied by an activist from the Spanish prisoner support group Salhateka.



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DOWN WITH THE PRISON WALLS!



**A TALK BY
LAUDELINO IGLESIAS MARTINEZ**



I was born in the Basque country into a poor working class family. We were 13 brothers which meant that we had a difficult economic situation. The older brothers had to start working at a very young age to help the family economically. I started working when I was 13 and I was getting paid next to nothing for lots of hours of work, so I started to get conscious about what labour exploitation is. Because I didn't have enough with what I was getting paid I started expropriating from those who exploited me and because of that I was arrested and imprisoned many times, suffering ill-treatment and torture. I've been in prison for a total of around 26 years between reformatories and prisons which means that now that I'm 44 I've spent more years imprisoned than free. I've been imprisoned in the majority of prisons in the Spanish state because of dispersion or because of trying to escape and I've been in isolation for nearly 16 years between 1st level and FIES number 1, "direct control". It is due to this that I can give testimony that in Spanish prisons there is ill-treatment and torture and that they systematically contravene fundamental human rights. Many friends and comrades have been killed due to beatings and torture and many others because of serious illnesses or hanging themselves. For me all these deaths are state murders.

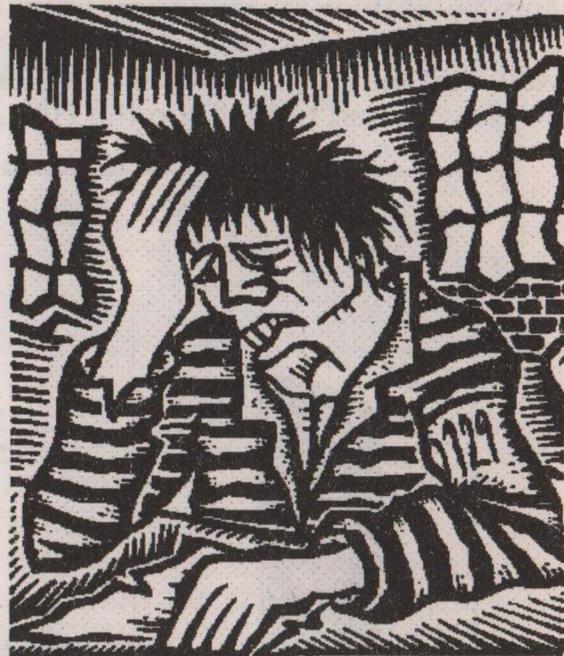
After Franco's death which led to the end of his fascist national catholic regime in Spain in 1975, what was called "the Transition" started, which led to the fascist-monarquic state that there still is now. Supposedly, when there's a change of regime there should be a total amnesty for all prisoners at that time. So in the streets lots of support started but mostly focused on those who were political prisoners, who were actually a minority. But all the people imprisoned up till then were a consequence of the Francoist-fascist regime. As a result of the mobilisations on the streets most of the Basque political prisoners were amnestied but all the rest weren't; so all the people that they called "social prisoners" got really angry and fought against this. They organised themselves into an group called COPEL, Coordinadora Presos En Lucha (Association for Prisoners In Struggle) and started to demand an amnesty for all prisoners with various protests. Because their demands weren't answered by the administration they started more radical protests like mutinies and riots inside



This is a real cell, but all the FIES ones are very similar. I draw this one in 1994 and I spent 2 whole years in it, every day. The measurements of the cells as you can see are very small, all the opening systems for FIES doors are automatic. They have a toilet that is not drawn because I wasn't very good at it but it was situated just behind the door. They used the round holes in the bed to handcuff us at the hands and feet after beatings (which used to happen most days) leaving us there in that position for one, two, three days and up to a week without giving us any drinks or food and meaning that we had to do all our personal necessities on ourselves. They didn't take off the handcuffs for anything, they insulted us, hit us if we complained – and this is still happening nowadays. On the exterior part of the window apart from the iron bars, there is a metal mesh with really small holes, smaller than the shape of a cigarette. The bed surface is made from metal, again with small holes. So you can now imagine how it was to spend even just one day handcuffed from the hands and feet, lying on that metal surface facing up or down.

All the walls are made from reinforced concrete which made it impossible to break anything and that is why they are called anti-mutiny cells. We spent 23 hours a day in those cells and then they took us out into a small caged exercise yard. But before taking us outside the cell they told us to undress and then they handcuffed us with our hands behind our backs. Once in the exercise yard we were on our own or maximum two people and still handcuffed, and I want to make it clear that this still happens nowadays. This place was completely free of any type of furniture and the roof was made of girders and then metal mesh, specially designed to avoid any escapes even if somebody came to get you with a helicopter. Even with all this, all the surrounding walls have razor-wire all over them.

The FIES modules are small maximum security prisons inside of maximum security macro-prisons and they are anti-mutiny and anti-escape. They are small units that have 8 cells on average and in them a maximum of 4 people, always keeping an empty cell between the occupied ones. In front of every cell door there's a camera and in front of the window there's another camera and also the corridors and yards have plenty of them and everything is electronically controlled. In every cell there is a listening device from where they listen to everything that you could be saying. The screws used the microphoned cells to insult and threaten you giving you death threats sometimes. In the cell they only let you have a set of clothes, 2 books, a tooth brush, and a pen, both cut down so you can't use them as a weapon.



There's no physical contact with the screws with the exception of when they come to move you to another cell or another prison.

They had us all completely isolated from the rest of the prisoners, they intercepted our communications, they limited our letters to two per week, each of only one page and in capital letters which then they read, the telephone calls were all listened to by screws and if you said something that they didn't like they cut the line. The communication rooms were special and reinforced with more iron bars.

The FIES regime has got 5 levels:

1. The first and the harshest one is FIES 1, direct control. In this one they keep the very dangerous social prisoners that have tried to escape, or that took hostages... They won't put you in this FIES straight from a conviction outside, you have to have had problems and confrontations with the screws and tried to escape using force and violence once already in prisons.
2. The second one is FIES 2 where they put all the big drug dealers, that is a FIES of control and protection for them. They isolate them from other prisoners so they don't get killed.
3. Then there's FIES 3 where they keep people who have been sentenced for what they call "terrorist crimes". In those they have people from ETA & GRAPO organisations. They don't keep them in FIES units, they are in normal isolation.
4. Then FIES 4 for convicted state civil servants like police officers, screws... that it is another FIES of protection.
5. And then FIES 5 where they keep rapists or people that generate great general alarm which is also a FIES of protection.

In the Spanish state, because of the political history of the Basque country, the screws even got to the stage of proposing that those prisoners who were taking people as hostages, making mutinies and trying to escape, should form a group to finish off some Basque prisoners as an exchange for their freedom. We first showed some interest to try to get as much information about their proposal and what exactly they wanted from us, to then obviously decline the offer because we wouldn't go and kill comrades inside prison!! What they were trying to create was a Prison GAL, Grupo Antiterrorista de Liberacion (Anti-terrorist Liberation Group), which was already in action on the streets and that killed around 50 Basque people, who were bombed, gunned or kidnapped. They were state-army-police mafias that were killing people that they considered to be involved in armed struggle. All the people that got sentenced for GAL involvement are already free and they all have honour medals. So they wanted to do the same inside prison but didn't manage to do so. I've been talking about a 'Prison GAL', but it is a common strategy that the screws offer something to prisoners to kill people that give them problems.

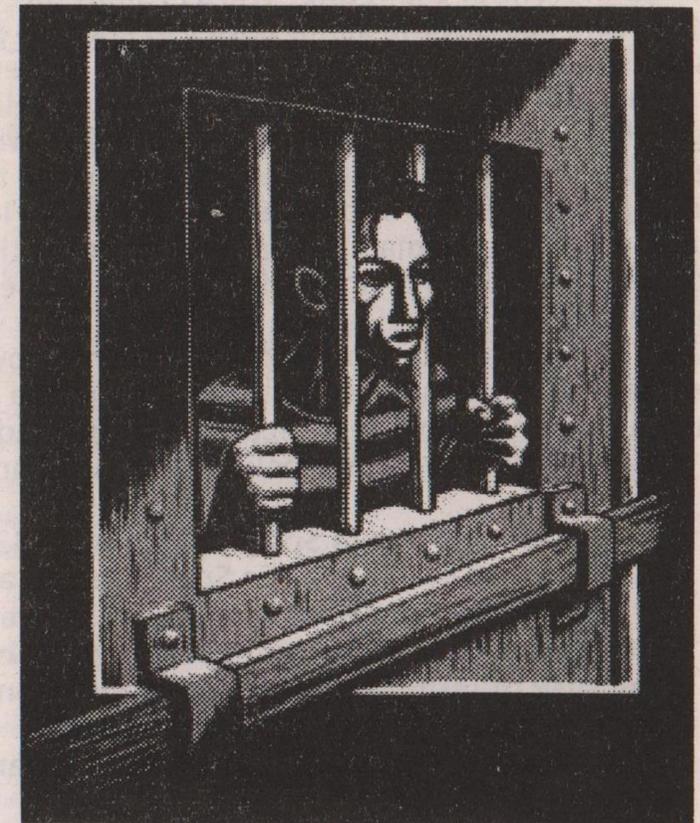
It's as easy as putting somebody that they want to eliminate in a cell with people that are willing and want to kill them.



Some words from a representative of the prisoner support group SALHAKETA...

To understand how prisoners come to be in complete isolation I'll explain the architectural changes in Spanish prisons. At first prisons were small and within cities so the citizens could see that a prison existed there and the prisoners saw that society existed also. Before the amnesties after Franco's death there were 10,500 prisoners and now there are 65,000, so the authorities realised that they needed mass concentration camps and made a new law in 1989 and created the plans for the perfect model prison that had 1009 places, a huge tall central tower surrounded by various units (the panoptic system). Outside these units there are not only two walls as before, but various fences with razor wire and after all these fences the prisons own several kilometres of the surrounding area that they are in control of, which means that if a person from outside gets close to the prison you would get chucked out because it's private property. This surrounding area is patrolled by police all the time which means that the chances of escape are next to nothing, because the central tower will give them the alert and they will be there in less than a minute. The function of these prisons is to centralize prisoners, move them away from society, and isolate them from their families, because there's no public transport to get there and the vast majority of prisoners come from poor families who can't afford taxis; what it is even worse is that they come to be internally isolated within the prison because most prisoners stay in one unit and that is all they know, as people in isolation don't have access to communal spaces like the library or gym. So with all this you could get an idea of what a FIES unit is: a small prison inside a secure unit inside a maximum security prison. People in FIES regime don't even get to know the people who are in isolation. This isolation is also for the people outside who try to get in touch because the penitentiary institution doesn't need any reason to deny you the right to visit. We don't normally get to know about torture from the person that suffered it, but from other prisoners who saw or heard it and then through other prisoners or families who let us know, which means that when that information gets to us we don't know if the person is still alive or not, so what we do first of all is to call the prison director as the mother, sister, cousin or partner, and then when we know that the person is still alive (that is normally the only thing they tell you) we try to bring a doctor or a lawyer into the prison, but it is really difficult.

The means of transport used for prisoners is worse than that used to transport animals. They are gun-proof buses with no ventilation and with small cells 1 ½ meters long and 1 meter wide that are shared by two people who most of the time are handcuffed. In 1989 Salhaketa asked two doctors for an investigation into the psychological effects on prisoners from this kind of transport, and they said that the worst thing is the anxiety as they have so little room, don't have enough air to breathe and most of the time are hyper-ventilating because of anxiety crises; they can't see where they are being driven and most of all anxiety is produced by the idea of having an accident because these vehicles have automatic doors that the cops need to open from the cab, so in the event of an accident those people will die or fall unconscious and nobody will open their doors.



Around 8 % of the Spanish prison population are women who are concentrated in special units in prisons that have been built for men, which means that they don't have access to public spaces like libraries and gyms. There they have a gynaecologically deficient situation. In the Spanish state women are allowed to have their children with them in prison till they are 3 years old and there are around 130 kids born and living in prisons with a paediatrically deficient situation. On the subject of women we'll explain something very current happening in Spanish prisons, and specifically in Nanclares de la Oca prison, where there are not many women as it is a small prison. Around a year ago some women started writing to Salhaketa saying that they were being offered their freedom if they prostituted themselves on the street and gave the money to the prison's assistant director who has a network of local prostitutes on the streets. This was mainly proposed to immigrant women without papers. So we decided to make a public statement asking for an investigation, and expressing our doubts said that if any of those women dared to denounce him we would commit ourselves to following and supporting their case; two of them denounced. We went to court with them and in June 2004 the director and assistant director of that prison

testified in front of the judge. The assistant director resigned but we know that now he has got the same power in another prison. We are requesting that this person be prohibited from having any power over prisoners, but we are not asking for a prison sentence as we don't believe in that. We must never forget that our final aim is to destroy prisons, which would be like destroying one of the state's weapons. In this same prison there's another investigation going on because lots of deaths are happening in there, 9 in the last year even though it is a really small prison. The last man that died there was the person who gave us all the information to denounce the assistant director, and he is dead because he helped us. He got killed just 3 weeks ago, his name was Jose Andres. He was found dead in his cell from an overdose, when he actually didn't take any drugs, after coming back from a leave permit when he was nearly at the end of his sentence. The family and Salhaketa have denounced the prison because we don't believe their version of the death.

- The average age in Spanish prisons is 33 years old, in isolation regime it's 35 years old and in the Spanish state a prisoner dies every 37 hours.
- 40 to 50% of prisoner communities have AIDS, an even bigger percentage have hepatitis. There are lots of people dying in prisons because of terminal illnesses and they don't let them out although there is a law that says they have to be freed.
- The index of suicides is 11 times higher than on the outside.

And we'll end as Gabriel Pombo da Silva did after every day in court:

DOWN WITH THE PRISON WALLS FOR FUCKS SAKE!!!!!!

[Gabriel is a long term anarchist prisoner, who escaped from the afore-mentioned prison Nanclares de la Oca in Spain at the end of 2003 after almost 20 years in prison, 13 of which were under the FIES regime, and was re-arrested in Aachen, Germany in June 2004; the trial of him and his co-defendants Jose Fernandez Delgado, Bart De Geeter, and Begona Pombo da Silva ran from March to September 2005 and was characterised by international solidarity and the resistance of the defendants and their supporters to the 'justice' circus.]



Letter from Laudelino Iglesias Martinez:

"From death row in Villanubla prison, Valladolid, February 26th, 2001

Dear comrades in struggle,

My name's Laude and I want to let you know that the Supreme Court of this murderous State sentenced me to life imprisonment, sentenced me to die into the death row of these modern concentration and extermination camps, in short it sentenced me to death. The Spanish State, though it has tortured me for 20 continuous years into its prisons, brought itself to sentence me to death while it should have released me 7 years ago if one refers to what is established by its penal code or its Constitution. This limits any prison sentence to 20 years maximum and specifies that no one can be subjected to torture nor to punishments and degrading treatments. But in the reality of facts, the humanism and the application of those laws are triumphant through their absence. My case is an additional example of the terrorist essence of this State. Abuse, torment, sadism, murder are favourite and usual practices against all those who fight for life, freedom, dignity and for all human beings.

Monarcho-franquist mafias that constitute this country oppress and exploit us, subject us to poverty and destitution, brainwash and make us ill, drop us out, control and poison our lives. They beat us, torture and murder when we rebel against those scoundrels. They confine us illegally and lock up in their extermination camps to torture us day after day, to use us as hostages against social and revolutionary struggles (...), to exploit us economically, to humiliate us, to harass us continuously, to make us mad and murder us (...). To isolate and fret us. My personal case was subjected to a wide number of those dirty methods. I've been tortured, trashed, insulted, threatened to death, tormented to kill me, maintained in isolation for over 12 continuous years by submitting me to the module 1 of the FIES regime (...), caused and kept alive diseases and generally, I've been systematically violated my most fundamental rights. They were about beating me up to death every time they brutalized me. It has happened numerous times and during one of these beatings, they put me into coma and resuscitated me at the hospital.

With this new sentence to life imprisonment, it is clear that they persist in this willingness to murder me. This is anyway what they attempt by always occulter themselves with suicide, or with a fight in between fellow mates, with overdose, or with any kind of farce. Along these over 20 years where they've kept me locked up, they've already murdered a number of my friends, they beat them up to death, resorting to torture, hanging, by causing or inflicting them diseases, by overdoses, by using other inmates in return of prison benefits, or by causing conflicts in between prisoners for stories of rumours, drugs, or for prison rights or privileges. I do not use any drug, I do not smoke tobacco either, I'm vegetarian and I try to live a healthy life in spite of such hostile conditions. I come from Euzkallherria and my spirit is libertarian. I have numerous friends, I feel loved, I'm still young and I very much want to live. But before all, I want to live free and I'm not going to loose this feeling for life because of this new sentence to life imprisonment. Even less will that prevent me to keep struggling for what I want, love and dream.

In this State, we are actually numerous prisoners who've spent over 20 years confined in prison and numerous are those sentenced to life, which is equivalent to a sentence to death. It is clear that this State doesn't respect its own laws. It is even less democratic and legitimate than murderous and corrupted. It practices detention, torture, gives sentences to life imprisonment and sentences to death against all those who rebel against those scoundrels (...)

The fact that this State has sentenced me to life imprisonment, though it has already kept me locked up and confined into its death camps, is a failure for the State and an additional victory for the libertarian struggle. In 20 years of detention, they haven't managed to make me deny my libertarian ideals and will not manage it along the numerous years they keep pressuring me.

Consequently, dear comrades and friends engaged in the struggle, do not consider this news as a failure but on the contrary view and feel it as a victory. Because undoubtedly, it is a victory of human resistance against the barbarity of capitalist prison and an additional triumph for libertarian practices and ideals.

The struggle goes on, we will take some rest when we defeat capitalism, once we defeated exploitation and oppression, until human beings are free and decide themselves for their fate, until Human Rights are respected by every person and people, until we obtain a free, egalitarian, standing by and sound world, until we build a prisonless society. As long as dignity will be derided, nobody can make us give up hope, our hopes and our sacrifices are never vain. Neither imprisonment, nor judicial farce, nor sentences, nor murders against us will break down our revolt.

That's all for now, I tell you that I love you and send you big brotherly and libertarian greetings. Salud y anarkî! Jo ta ke! Hurrengo arte, lagunak! Agur!

Laudelino Iglesias Martinez : Villanubla, Carretera Madrid-Gijon, 47014 Valladolid, Spain.

(anarchist black cross – gent)

Letter from Laudelino Iglesias, free after more than 23 years in prison.

Laudelino Iglesias Martinez left prison on the 9th of August 2004 after spending more than 23 years in the Spanish prisons. He is one of the well-known social rebels and anarchists in prison in Spain, co-founder of the APRE (r), de Asociacion de Presos en Regimen Especial (reconstituída), organisation of prisoners who in the beginning of the nineties struggled against the isolation and for their rights as human beings and was brutally repressed. Laudelino spend years in the infamous FIES-units but never stopped to struggle.

As Laudelino writes, in an accompanying note to the support group 'Amaitu', the last years he had very difficult moments, with severe depressions and disgusted by everything, himself included. He admits that this resounds in his letter, that he is very sad about this, that the cure will take long time and that he believes that the consequences of almost 24 years imprisonment will never disappear completely.

"Dear comrades!!

Finally they have released me, finally they set me free from the leGAL hostage taking to which I was subjected since no less than 23 years and ten months. I have made it thanks to the knowledge which I taught myself about my human rights and by writing a lot, as well to their courts of injustice as to those honest and combative people from the streets and from other prisons who wrote me and helped me... But above all

because I never lost my cherished hope and because I always took care of myself as good as possible and never stopped to believe in my ideas.

Yes, 23 years and 10 months taken hostage in the extermination camps of the fascist and murderous Spanish state, ruled in the first place by some national-catholic capitalist parasites who sit satisfied at the fireside while they exploit, oppress, squeeze, torture, kill and deceive the workers, students and all persons who, to survive, dare to violate their unjust laws. Laws which, we should always keep in mind, are dictated by our executioners, made on their size and only in their interest, imposed upon us by the sword, with violence.

Yes, finally they let me go, but they have robbed 23 years and 10 months of my life (my freedom), and have mistreated me (physically tortured, beaten, threatened with death, insulted, completely isolated in special security quarters during more than 15 years in the first degree and in the FIES.1-C.D.-, they have conspired against me with the intent to discredit me and be murdered by certain "prisoners", they have unlawfully applied sanctions to me, they have infected me with dangerous and incurable diseases, they have continually hurt and harassed me) – all this till the last day... That is the normal treatment they give to the prisoners who struggle ceaselessly so that they don't take away their dignity and respect their fundamental human rights. Yes, they played many dirty tricks on me and earned a lot of Money on my back, Money they have stolen of the wages of the workers. They have kept me locked up in some thirty prisons and maxi-prisons (concentration camps of the social war in which the world is immersed), and now they release me from the prison of Valencia, out of its worst section of the second degree (section 7), my last cell was number 205 of the second floor.

I leave behind some friends, which makes me sad, but be sure that just as I did conquer, they too will win their freedom one day. Many of my time and others have been murdered unpunished by the guards through tortures, beatings, suicide, carelessness, etc.; all remain in my thoughts and in my heart.

For the other prisoners (except the few and honourable exceptions) I feel nothing but disgust, it is with shame that i talk about them, but the prisons in the capitalist world are full of servants, creepers, individualists, ash lickers, quarrellers, violators, collaborators, and many are just the same as the screws or even worse... , miserables without morals, who have no respect neither for the others nor for himself. They are the canon flesh to fill the prisons (who have become real mastodons) and as such fulfil one of the insane objectives of this system which exploits and oppresses us. It is a complete degeneration and it becomes worse everyday...

Bit by bit I will tell you about the things and my experiences in the prisons of this damned State, now i will dedicate myself in the first place to LIVING this life (they have kept me practically whole my life imprisoned, which means SUFFERING life) together with my girl friend and enjoy the space and taste as much as possible of all good things that life offers.

I leave you know with a brotherly libertarian embrace, till soon comrade. Keep strong and resist without end!!!

Til an end is made to all exploitation and repression,

Till we all are free.

Salud y Anarquía!!!

Laudelino Iglesias Martinez

From the micro-prison of Valencia, 9 augustus 2004. Picassent"

(intro and translation: anarchist black cross – gent)



SALHAKETA

Prisoners Support Association

WHAT WE ARE?

We are a social movement born in Bilbao (Basque Country) in 1982 to support all imprisoned people, and to claim for their dignity as well as for their families and former prisoners dignity. For this reason, we also denounce imprison life conditions and Human Rights violations.

WHAT WE WANT?

We want prison abolition, because prison sentences are inhuman and unable to re-socialize people. For these reasons we ask for out-prison answers to social problems, as well as we develop our solidarity and support with imprisoned people. We work for the fulfilment of imprisoned people rights.

WHAT WE OFFER?

We offer a meeting space for developing a solidarity work for imprisoned people as well as for former imprisoned people, families and friends. As part of it, we stress the work on:

- *Denouncing imprison life conditions and Human Rights violations.*
- *Social and legal assistance for imprisoned people and their families.*
- *Social and personal resources research.*
- *Social struggle against prison as social control system.*

... and, for sure, we offer our support and solidarity with imprisoned people.

PRISON IS NOT THE SOLUTION...

- *Because it is a repressive ghetto.*
- *Because it doesn't help for socialization*
- *Because it isn't the only one way to resolve social conflicts and there are more human alternatives.*
- *Because the imprisoned people are always the same (poor, marginal and exclude people)*

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