

The Week

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SOUTH AFRICA

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The
Week

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AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Shortly after our successful school devoted to Africa and held over Whitsun this year we announced that we were to publish a pamphlet which would comprise the speeches and lectures made at that school. This has proven to be too unwieldy and we are, therefore, splitting the proposed pamphlet up. This is the first part and is devoted entirely to South Africa. Others will follow (but further material on South Africa will be included) as and when the technical work is completed.

In introducing these two articles only a few points have to be made. Firstly, we can and must endorse the call made by the two writers for the line that experience has shown that only an armed struggle by the South African people can remove the monstrous Verwoerd regime in the foreseeable future. This is entirely an affair for the South African people to decide; but socialists in Britain have the duty to explain this fact and thus prepare to resist any tendency for intervention by British imperialism against the African people.

Secondly, we have to recognise the big part played by British big business and the various British Governments (including, unfortunately, the present Labour Government) in bolstering up the Apartheid regime in South Africa. What is more, this regime seems, with aid from U.S., West German and British imperialism, to be building up its resources for an expansion of its power on the African continent. Clearly, all socialists (and humanitarians) must show their seriousness by fighting with all the resources at their disposal to change this state of affairs. If we do not do this we are accomplices of Apartheid; there is no third way.

Lastly, we need to explain that the whole business of Apartheid and hypocritical British support for it is yet another argument showing the rotteness of capitalism. Despite all the affluence, welfare statism, etc., South Africa is a living example to show that capitalism means barbarism.

Paper presented to The Week School on African Affairs, 6th June, 1965.

I do not wish to burden you with a lengthy dissertation on the evils of what is generally known as Apartheid. This has been done over and over again in the past and no doubt it will be done again and again in the future. I propose to deal at a later stage with the basic policies of my Congress and its approach to the struggle for democracy in South Africa. But allow me first to deal at some length with what we believe to be the crux of the South African problem.

Apartheid is, of course, another name for racialism. Both are familiar words. But the more familiar they become, the more clouded are the issues involved in the struggle for democracy in South Africa. The inability to see the issues other than through racial blinkers has spread to alarming dimensions, and bestrides even some of our most learned rostrums.

The liberal institutions in Britain - students, both black and white, in the universities and other media of public enlightenment - are befuddled in their thinking by extreme obsession with what may be called anti-racialism. The fashion is to take up an attitude against the evil of racialism because it makes one appear progressive and superior to others. Also, it spares one the trouble of doing some hard thinking to find its causes and provide remedies.

All attitudes, as such, are blind things, unthinking. They are therefore equally undesirable whether they be pro-racialism or anti-racialism. The struggle for democracy in South Africa has for a long time been retarded, diverted and blockaded by blind anti-racialist attitudes. Such attitudes are a poor substitute for ideas and well thought out views.

Reaction to the racialism of the whites became obsessive anti-racialism even among Africans, who failed to recognise the real issues involved in the struggle and, therefore, carried out faulty planning of campaigns. They saw the South African problem purely in terms of race, and presumed that since there were white racialists, there must necessarily also be black racialists. Like the German professor who, on seeing a bicycle for the first time, swore that it could not be ridden - for the simple reason that if you did not fall off to the left, you must necessarily fall off to the right!

The Africans, the dispossessed people of South Africa, were often, exhorted virtually to forgive their dispossessors and never to show racial animosity. Of course, it was merely the animosity which anybody robbed of his land would show against the robber, whether the latter is white, black or yellow, or, indeed, of the same colour or race.

The point I want to make here is that racialism is not the real problem in South Africa. This point has to be made sharply. But as we have to bring it out clearly, we will now go straight on to the historical background. During the first contacts between the African people and white settlers in South Africa, there was a lot of mixing between the races, and intermarriages were common, in spite of the wide gap between cultural backgrounds. But the settlers, who brought along with them knowledge of commerce

* Matthew Nkoana is the Chief Representative in Europe of the Pan Africanist Congress (S.A.)

and diversified economic organisation, started off at a great advantage over the simple mode of life of the indigenous people who were mainly pastoralists.

It was only natural that the settlers, who came from a survival-of-the-fittest type of civilisation, sooner or later took advantage of their position. Once they had thus turned the indigenous people into an economic asset, the latter's freedom had to be curtailed to ensure continuity. Since one does not interfere in this way with the lives of one's equals, those thus treated must be looked upon as of a different order in society. And so certain relationships developed between the settlers and the indigenous people as befit relations between, at first, master and serf, then master and slave and finally master and servant.

De Kiewiet, in "A History of South Africa", says: "From the very beginning there was woven the double strand of South African history: the servile worker and the free colonist, cheap labour and land. These combined to create the habits and institutions of South African society. The white settlers began to look upon labour as the function of a servile race, and became a privileged caste depending upon an excessive number of slaves and servants whose labour was wastefully employed."

When slavery was outlawed, it became necessary to develop new techniques for the purpose of attaining the same ends: the amassing of wealth by the few which entails the degradation of the many. In South Africa we have the classic example of how these techniques have been perfected. We have there a refined system of slavery in a modern cast. No longer are men seized and sold as a straight-forward commercial deal, but they are still seized and compelled to sell their labour at any price that the buyer chooses. The two different worlds still exist: the one a world of privilege and plenty, created and maintained through the iron fist of tyranny; the other a world of misery and grinding poverty, of apartheid restrictions and humiliations.

The "habits and institutions" are today what they were then. These habits and institutions are racist in orientation, but racism is the effect rather than the cause of a system of crass economic exploitation. Allow me to quote from another recent paper of my own on the subject:

"This is not to underrate the scourge that is racism in South Africa. It is a terrible mental disease once it takes hold of the victim, but it is not in the blood; it is not congenital. True, there are many - tragically too many - among white South Africans in whom racism has become a kind of second nature. But this is not a natural phenomenon. It is fostered and nurtured in the European homes and schools and in public life. The books the children read are littered with the grand myth of the black man's inferiority. But it remains an artificial growth; so artificial, indeed, that it has become necessary to enact legislation to bolster it up and patch up yawning cracks in the racist wall. Thus we have laws preventing inter-marriage between the races, banning multi-racial worship or social mixing in entertainment, sports and other vulnerable spheres. Without this elaborate intervention from the cradle to the grave, those Whites who know not which side their bread is buttered might multiply enough to disturb the structure of white supremacy and so bring about the end of economic privilege....."

It must be clear not that racialism is not the real problem, not the root of all evil in our land. There is a song that knows what the root of all evil in our land, as in other lands, is!

Having made this and other studies of the South African situation, my Congress at its inception in 1959 laid down a grand strategy and combat policies which, because of their insistence that the utmost pressure could only come from the most underprivileged sections of the community, the Africans; met with wild charges of racialism from those who are obsessed with anti-racialism. In an article published in that year, the President of P.A.C., Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe, pronounced to the world our position as follows:

"It is our contention that the vast illiterate and semi-illiterate masses of Africans are the cornerstone, the key and very life of the struggle for democracy. From this we draw the conclusion that the rousing and consolidation of the masses is the primary task of liberation...We have made our stand clear on this point. Our contention is that the Africans are the only people who, because of their material position, can be interested in the complete overhaul of the present structure of society. We have admitted that there are Europeans who are intellectual converts to the African's cause, but because they benefit materially from the present set-up, they cannot completely identify themselves with that cause..."

The P.A.C. does not believe that racialism is a monopoly of the whites. That would be racialism. We take a scientific view of the whole question of race. Here again let me quote our President, from his inaugural address: "The Africanists take the view that there is only one race to which we all belong (the human race). We do, however, admit the existence of observable physical differences between various groups of people, but these differences are the result of a number of factors, chief among which has been geographical isolation. In Africa the myth of race has been propounded and propagated by the imperialists and colonialists from Europe, in order to facilitate and justify their inhuman exploitation of the indigenous people of the land...."

The imperialists have propagated that myth not only in Africa but in their home countries for the same reasons. They did so to justify in the eyes of their own people continued occupation of far-away lands against the wishes of the colonial people. The grand myth of the black man's inferiority has over the ages littered the pages of great works of art by which the thinking of the people of Europe has been influenced in respect of coloured immigrants, such as here in Britain, bedevilling already existing cultural differences.

From this conclusion, it must be clear that, while we do not think racialism is a monopoly of the whites, no valid argument can be advanced that Africans are vulnerable to the evil. Unless there were some unworthy motive for it, one cannot imagine Africans suddenly acquiring notions that other people are inferior to them. We live in the age of science and, as Sobukwe puts it: "All scientists agree that there is no 'race' that is superior to others." What unworthy ulterior motives can there be? The only social motivation of this kind could be economic gain. As this is essentially a political question, it can be answered in terms of our policies on socio-economic development in a new South Africa.

Sobukwe has said: "Politically we stand for government of the Africans for the Africans by the Africans, with everybody who owes his loyalty only to Africa and accepts the democratic rule of an African majority, being regarded as an African. We guarantee no minority rights because we are fighting precisely that group-exclusiveness which those who plead for minority rights would like to perpetuate. It is our view that if we have guaranteed individual liberties, we have given the highest guarantee necessary and possible. I have said before and I still say so now, that I see no reason why, in a free democratic Africa, a predominantly black electorate should not return a white man to Parliament, for colour will count for nothing in a free Africa."

The 1959 Pan-Africanist Manifesto is illuminative: "The basic question confronting the African people is identical with that which faced mankind from the beginning of time itself: the problem of man's relation to his fellow man. It is the question of how man shall live with his fellow man in fellowship, in harmony and in peace."

"Man moves and has his being in a social environment. In the absence of social life the social question would fall away. Man's relation to his fellow man is determined by his primary needs. The social question, whose structural foundations are found in economic determinism, arises within the framework of social relations."

"Man is, therefore, a social being and not an economic animal. To live in harmony with his fellow man, man must recognise the primacy of the material and spiritual interests of his fellow man, and must eliminate the tendency on his part to uphold his own interests at the expense of those of his fellow men. It is only within such a set-up that the human personality can be developed and that respect for it can be fostered."

In a word, the P.A.C. is imbued with a deep sense of humanity and social justice. Even though writing while in South Africa, where anything that rejects the present social set-up goes by the name of outlawed Communism, the President said in an article in 1959: "Economically we stand for planned economy and the most equitable distribution of wealth. I have said that to me at least, the slogan of "equal opportunities" is meaningless if it does not take equality of income as the springboard from which all will take off." The rationale in relation to the principle of equality of income takes off from the premise that the families (with special reference to children) of university professors and street sweepers have the same needs, material and spiritual interests are the same, and they are equally entitled to the benefits of a social set-up within which the human personality can be developed and respect for it fostered.

One of the aims of the Constitution, the only such document in South Africa that refers to Socialism as a goal, is to create an Africanist Socialist Democracy, which means Socialism grafted to African conditions.

The most powerful motive force in the struggle for democracy in South Africa is African nationalism. The people of South Africa, albeit as separate tribes have a glorious past, a proud tradition of struggle in defence of their land. Today the various tribes have forged bonds of unity and are emerging as a nation. They have behind them a common historical experience as a dispossessed people. They are acutely aggrieved by this dispossession.

The least the international community can do to help them is to endorse their right to fight, by whatever means they deem fit, for the restoration to themselves of the effective control of their land. Here one may recall with gratitude, that at least one West-orientated world body has endorsed this right. The World Assembly of Youth last year, noting that "State acts of violence and repression, including ruthless methods of suppression and proscription of the national liberation movement, have eliminated all possibilities for effective peaceful resistance to tyranny" said in a resolution that it "recognises that it is the right of the people of South Africa to revolt against the tyrannical South African regime."

After 300 years of subjugation, economic abuse and social debasement, it is crystal clear that the only way by which the South African question can be resolved is a full-scale, efficiently organised armed revolution. A revolutionary climate already exists in South Africa. But to carry out the operation successfully we need tremendous resources of a material and technical nature. We ask the international community to assist us undertake this herculean task.

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COUNCIL OF AFRICAN ORGANISATIONS' RESOLUTION ON SOUTH AFRICA

Submitted by representatives of the African National Congress, Pan-Africanist Congress and South African Coloured Peoples Congress - adopted with acclamation.

This first Congress of the Council of African Organisations, having taken cognizance of the following in London on the 7th February, 1965:-

1. That the South African State, armed to the teeth, is determined to defend by force of arms the privilege of the white and the imperialist investments in the country, on which these privileges rest;
2. that all illusions of change by constitutional means have been irrevocably shattered by the merciless suppression of all attempts to effect a peaceful change;
3. that the South African masses realize in ever growing numbers that their liberation depends mainly on their own effort, with the aid of their African brothers;
4. that they can in no way rely on Imperialism to change its very nature by urging it to bring about such change as would threaten its financial interests;
5. that the South African democratic struggle is an inextricable part of the war to free the entire African Continent from Colonial and Imperialist rule-----

Therefore Resolves:-

- a) that the liberatory struggle in South Africa can obtain its objectives of democracy and national independence only by the revolutionary over-throw of the state;
- b) that in as much as South Africa is the most industrialised country on the Continent, its liberation from the fetters of imperialism and white minority rule, will constitute the great leap forward in the advance of the African peoples as a whole;
- c) that the Organisation (C.A.O.) establish a fund to aid South African Liberatory movements in the struggle for freedom and democracy;
- d) that the C.A.O. and other organisations attending this Congress use their good offices to assist Liberation organisations based in Britain and other countries in Europe;
- e) that the C.A.O. and other organisations attending this Congress organise an Annual Sharpville Day on March 21st to commemorate the militant resistance of the South African people against white supremacy and merciless imperialist exploitation;
- f) that the C.A.O. and other organisations attending this Congress seriously consider the military presense of free Africa in those independent African States, which have common borders with South Africa, in order to safeguard their sovereignty and offer protection to the liberatory forces based in those border territories;
- g) that the C.A.O. and other organisations attending this Congress demand that the British Government afford the necessary protection to South African refugees in the British Protectorates adjoining South Africa.

(The following is the text of a speech delivered at a meeting in the House of Commons by Barney Desai, President of the South African Coloured Peoples Congress.)

Recent developments

During the period 1962-64, the ruling white oligarchy conducted its most successful onslaught against the broad spectrum of the opposition forces within South Africa.

On the eve of launching massive attacks on police stations and military installations, the South African security forces intervened successfully and arrested over 5,000 members of the Pan-Africanist Congress (Poqo), breaking the back of the operation even before it had commenced. This was followed by the detention of hundreds of members of the Congress Movement and the dramatic arrest of its leaders at Rivonia. The High Command of Umkonto we Siswe was now in captivity after having directed nationwide sabotage. Shortly thereafter, the Natal Regional Command of Umkonto was uncovered and mass trials of A.N.C. leaders in Port Elizabeth, its strong point of organisation, commenced. Leaders of the Coloured Peoples' Congress, Indian Congress, Trade Union Congress, were detained, jailed, banned. Their organisations grinding to a standstill in face of vicious suppression. Less than six months after the life sentences were imposed on the Rivonia leaders, the S.A. Security forces announced the capture of the new High Command of Umkonto. Five of them were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The National Liberation Front collapsed with the jailing of Dr. Alexander and ten others - its leadership.

Socialist and left wing members of the Liberal Party, organised under the banner of the African Resistance Movement, made a powerful but short lived appearance. They had successfully conducted sabotage operations against rail and electrical installations. Like all the other organisations, they produced members who were to break down under solitary confinement and torture. The organisation could not survive against the full weight of police terror. The defection of its leaders, who became state witnesses, was the nail in the A.R.M. coffin.

The Communist Party of South Africa is presently engaged in a grim battle for survival. The defection of Central Committee member Piet Beyleveld is indeed a grave blow to this Party. It is significant that even before the present Fisher trial, Beyleveld, in his evidence for the State, recalls that the Central Committee of the Party had considered "going dormant" in the face of the crushing setbacks that were being suffered by itself and other liberation forces. The various elements of the Non-European Unity Movement have been silenced by bannings and vicious restrictions on its leadership.

During the period 1963-64, over 1,000 persons have been sentenced to a total of over 7,000 years' imprisonment, twenty-one have been executed, thousands more are either going through the process of trials or are awaiting trial in prisons. The emergency regulations are still in force (since 1960) in the Transkei. Hundreds of peasant leaders are detained there.

Progressive newspapers have closed down, the remaining ones are in the process of winding up.

The Whites Move to the Right

Far from "seeing the light and mending their ways", or what Archbishop Hurley, President of the Institute of Race Relations, S. Africa, calls "a change of heart", White South Africa is stampeding into the Verwoerd camp. After all, the English and Afrikaans speaking whites have always agreed on white supremacy - they fall out on how to effectively maintain this race domination and super exploitation - whether it was to be through deceit and cunning or through naked, brutal force. As the oppressed non-white mass, with heightened political consciousness, can no longer be kept at bay through more "benevolent" methods - the entire white population has opted for force to maintain the status quo.

The arms build up continues at an alarming rate. In 1964 alone, South Africa allocated £150 million for defence and security expenditure. Large numbers of civilians, including high school youth, are being trained in the use of fire arms. Vorster stated on September 11th, 1963, that 27,250 women belong to pistol clubs where they received instructions from police officers. In November of 1963, Professor Le Roux, Vice President of Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, stated that South Africa was developing poison gases known to be capable of massive devastation. He said, "We appreciate that these poisons are capable of being delivered in vast quantities by aircraft and long-range missiles, and they can have a destructive effect similar to that of a nuclear bomb of 20 megatons. These gases are ten times more poisonous than any other substance you can name." (Reuters, 7th November, 1963).

No doubt encouraged by this information, Dr. Donges, Minister of Finance, boldly proclaimed that South Africa could cope with any "Army of Liberation" which did not receive financial and military support from at least two great powers. (Cape Times, 18th September, 1963.)

The "economic boom" has no doubt favoured the extravagant military budget. The white population have also benefitted materially from the "boom". White incomes have soared, resulting in the prices on consumer goods rocketing. Non-white wage rates remain pegged and efforts to make ends meet become impossible.

The South African immigration policy of recent years has met with great success, in 1964, a record total of 40,000 white immigrants entered the country. Of this figure, some 12,600 were British.

Despite the officially proclaimed Boycott of South African goods by over 52 countries, South Africa's export trade showed an improvement in 1964 of over £10 million on the 1963 figure. Trade with Britain, West Germany, U.S.A. and Japan maintained a steady level or else showed an increase.

Imperialism and the Status Quo.

A third of British overseas investments are located in South Africa. She has a favourable balance of trade and receives an annual return from

British firms alone, some £30 millions in dividends on branch profits. Despite the declared imposition of an arms embargo by the U.K., there remains an uninterrupted, undeclared flow of armaments to Verwoerd. In January of this year (1965) Britain agreed to supply South Africa with three submarines valued at £13m. The order has been justified, rather ominously, on the grounds of the existence of "secret clauses" to the Simonstown Agreement between Britain and South Africa. The Buccaneer contract was honoured in the interest of business and at the expense of the oppressed non-whites. It has not gone unnoticed that South African pilots still receive training in the U.K., that ICI has been allowed to invest millions in partnership with De Beers, for the setting up of arms factories in South Africa, that British technical experts have been flown out to give the necessary advice and services for the manufacture of weapons which will be used for the merciless suppression of the militant struggle of 13½ million non-whites.

The least we are entitled to expect from the British Government - the socialist administration - is an unequivocal assurance that there will be no circumvention of the arms embargo. It is our contention that the Simonstown Agreement must be terminated if the arms embargo is to be effective. We cannot agree that the U.K. is morally bound to honour existing contracts with a regime that has been castigated by British representatives at the United Nations as "indefensible and abhorrent".

The United States is second on the list of South Africa's major trading partners. U.S. investors have also found South Africa a source of substantial revenues. Earnings rose from \$50 million in 1960 to \$86 million in 1963. A rough indication of the relatively high yields obtained from investments in South Africa may be seen in a comparison of the ratio of South African to total United States direct investment overseas. In 1963 these ratios were 1.9% and 1.0% respectively. (UN Report A/5 825 December 8th, 1964). Apartheid pays. The U.S. announced an arms embargo of South Africa in December, 1963 - with the important qualification that "all existing contracts for the supply of ground to air missiles" would be fulfilled. A U.S. Navy spokesman said that co-operation would be maintained with the South African Defence Forces for "strategic reasons".

West Germany has become an important factor in South Africa almost overnight. West Germany is not only the third most important trading partner but her investments in South Africa take third place after the U.S. Her co-operation with Verwoerd's aggressive war plans is cause for grave alarm.

In July, 1961, J.J. Fouche, S.A. Defence Minister, negotiated secret defence agreements with Bonn. The task of implementing these agreements on behalf of Bonn has been entrusted to Major General Friedrich Wilhelm van Mellenthin - former member of the General Staff of Hitler's Wehrmacht. The General's presence in South Africa is justified under the guise of his position as General Manager of Lufthansa Airways. He is a strong proponent of the idea of a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation (SATO), which would include within its framework Mozambique, Angola and Rhodesia - to defend colonialism.

Herman Abs, Chairman of the Board of Deutsche Bank and described by

the United States as one of the "industrial Bosses who exercised the greatest influence on the direction of Hitler's policies", in the autumn of 1963 visited South Africa and had long conversations with Government Ministers. Abs, who is also a leading member of the Atomic Commission of West Germany, took part in talks with Minister Diederichs who bears chief responsibility for the S.A. Atomic Energy Board. It is suggested the talks were connected with measures necessary to commence the large scale production of fissionable material for nuclear bombs, following the successful completion of tests on the production of nuclear grade uranium metal and reactor material in the pilot plant at Pelindaba near Johannesburg.

A leading theoretician on the S.A. Atomic Energy Board is Dr. Heinz Verleger, former government counsellor (in the Nazi era) in the Physical-Technical Reich Institute in Berlin. Twenty million pounds have already been set aside for nuclear power plants to be built for Escom. If the plant is to have a capacity of more than 100,000 kilowatts South Africa is well on the way, with German assistance, to producing the A-Bomb.

Earlier, I referred to Professor le Roux's electrifying announcement about the development of poison gases. It is now clear that the expertise for the production of poison gases comes from a group of scientists formerly employed by IG Farben. They are headed by Gunther Pruss, who served in a leading position in the poison gas research department of the Nazi Wehrmacht. The production experience and licenses of the former IG Farben trust were made available to the specialist group by Dr. Felix Prentzel, formerly ministerial director in the West German Federal Economics Ministry under Ludwig Erhard. Today he is the Director General of Degussa, a nuclear concern, of which Abs is the Chairman.

The evidence of involvement is overwhelming and if there was still doubt of the real sentiments of the West German leaders, we need only refer to the statement of Dr. Heinrich Lubke, President of the Federal German Republic who said, in 1959, after a visit to South Africa, "The problems (of the natives) are in good hands with the Government". (Information Sudafrika, April, 1959).

The Road Ahead

There had been the belief in recent years that the intransigence of the Verwoerdian regime could be broken down by a short, but intensive struggle on all fronts. To be sure, some leaders had held before the people the prospect of constitutional change by the white supremacy government under pressures from imperialism. To both beliefs there has emerged a negative answer. The Verwoerd Government, backed by western imperialism, is powerful and has the capacity to conduct a long struggle in defence of the status quo and, secondly, imperialism will only intervene to stabilize the situation in order to protect their investments. This action might well take the character of staving off the revolutionary conflagration.

It appears that where some organisation sought to coerce the Verwoerd Government to bring about changes, by a resort to force, the Government not only suppressed their violent attempts ruthlessly, but in addition,

were assisted by Western countries in this suppression. The lessons that we have learned vis-a-vis Imperialism's intertwining interest with White supremacy, are being assimilated by our people. The result will be that the struggle for political equality and economic justice is going to be resumed on a higher level, taking not only an anti-Verwoerd, but an outright anti-imperialist turn. In such a confrontation force will decide the outcome.

It is now widely predicted that "chaos and barbarism" will be the outcome of such a revolution. We reject this prophesy. "Chaos" will be the order of the day for the mine owners, industrialists and land barons. The revolution of the oppressed, dispossessed, disenfranchised, non-white chattel, will be its own authority. It is our prophesy that barbarism will come from the privileged whites, who are presently arming themselves with modern weapons and poison gases to challenge the ideas that are ripe for South Africa.

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