

Appendix 17. Ethiopians against the center

Response by HG to: "Menilikism: Defeatism and Fatalism
" by Tecola Hagos. [URL1]

HG's Comment : The great leader who defeated a European power and retained the freedom of Ethiopia, on the basis of which all nations on earth recognized independent Ethiopia, and in whose achievement many blacks across the world rejoiced is now called defeatist by Professor Tecola Hagos.

Professor Tecola Hagos continued and wrote, "Very often some Ethiopian intellectuals and foreign historians depict Menelik as the architect of the battle of Adowa. To begin with it was his own action of selling out Ethiopian territory and people to the Italians in exchange for money and weapon that gave the Italians a beachhead to launch their war of aggression and expansion that led to the battle of Adowa."

HG's Comment: This is a prime example of how willful distortion or ignorance of history may be used as a foundation for perpetrating unbridled defamation of Menelik II and of Ethiopia. Why seek authors to vilify Ethiopia or one of its greatest leaders? Why rely on propaganda materials by colonials or paid hands that use colonial propaganda as a foundation for defaming Ethiopia and its leaders? Why not seek readily available and published treaties for founding a basis for understanding Ethiopian history and its leaders? The answer has to do with alienation. People who succumb to one or more of the

Historical Points of Alienations described in Chapter 5, part a1, may be severely disconnected from their own heritage and work to further the alienations.

Hostages empathize and sympathy with their hostage takers. Harshly subjugated people revere their subjugators. Likewise, alienated people work to further the alienations. Such psychological problems exist. Yet, it is possible to debrief the estranged people (victims) so that they can regain sanity and see realities for what they are. Unfortunately, Ethiopia has not spent energies at debriefing otherwise proud Ethiopians from succumbing to strange appreciation of propaganda by colonials. The tax paying Ethiopian peasant has helped educate a few of its children. The problems of the peasant are many and different. Equally many faults exist in the system that the peasant had created for his governance. The peasant himself can enumerate many faults and problems. What he has educated his children for is to make him better, and not to burden him with a litany of accusations, let alone accusations by falsifying events or exaggerating falsehoods. There were positions taken by Menelik II that are quite puzzling as described elsewhere in this series of reports. However, Professor Tecola did defame Emperor Menelik II and by implication Ethiopia when he writes about unfounded charges in his effort at equating Menlikism with defeatism and fatalism.

The allegation of "selling Ethiopian territory and people for many and guns" is so defamatory of Ethiopia and of Menelik II that it should be examined soberly, and without succumbing to validate every claim made by colonial or fascist propagandists. The historical context for purchase of

guns and munitions and the need for such purchases ought to be examined, at least briefly, as is given below. First though a brief note on the vectors of forces arrayed against Ethiopia is significant to understand the geopolitical context within which Ethiopia survived.

There is crucial observation that ought to be emphasized again and again and by different authors, and should be discussed by all concerned Ethiopians. That point concerns the problem that arose with the revolt of Ahmed Gragn, which was supported by the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Since that revolt, Turkey had a bogus claim on Ethiopia's maritime and coastal territories and properties. Quite simply, Ethiopia has not yet recovered from the outcomes of that revolt. Ethiopia did not recover because Britain along with other Europeans had caused Turkey to write a Firman (official letter) that gave freedom of action to the leader of its former colony, Egypt (see the 15th July 1840 Convention between Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Turkey). Subsequently, Britain required and facilitated the writing of additional Firmans by Turkey (e.g., May, 1865; 18th June, 1873; 2nd August, 1879) that gave Ethiopian coastal and maritime territories to Egyptian leaders, based on which Britain as a colonial master over Egypt became the controlling power. This British effort was augmented by the Berlin agreement (1885 Berlin Act) that effectively denied Ethiopia its coastal and maritime territories.

Interestingly, British subjects wrote Ethiopian history, some of them injected all kinds of propaganda in Ethiopian history that would cause Ethiopians to fight against each other instead of working together to resurrect Ethiopia. For

a long time, from the days of the revolt of Ahmed Gragn till the reign of Menelik, Ethiopia did not send Ethiopians as its emissaries to foreign governments. Instead, they sent foreigners or even foreign ambassadors to Ethiopia as emissaries of Ethiopia to foreign governments. Not surprisingly, Ethiopia became fragmented and the era of the princes (Zemene Mesafnt) offered opportunities for foreigners to strengthen their bogus dominion over Ethiopian maritime and coastal territories. That fragmentation began to change when Emperor Tewodros started his forceful unifying effort. But then, Britain that aspired dominance over Ethiopian maritime territories had to send a military expedition to stop Emperor Tewodros who shared his plans to regain lost Ethiopian maritime territories to British emissaries.

Later, Britain had to send its admiral to Adwa and sign a Treaty with Yohannes IV to give him a false hope that the fort at Kassala, an Ethiopian territory, will be returned to him from the Egyptians, and Massawa is guaranteed by Britain to serve as a free port for Ethiopia to use. Of course, the British were lying. Yet, Yohannes IV continued on the unification effort that was started by Tewodros in the north and placed a death nail to the foolish attempts by Egypt to occupy Ethiopia while Menelik II incorporated fragmented Ethiopia of the south into a unified country. However, none of the three Emperors succeeded to regain any of Ethiopia's maritime territories until Haile Selassie's reign extended over part of the Ethiopian Red Sea territory- and that after Britain delayed Ethiopia unity for an additional decade (1941-1952). The Portuguese Chaplain Alvarez, had written that during his visit of Ethiopia before the Ahmed Gragn revolt, Ethiopia suzerainty stretched to

Swakin. However, Ethiopian maritime territory south of Swakin up to Ras Kassare was lost to Ethiopia when Britain and Italy used a man-made pile of rock (Ras Kassare) as Ethiopia northern coastal limit. This paragraph is expanded and treated more fully elsewhere. However, a brief notation is given here to provide a context that will expose the unjustified allegations made by Professor Tecola Hagos.

Indeed, Ethiopian had sent expeditions to clear squatters from its coastal and maritime territories when the work of foreigners became flagrant. For example, Emperor Zerse Dengel and Fasiledes were among those, since the days of Gragn, that marched to Mereb Melash and dislodged Turkish forces and punished Ethiopians who supported the Turks. Yet, the Ethiopian highland kingdom did not maintain garrisons at important ports to remove the Turkish bogus claim over Ethiopian territory and to discipline local chieftains of coastal regions. To be sure, the French did not need any Firman from Turkey when they purchased Djibouti from local chieftains. Neither did an Italian shipping firm and later Government need a Firman from Turkey to purchase Aseb from local chieftains- both these purchases of coastal Ethiopia were consummated in the reign of Yohannes IV. Only the British required the cover of a Firman from Turkey to their vassal governors of Egypt to control coastal and maritime Ethiopia without paying a red penny to any local chieftain. Their surrogate, Egypt, largely managed the Turkish interests over Ethiopian territories. That was why the British sought Firmans from Turkey to give to the Pasha, and later Khedive, of Egypt. This proved useful, as Egypt became a colony of Britain since 1882. The geography and attendant temperature

difference between coastal and highland Ethiopia, as well as the devastation by the Gagn revolt had debilitated the Ethiopian highland kingdom from extending effective control over its coastal territories at that time. These historical facts are significant to understanding the allegations placed by Professor Tecola Hagos.

An examination of publicly available documents of treaties made with respect to Ethiopian territories indicates the following. "On the 2nd December 1883, the Commander of H. M. S "Ranger" informed the Governor-General of Eastern Soudan that he had received information that Her Majesty's Government had decided to maintain Egyptian authority at Suakin, Massowah, and the Red Sea Ports" (Brownlie, 1979, p. 616). Clearly, the British had already placed Swakin and Massawa, part of the so-called Eastern Sudan Territory, as theirs through their colony, Egypt, before they sent Admiral Hewitt and signed the Adwa Treaty with Yohannes IV in 1884. Within six months of signing the Adwa Treaty, and in contravention of that Treaty, the British invited Italy to take over Massawa, and Italy occupied Massawa on the 3rd February 1985. To suggest that Menelik II gave a beachhead to Italy is not right. The historical facts do not support such inference as was wrongly made by Professor Tecola Hagos on this score.

Though I have demonstrated above, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there was no beachhead in the Massawa area that the British did not control by that time - and by that reason alone the allegation of exchange of guns and money for a beachhead is invalidate - the allegation involving the

selling Ethiopian territory and people for guns as was claimed by Professor Tecola needs some flushing.

As Ethiopia was reorganizing from the Era of the Princes (Zemene Mesafinit), powerful individuals that aspired to be emperors received guns in different ways. Dejazmatch Kassa Mercha (later called Yohannes IV) received guns and munitions from the British that came to dethrone Tewodros. Kassa Mercha received the guns and armaments as a payback for allowing the march of the British expeditionary force across Tigrey without any resistance from him. Later, Kassa Mercha used the armaments to defeat Emperor Tekle Giyorgis (former Wagshum Gobeze, and a brother in-law to Kassa Mercha) that succeeded Emperor Tewodros and imprisoned him after a battle near Adwa, when the emperor came to subjugate Kassa. Owning "modern armament" is crucial to becoming emperor and defending ones interests. Dejazmatch Kassa crowned himself Emperor Yohannes IV and subjugated Negus Menelik, Negus Tekle Haymanot and others.

Negus Menelik bought armaments and munitions from Italy on the pretext that he will avenge the death of an Italian geographer that was killed in Hararghe, and used the armaments to incorporate Hararghe within Ethiopia. The Sultan of Harar, who was ruling over Hrarar after the Egyptian pulled out, later joined Menelik in a march to oust the Dervish from Ethiopia. Those armaments were also used to incorporate other southern Ethiopian territories within Ethiopia. Of course, Menelik had written to tell the Italians that their hurt was avenged. All the Italians had to do was scratch their heads and figure out how that

computes. When Menelik felt unduly threatened by Yohannes IV, as is briefly described below and more fully exposed elsewhere, Negus Menelik entered into the Wuchale agreement with Italy that secured him half of the armaments and munitions that he sought. Later, in 1896, Emperor Menelik II signed a treaty with Italy in which article 2 simply states that the Wuchale treaty is annulled (null and void). The 1986 Treaty and conventions derived from it also require that Italy would not give the territory entered with Ethiopia to any other power, clearly indicating that the territory that they would administer is Ethiopian. Subsequent conventions and agreements (1900, 1902, etc) rely on the 1986 Treaty, and have stipulations that in case of disagreements only the Amharic version will apply to Menelik.

A significant point to recognize here is that Menelik went to war, risking his life and liberty, when the party who signed the agreement with him misinterpreted his agreement. He insisted on the validity of treaties agreed upon with him. To allege otherwise is not supported by verifiable history. Yet, the colonization of northern Ethiopia, Mereb Melash is germane to a discussion of the claims of a selling out made by others, and is briefly dealt below, and in detail elsewhere.

After, the Italians occupied Massawa at the invitation of the British, though Ras Alula delivered a crashing blow to Italian soldiers at Dogali about 19 kilometers from Massawa, and perhaps because of it, Italian hastened to fight against Ethiopia more vigorously and brought more soldiers for that effort. Negus Menelik had incorporated Hararghe, and Ras Kassa was working to incorporate

Arussi, so that Menelik's soldiers were engaged over a wide area in the south, when he received a note from Yohannes IV about the achievement of Ras Alula at Dogali.

Yohannes IV did not know that he was lied to by the British, and was working in good faith for the purposes of the 1884 Adwa Treaty, and inadvertently kindled the wrath of Muslim Mahadists, the Dervish, when he extricated Egyptian soldiers that forcibly ruled over the Sudan and gave them free passage through Ethiopia. The Dervish attacked Gondar. Yohannes IV instructed Negus Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam to defend against the invasion. The Negus tried but was unsuccessful, and even his daughter was taken prisoner by the Dervish to the Sudan. Yohannes IV was unkind to the plight of Negus Tekle Haymanot (though he realized later that he was misled by his court about the valiant attempts of the Gojjam soldiers to counter the Dervish).

When his soldiers were assembled from the southern expedition, Negus Menelik advised his readiness to implement the emperor's wishes in the northern front. After rejecting Negus Menelik's offer to join forces with those of Emperor Yohannes IV and fight against the Italian occupation in the north, and after saying that his own army is sufficient to the task, and after instructing Menelik to march against the Dervish instead, Yohannes IV marched to Saati to confront the Italians and camped there for a month. Meanwhile, a mere show of force by Menelik II and his entourage at Azezo was sufficient to cause the Dervish to flee to their country, the Sudan. Yet, Yohannes IV departed from his camp from near Saati, leaving the Italians unharmed, marched to attack Gojjam and died in Metama fighting against the Dervish. In the wake of the death of

Emperor Yohannes IV, and led by Dejazmatch Debeb, a relative of Yohannes IV, the Italians had marched to the highland region of Mereb Melash. Then they crossed the Mereb River and occupied regions south of it. Ethiopians under the able leadership of Menelik II dislodged Italian forces from Amba Alaghe, Mekele, and completely routed the Italian forces in the battle of Adwa. Though he did not march to the Red Sea, as is discussed under another heading elsewhere and briefly described below, Menelik II shall remain a great leader simply because of his achievement up to Adwa.

For the record, it was after Emperor Yohannes IV ordered Negus Menelik to retrace the route he took to Begemedit back to Shewa, which caused Menelik to secure permission to return from Begemedit to Shewa via Gojjam, that both Menelik and Negus Tekle Haymanot conspired against an emperor. They regarded the emperor to be ungrateful and unfathomable, and Menelik began to arm himself against a potential onslaught by Yohannes IV (Tekle Tsadiq mekuria, 1983 Ethi). It proved lucky for Ethiopia that Menelik was arming himself with more modern weaponry, which later allowed him to defend Ethiopia against colonials. Likewise, his effort at incorporating southern Ethiopian regions made them unavailable for European colonizers to place them under their dominion, and also allowed Ethiopian to defend their country from Italy at the battle of Adwa.

At any rate, Yohannes IV returned from Saati leaving the Italians unharmed and destroyed Gojjam to punish Negus Tekle Haymanot for the conspiracy he made with Menelik, though he could not touch Shewa this time around. A show

of force by Dejazmatch Mekonnen whose soldiers from Hararghe guarded the east side of the Abay Gorge along the Shewa-Gojjam road was sufficient to dissuade Yohannes IV from any attempts against Menelik. Instead, Yohannes IV marched to Metema. The valiant Emperor, who previously knew when to attack a fortified camp as at the battles of Gundit and Gura, at which he defeated Egyptian soldiers, and at Saati where he camped 10 kilometers away from an Italian fort, made the mistake of fighting like a simple soldier at Galabet and was unfortunately shot in 1889, and died the next day, at a great cost to Ethiopian pride. The devout Christian gave his neck for his religion and country. He completed the trinity of great Christians and defenders of Ethiopian freedom. The other two were Captain Cristavo de Gamma, who was beheaded by Ahamed Gragn, and Emperor Gelawedos by Gragn's nephew, Amir Nur.

Indeed, the entire Dervish animosity toward Ethiopia would not have started were it not for the ill-advised services Yohannes IV rendered to Egyptian soldiers as per the terms of 1884 Adwa Treaty with the British, which the British did not respect. It took years for Yohannes IV to come to the conclusion that the British were not abiding by the terms of the Adwa 1884 Treaty. However, Yohannes IV's realization of the British role was a bit late. Some also argue that his devotion to the Tewahedo Christian faith might have had adverse repercussions with the Dervish and Ethiopian Muslims of the north some of whom he converted to Christians. Clearly, the emperor has acted as best he cared to pursue, and there is no defensible foundation to accuse Menelik II, who worked under Emperor Yohannes IV, for giving away a beachhead head or for lack of wit or bravery

in the defense of Ethiopia and its people. Below, I describe the equally unfounded claim that Menelik sold people or territory for money.

Menelik borrowed money to buy guns and munitions described in the 1st October, 1889 Additional Convention to the Wuchale Treaty of 2nd, May 1889 by using the customs house in Harar as collateral. He paid all that he owed to the Italians in the Wuchale Treaty before marching against them to Adwa. He charged, "ye tchera geber" to collect funds from Ethiopians and pay off that loan (Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, 1983 Ethi). He deemed it wise to buy guns to protect himself from a potential attack by Emperor Yohannes IV, the father of Menelik's son-in law. It should be underscored that people ought not to judge the past by using modern functions of government as models. Ethiopia has not regained its stature since the revolt by Ahmed Gragn in the 16th Century. Since the beginning of "Zemene Mesafnt" until Menelik II became emperor, Ethiopia did not have a well-organized and centralized government. Emperor Tewodros fought hard to gain a central government system. Emperor Yohannes IV advanced the cause a bit further. Menelik II succeeded in centralizing authority.

There were oddities in the reign of Yohannes IV that could be viewed as arising from lack of a centralized government. For example, when Yohannes IV left from Saati, he took Ras Alula who was the governor of Mereb Mellash with him instead of leaving him behind to guard against Italian encroachment of the highland regions. Negus Menelik tried to act as a reconciling element between Ethiopia's Emperor and Italy while Ethiopia was at odds with Italy -

go figure - Yohannes IV later wrote Menelik II to pursue the strange effort though he told Menelik that it won't have a successful result (Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, 1983). That said, let us stay on the subject of the unfounded allegation that Menelik II as wrongly alleged by Professor Tecola Hagos sold Ethiopian territory and people.

It is well known that Menelik made Italy pay for feeding the Italian soldiers that Ethiopians captured during the battle of Adwa. Any other mention of money that was claimed to have been taken by Menelik has its foundation likely in propaganda pieces by colonials, and in the infamous and defamatory document of the EEBC (Eritrea-Ethiopian Boundary Commission). The EEBC authors brought no evidence to support their wild allegation. The foundation for the so-called international boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia was purportedly based on the 1900, 1902, and 1908 treaties according to so called 2000 Algiers Agreement between Meles and Isaias.

There was no foundation for the claims made Isaias and Meles or the EEBC. Emperor Yohannes IV camped at Saati, 26 kilometers from Massawa, in the coastal Red Sea region, in 1888. The highland region of Mereb Mellash was not encroached by Italian forces then. The Italians marched to the highland region and up to the Mereb River by 1889. From 1889 to 1900, a period of 11 years of military occupation by Italians forces is the foundation for the existence of an "independent Eritrea". The five men who were hired by Isaias and Meles or their supporters to provide an unjust but legal-sounding boundary *de novo*, by using the Meles-Isaias so-called Algiers Agreement of 2000, went beyond their declared purpose of producing a

boundary. They resuscitated defunct and nullified conventions of 1900 to 1908 in order to place an international boundary between a phantom state called Eritrea that did not exist as an independent state but was a part of independent Ethiopia for thousands of years before a colonial Italian administration of the coastal region since 1898, eleven years before the conventions cited by the EEBC to found an international boundary within Ethiopia. The five men went beyond placing an international boundary and defamed Menelik II and Ethiopia in their EEBC document. Put simply, the five men who wrote the EEBC lied about Ethiopian history. Indeed, without furnishing any supporting evidence, the five paid authors of the EEBC have written that Menelik had taken money. Here again they lied for they have brought no supporting evidence to document their story. The five men that authored the EEBC were paid hands and delivered to Isaias and Meles handsomely for what they were paid to do. Though they opted to defame Ethiopia and Menelik II, that extra effort on their part was outside of their self-declared mandate. Neither the lie on history or on defaming Menelik was necessary for the EEBC to do. They did it nonetheless. Certainly, they cannot be regarded as the foundation for activities performed by Menelik II, who died a century before these paid hands manufactured the EEBC document, when the EEBC does not itself show verifiable proof for its allegation. Therefore, I challenge Professor Tecola Hagos to produce any piece of document other than the nasty EEBC instrument that cannot be used as foundational source, or colonial propaganda that is not independently verifiable, to support his allegation that Menelik II took money from Italians to sell territory and people. If he cannot produce verifiable document (a treaty, a convention

or other document signed by the parties that are said to have been involved in the transaction) in support of his claim, which I bet he cannot, then he should cease and desist from defaming one of Ethiopia's gallant leaders for an act he has not committed, and by implication from accusing the gallant Ethiopians who stood with their leader and delivered a blow to an invading European power, and act that shall live in glory till kingdom come.

It may be stated that we should appreciate the hurt that proud Eritrawi Ethiopians may feel each time Menelik's name and freeing Ethiopia from Italian colonization is mentioned, because their region was not liberated by this great leader. However, shoveling lies against the historical record won't alleviate the hurt. It only exacerbates the alienation. Neither is there any validity to deny the courage of all Ethiopians who came to Adwa to fight against and routed the colonials. As Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam in his latest book, "yekehdet kulkulet", put it plainly, when Ethiopians from the south marched a 1000 kilometers to fight in defense of Ethiopia why were not those in the region fighting for their liberation? I will let his statement convey the intended meaning for all freedom loving Ethiopians are accorded equal dignity in fighting for their liberation. I will merely explore the history surrounding the 1896 Adwa victory for its won sake.

During the Adwa victory, food ration sent to the region had run out, and a part of the Ethiopian forces were sent to gather more food from the region. Also, the drought period did not permit Ethiopian forces to march at will. We are also informed that lots more would have been achieved had there been sufficient water in the Mereb River and across it

to permit the Ethiopian forces under Menelik II to march into Mereb Mellash as pointed out by Kibur Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria in his book on "Menelik ena ye'ityopia andenet". Yet, would Menelik have considered it wise to march to the Red Sea immediately after the Adwa victory? This remains a question for historians to puzzle over? It has to be remembered that the British had stationed military garrisons at Khartoum by this time. After the defeat of the Italians forces at Adwa, the British parliament was so angered that a black force would defeat a white army and in both the House of Commons and of Lords members were competing among each other to shower words of indignity that the Anglo-Saxon verbiage would allow. For his part, the son of Queen Victoria, who was in South Africa used insolent words against Menelik and Ethiopia for defeating a white army. Meanwhile, Africans, Caribbean's and blacks in the USA who had managed to hear of the victory, despite strictest news blackouts in the western world, relished it with utmost satisfaction. Had Menelik II marched to the Red Sea at that time, a combined British and Italian force would likely have met Ethiopian forces. Many more mercenaries from South Africa through Australia across Europe to the USA would have crowded the region. Perhaps that thought did not escape the imagination and foresight of Menelik II.

The victory at Adwa was so sweet to relish that Menelik II was not going to squander it by taking ill-advised adventurism. Like Ras Alula, who demolished an Italian force at Dogali, only 19 kilometers away from Massawa, did not march to Massawa, so too Menelik II did not march to route the Italians from the Red Sea in the condition that Ethiopia was at in 1896. In both cases the consequences

would likely have involved a possible retaliatory attack by Britain, which had claimed dominion on Ethiopia's Massawa region by reason of a false ownership deeded to it through Egypt by Turkey. Had the lords of Tigrey been cooperative, Menelik would likely have unraveled that maze and liberated the coast later, but not in 1896. By not marching to the Red Sea Menelik did not push hard against the white backlash, and by treating the captured Italians with dignity Menelik quenched the anger of white colonials and restored Ethiopia to the noble and just country that Greeks before the Birth of Christ had written about, and the Prophet Mohammed had referred to since.

The purpose of identifying historical points of alienations is to show how enemies of Ethiopia could use those points of estrangement and bring dissention among Ethiopians. Certainly, the points of alienations are not legitimate grounds for denying ones heritage. Colonialism is not unique to Mereb Mellash or any part of Ethiopia. Different European countries from the 6th century to 1870 had colonized parts of Italy. That fact did not deter the Italians from being united and from working for their common good. While Italy was colonizing parts of Ethiopia, a portion of its own territory was not liberated from Austria. It was after the 1st World War that Italy regained parts of its territory from Austria.

History should be written to document what the past was the good, the bad and the ugly. However, it does not require stories such as the unfounded allegations and defamation of Menelik II, and by implication of Ethiopia, as was done in the piece by Professor Tecola Hagos. History is not to be

used to satiate the insatiable quest of crybabies such as the EPLF and TPLF that aspire to achieve the impossible task of adjusting the present as a way of undoing the past. They are wrong in the way they have constructed the past. They are wrong in the way they construct the present. They are wrong in their foolish attempt to adjust the present to undo the past. They are a scourge to Ethiopian history and should be removed ASAP. The Eritrawi Ethiopian should not miss the boat bound for freedom once more. They should join hands with pan-Ethiopian political parties and contribute to the pan-Ethiopian parties (provide money or other support) in order to resurrect Ethiopia.

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URL1. <http://www.tecolahagos.com/menilikism.htm>

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