

1 BLOC 1 : 3'20
 1 BLOC 1bis : 1'32 MOVING
 1 BLOC 2 : 5'08 ELECTION
 1 BLOC 3 : 10' CERTIF
 1 BLOC 4 : 17'34 } GARFUNKEL
 47'34 } BIG ACTION
 } LETTERS 3'20

GARFUNKEL 1

PL

C.L. I would like Irene to read a part of your book.

She will translate it directly into English.

G. You will read it in Hebrew?

C.L. In English. She translates it directly. I would like you to start translating with the first time you were caught by the Gestapo. It was when? August?

I. July.

C.L. 8th July 1941. OK, try to do this, Irene.

PL

I. [The German general announced to the Jewish representatives in ^{town} ~~return~~ for a military order that the Lithuanians ^{town} refused to live now in the ~~camp~~ together with the Jews because the Jews are Communists and the Soviet rule was terrible for Lithuania. The ^{freedom} ~~freedom~~ said that it is impossible to continue the way things were in ^{town} ~~town~~ in the last weeks.] It was clear from his words that he meant the pogroms against the Jews and the mass arrests. Therefore, he said, a ghetto would be established for the Jews of ^{town} ~~town~~ in the part of Slobodka. All the Jews of the ^{town} ~~town~~ had to move into the ghetto until 15th August 1941. They can take with them all

SM front
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SM front

Maaffrodo

photo

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W.C. p. 19

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68- Garfunkel

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their belongings. He added that the Jews themselves had to be interested in establishing the ghetto *out* because they would be isolated, far away from the Lithuanians, and safe. He also promised to order to stop immediately the arrests by the collaborators *on* (the Lithuanian collaborators) and to liberate the women and children from Fort Seven. The German also announced that all the Jews of Kovno had to wear a yellow badge on their clothes and that the five *photo* *Sm* representatives present are responsible personally to obey this order. At the end of his words he said they had to come again tomorrow until 10 o'clock *out* in the morning and to announce to Jager whether they agreed to move to the ghetto until the time he stated. He *added* finished and said "It's for your own good. In the ghetto you will be living peacefully and quietly. You will handle all your matters yourselves. If you *Sm* stay in town you only endanger your life."

These words shocked the Jewish representatives and they tried to prove to the German general that it is impossible to identify all Jews with Soviets and Communists. They tried to convince him that there was no possibility to put all the Jews in this restricted area which was intended for the ghetto. *out*

They said the ghetto would be terribly crowded and that this would cause epidemics to break out and *clangit*

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that they would also be a danger to all the population in the town. Also the date 15th August - it was only a very short time to move into the ghetto.

But all these things were in vain. All Jews are Communists" repeated the general several times. "Marx was a Jew and Stalin was also a Jew". "But Stalin was never Jewish!" cried the Jewish representatives. "It's clear he was a Grosanian, a pure Grosanian." "If he was not a Jew, then his brother-in-law or his relatives or his friends were Jews. This was the cynical answer of the Nazi general. This terminated the conversation.

G. For a long time we could not know precisely who was this general. According to various sources

I think this was Stalcker

C.L. The chief of the Einsatzgruppe A, in the Baltic area.

our G. Yes. And there was Bl... there also.

C.L. But you were yourself present during this meeting?

G. Of course.

C.L. And it was the first time you met the Germans.

G. Yes. First the Germans talked to Rabbi Shapiro.

C.L. Rabbi Abram Shapiro.

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Broken

G. ...but he was very ill.... And he gave the representatives of the Gestapo the names of myself, of Dr Rabinowitz (he was the physician), of Goldberg,?

C.L. Goldberg?

G. Goldberg was there also.....

And immediately a man from the Gestapo came to all these persons and said we must go to the Gestapo.

So it was the first - if it is possible so to say - the first meeting of the Germans with the representatives of the Jewish population.

C.L. And how many Jews at this time... this was in ...

G.we waited in the corridor of the Gestapo.

Then came an officer of the Gestapo and asked the names of some Rabbis. So we gave the name of Rabbi Smid and Rabbi... Schneider. And when they were brought They were asked to come in....

C.L. And in which state were the two Rabbis? How were they?

G. They wanted ... they said that ... They wanted that all the representatives of the Jewish religious people also..... go and talk with Briskis It is interesting ...

C.L. This was ... And the Germans entered Kovno on 24 June 41. This means they were here since two weeks.

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G. seventh force.

C.L. The ~~mass~~ execution. How many Jews had already been killed in Kovno in 2 weeks?

G. In these two big pogroms, I think 5, 6 thousand.

C.L. 5, 6 thousand? And did you know at the time that they had been killed?

G. No. We knew only that about 8 or 9 thousand were arrested... taken - to ~~Chelmo~~ ^{Kovno} - very terrible conditions.

Starck promised that if we agreed to the proposal he would release all the women and children from the fort. This was done.

C.L. It was done?

G. Yes. All the men were annihilated by the Germans, with the help of the Lithuanians. the Lithuanian police who volunteered to help the Germans.

Of course the Germans deceived us. About a week before the ghetto was closed there was also an action, only on men, and about 1200 were taken and brought to the jail. I personally was among these people. For a long time it was unknown what was the fate of these Jews. Then they made a selection of specialists who were engineers. other people were annihilated, we don't know

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where..... So when they debarked the specialists they wanted to use...

C.L. They released the specialists? They didn't kill them?

G. No, they released them. So this was the first big lie of Stasheck. ^{Re other people killed} Stasheck also promised that when the Jewish population was concentrated in the ghetto, nothing would happen to them. As you know, when we were already in this ghetto the first action was against the 534 intelligent... That was the first. Then they plundered everything which had some ^{value} worth and then experimental actions. They gave us 500 certificates to distribute among the artisans.

danger But

... the other day, all the Jewish ^{had to} gathered in a special place and the action began. ^{when a} Any Jew who had the certificate ^{he} was.... immediately released. And then happen ^{something that I can't explain} ... suddenly came an officer of the Gestapo and told ... free to go home. We called this an experimental action.

GP all

We were all very happy. ^{and this not repeat again} We thought it was the 1st time. That was the first action...

2 weeks later, several minutes

C.L. But when did you start to know exactly that the people had been killed? ^{Because} At the beginning, they were

G. among the thousand before the closing ... and then it was the first action... A young child

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succeeded ^{to escape} and he told us everything ^{name of the} that happened in the transports. Then it was the ^{the liquidation of the} second action.... ^{Small ghetto}

C.L. But you have to explain

G. ...?...

G. The so-called B ghetto. So the second action was the liquidation of the small ghetto. Then they ^{also} burned the hospital - the patients together with the physicians. It was the liquidation of the second ghetto. Dr Elkers was ... but he managed to go over in time to the big ghetto.

^{achieve} e.... The big action.

C.L. But at the time of the big action you knew already that people were to be killed.

G. Absolutely.

GARFUNKEL 4 (sic)

C.L. Do you remember the day when you moved inside the ghetto? Do you remember this?

G. (... incompréhensible)

C.L. And it was a difficult operation, to move 30,000 people...

G. Oh, yes. It was very difficult because the Lithuanian population exploited the situation.

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money claim

They went into the Jewish apartments... and took what they wanted. Then it was necessary to pay them money - to the people with cars - to transport. It was very difficult....

C.L. What could you take?

G. Very little. Clothes. The Jews took very many books.

C.L. They took books?

G. Yes, books! Blankets, whatever was possible.

C.L. And furniture?

G. Furniture also was possible, but there was no place on these carts. Still, we took a lot of things. Of course, later on they confiscated them, their money and valuables... here is also a picture of the transports. The transports took about a month.

..... they were given, I think, two days.

C.L. It was much more difficult, more harsh - two days.

G. But they did this not because of love of the Jews...
....

C.L. You mean it was better for them to gather all the Jews in one place..?

G. Of course... a chicken's pen?

It was very easy... the action of... during the action also some Jews were killed and a lot of things were taken. Still they were not satisfied and Jorgan...

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Kovner Bar

photo

Kovner 1/2
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C.L. The Gebietskommissar?

G. The Gebietskommissar? He was in charge of the Jewish...

C.L. Judenreferent?

G. Yes. And he asked - and he was very cynical, very ^{practical} broken? - he said the Jews had deceived the Germans - that we had not delivered. So he asked us in two days to deliver, and after two days they would search all the Jews in the ghetto, and for every?.. a hundred Jews would be shot. It was very dramatic incomprehensible.....

And The lot of things were brought by Jews

C.L.?... to give them to the Germans?

G. During the time many Gestapo came to see if they had taken for themselves...?

C.L. What kind of things?

G. Watches, jewels, diamonds... It was of course stealing, a lot of things were brought, and even

C.L. And the people were giving their things willingly

G. Yes, willingly. Of course there were some who hid, but most ...?

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I. "The property which the Jews of the Kovno ghetto delivered to the Germans out of hope to buy the right to live was more than could be imagined. It was property worth fifty million marks at least. The Germans themselves were surprised by the result of this contribution. The searches, which made the life in the ghetto difficult so much, were stopped. A time of peace and quiet came to the ghetto, but only for a few days, because the Nazi beast was already preparing new diabolic deeds."

C.L. You write that the Jews were buying the right to live.

G. In hope to be alive.

C.L. They thought it was possible with money, with gold...

G. Of course. And this was sent to Germany. And then Jorgan told us that he gives two days... what is the lot of the 500 intelligents. Where are they? Because all the time the Germans made efforts... they are alive. They were taken to Prussia only for work."

C.L. They were intellectuals, these people?

G. No...

C.L. What kind of professions? Teachers?

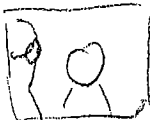
G. Teachers, Rabbis also, ... most of them went.... because it was said the 500 people... have to

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bring in order... archives.....

GARFUNKEL 5 (?)



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C.L. This we will talk about, but what was the answer of Jorgan to the ...?

G. That all these people were killed under the pretext that Jews.... had destroyed 50 sacks of sugar, and therefore for every destroyed... for every sack he gave an order to kill ten Jews.

C.L. Was this after the election of the ~~Arresten~~ Rat?

G. Before.

C.L. Before?

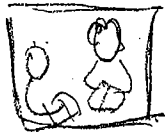
G. No, after.

C.L. Why did they... they wanted to destroy the....

G. (téléphone) So they went into the ghetto, and in order to penalise.....?????

they take no \$50 but they take hundred \$/h/fn.

GARFUNKEL 6



Syne

I. "In the first days of August Kominsky announced to the Jewish committee...."

C.L. Who was Kominsky? Explain.

G. Kominsky was the Lithuanian in charge of the Jewish affairs in the municipality of L'vov.

"... Kominsky announced to the Jewish committee

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that at the head of the ghetto in Slovodka an Alttesten Rat would be established which would be elected by the Jews themselves..

C.L. Slovodka was the area of the ghetto. The quarter of Kovno.

But immediately the 'Oberjude' has to be elected, and that this was the demand of the man in charge of Jewish affairs in Kovno, Hauptsturmführer

Jordan. Immediately the Jews of Kovno faced a terrible problem. Who should be elected to this task, which needed great responsibilities that cannot be imagined and which is difficult and dangerous at the same time? For this purpose

the committee called a meeting of everybody who was in public affairs who was still in town. The meeting was held on August 5th in the office of the committee, and about thirty people took part. This Jewish meeting, which was the last one in the town of Kovno before the Jews left, it was exceptionally dramatic....

C.L. Before the Jews left it for the ghetto?

I. For the ghetto (yes.) "...all were conscious of the fact that the solution had to be found to the problem, which was a question of life. It would not be easy to find the right man for such an unusual task. It was necessary that the man would know the

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language so that he would be able to speak to the Germans, and that he would be able to be a messenger of the ghetto. Even if it was known from the start that the elected man would only be the Oberjude, only a humiliated representative of those "darn Jews" (in the German terminology), even though everybody understood that all must be done so that the man elected will have also a kind of authority in the eyes of the Germans so they would consider his words. (Everybody understood that the elected man had to have characteristics so that he would be able to influence the Germans

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to a certain extent. It was also necessary that this man, who would be the head of the ghetto, would have a part in public affairs, that he would be a good Jew and a good human being. A clever man, courageous, with a strong character so he would not fall on his knees each time he came to the Germans as a tragic messenger of this poor Jewish community. At the meeting several representatives were suggested, but nobody could come to an agreement. In addition, all the people refused to take the task on themselves. There was a terrible mood of depression in the meeting. After a long discussion, Dr. Ellers, the chairman of this meeting, suggested Dr. Ellers, who was a self-conscious

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Jew, a Zionist and a very famous doctor in Kovno. The suggestion was immediately accepted by everybody with great enthusiasm, but also Dr Elkers refused to take it on himself. Again there was a terrible atmosphere of embarrassment. Then Kraf Schnuckler got up and held a passionate speech which shocked everybody. He said "How terrible is our situation, that we cannot offer Dr Elkers the respected task of being the head of the Jewish community in Kovno, but that we offer him the humiliating task of being 'Oberjude' - the man who represents us to the Germans. But please, I want you to know, dear Dr Elkers, that only for the German murderers will you be an Oberjude. In our eyes you will be the head of our community who was elected in such a tragic hour for us all, when we are bleeding and the sword, the murdering sword, is swimming over our heads. A duty has fallen in your path which cannot be more difficult, but at the same time it is also right, and a great ^{Mitzvah} Y. You cannot refuse. Please, be our leader. Protect us. You will be with us and we will all be with you, until we come to the great day of liberation." Schnuckler finished talking and started to weep, and all the people in the room were weeping together with

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him. Dr Elker was standing pale without uttering a word. Everybody could see what was going on deep in his soul. And everybody was feeling that in this tragic moment Dr Elkers understood that it was his duty to bring this great sacrifice which cruel fate had demanded from him. A great feeling of relief came over all, and there was a ray of hope in the broken hearts of all the people present."

outlines

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G. Dr Elkers, in the full sense of the word, was a saintly man. It will be enough to illustrate that after the big action - it was 7 o'clock in the evening. - Dr Elkers managed to get from the Germans at least 100 ...?.. And he also got permission to enter the area of the so-called second ghetto, which was destroyed, and to take from 100 Jews. In the morning he went to this place together with some Jewish police to get these people. Many began to cry "Dr Elkers, save us! Save us!" there was a polizist with his gun who began to beat Dr Elkers /... then the Jewish police risk his life to save the hundred people. They couldn't but... he was then not a young man, went to the place where.....

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G. On October 19th 41 Elkers wrote a parting letter to two of his children, who were in England. This letter was written in Hebrew, and it was given a prayer that it should reach the children. "I am writing to you in an hour where many sore souls, many widows and orphans, many naked and hungry people are standing on my doorstep asking for help. I have no strength, and in me is a desert, and my soul has left me and I am naked and I have not one word to say." Then he added to describe what had happened in the big action of October 29th 41. He said "In my ears I have heard a terrible symphony of weeping, crying and yelling of ten thousand people, old young and babies which was tearing the heavens. There was not an ear that heard such a crying in all the generations and times. Together with many of the holy people I am crying out of a torn heart. Who is like you in the mute, my Lord?"

G. It happened in 1941..... It is difficult for me now to read this. I should be asked, I feel it, it's not by (incomprehensible) ... understand the understand also my life.

what I could contribute I contribute

ce I thank you very much, I am very much a man of what you do

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C.L. It is very moving. Directly from Hebrew...

C.L. And all the pictures in the book were bought from the Germans?

G. I would not say all, but most of them these were Germans, German soldiers after the war, they sold them...

C.L. They sold this for good money? And who bought them?

G. Various persons private persons.....

C.L. But at the time, in the ghetto?

G. It was after the ghetto.

C.L. It was after the ghetto. But you had communications with the outside world? Did you have a radio, for instance, in the ghetto?

G. This was the terrible thing. We had only... to listen.... It was of course illegal. It was a terrible danger

C.L. It was a terrible danger to have a radio

G. For the Jews? it was espionage

C.L. How many radios were in the ghetto?

G. perhaps ... the Communists. This I am not sure. Of course it was necessary to adapt.....

C.L. It was clandestine radio?

G. It was one of the consequences of.....

Dr Elters....

It is impossible. We had no contact - to know what

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was going on.

C.L. The ghetto was completely isolated?

G. People in the places of work sometimes would steal a newspaper or even get from a German. So as a matter of fact we knew everything.

We knew about 5 o'clock in the morning about the fall of Mussolini (?)

C.L. At 5 o'clock in the morning about the fall of Mussolini?

G. Of course. ^{They} We told all the population not to show joy because the Germans..... would object.

C.L. This is extraordinary. He says they knew the fall of Mussolini but they ordered the population...

G. We knew before many generals knew...

C.L. ... they ordered the population of the ghetto not to show joy because the Germans could feel something.

exchange Hebrew and one

G. So it's possible to begin?

C.L. It's possible to begin but please take your time....

You can eat very quietly... there is no problem.

Plan de Mrs. Paulant et echant

C.L. Irene will read now in English - she will translate directly from Hebrew to English what you read -

this extraordinary passage from your book about the Lebensscheine. And how the German cracked completely the Jews with these life certificates. It was the same everywhere in the ghettos in Lithuania, in Vilna.

G. I think they were yellow Scheine....

C.L. And these ones were white.

Blue 3
certificates

I. "On 15th September 1941 in the evening Kominsky came to the office of the Ältesten Rat and delivered a written order from the Gebietskommissar of Kovno together with 5000 white certificates. On each certificate it was written in German: 'A certificate for Jewish artisans. Gebietskommissariat, Kovno. Signed Jorgan S.A. Hauptsturmführer.' By the order of the Gebietskommissar it was said that the Ältesten Rat has to distribute these certificates among the artisans of the ghetto and their families; all this in one day, 16th September. When Kominsky was asked what these certificates meant he answered that there would be certain advantages for the people who had the certificates and that on the whole the economic situation would improve."

G. He knew everything.

C.L. He knew everything?

G. He knew, Kominsky, that a big action would destroy



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about 25 000 Jews in....

C.L. The idea was to destroy 25 000....

G. The plan was 25, and to leave only at the end those who had the right certificate.

C.L. There were 30 000 Jews in the ghetto at this time.

G. ?

C.L. At this time there were 30 000....

G. 30 000....

C.L. And they planned to let alive only 5 000?

G. Only 5 000 craftsmen.

C.L. Artisans? Skilled workers.

G. Skilled workers, artisans... it was not clear.

C.L. They wanted the artisans alone, or did they allow some members of their families?

G. It was not clear.

C.L. But excuse me... Why did they want to keep the artisans?

G. Because they used them as a

C.L. For the? Is it true that the Jews were the skilled workers in Lithuania?

G. Yes.

C.L. It is true? That the Jews in Lithuania were the skilled workers?

G. Very many. They knew this. And they decided to leave these 5 000 alive ... and the others were superficial,

C.L. Le hochs mable

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I. "The next day in the morning the Ältesten Rat started to distribute the certificates by a special committee of the labour offices."

C.L. At the time the Ältesten Rat didn't know...

G. No...

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I. "Although the whole affair already made a great suspicion from the beginning, it was not clear that it was the sign of an approaching holocaust. In the early hours the distribution of the certificates went on peacefully and relatively quietly.

It was very difficult to decide who was an artisan, because many people who had no past experience in work had registered as artisans before, at the beginning of September. In addition it was very difficult to know the real number of the family members of the artisans. It was looked for ways in order to get over those difficulties. The whole situation changed completely

in the afternoon, when in the Ältesten Rat orders were received from Germans, the directors of the working places in town where Jews of the ghetto were working, and they demanded that their Jews be given some of the 'life certificates'."

(Sync G)

C.L. The Germans who were employing the Jews knew exactly

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what was the meaning: the people who got the certificates would live and the others would die. 'Life certificates'.

I. "Immediately it was understood what the true significance of the Life Certificates was, and why the Germans gave the order to distribute them. It turned out that the Germans decided to let alive only 5 000 people of all the Jews of the ghetto. Only the artisans who were useful to them. All the rest of the people of the ghetto - 24 000 people - were condemned to perish. Then the Jews understood what Kominsky meant when he said that the economic situation in the ghetto would improve..."

"... This knowledge spread quickly in the ghetto, which on the whole was already in a great stress and terrible nervousness. The people stormed the offices of the Altsten Rat in thousands, demanding strongly to give them white certificates.

All claims that the number of the certificates was limited were in vain. Of course in those conditions it was impossible to distribute the certificates in any kind of plan or order. Thousands of people and women, terrified, were screaming and weeping and begging and screaming and quarrelling amongst themselves. It was not difficult to understand those people who had to distribute these cert-

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Sub No 3

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ificates, who had this terrible bitter role:
to decide who is going to live and who is going to
die. Who could be so clever to find the right criteria
way to decide who has the right to stay alive and
2 who doesn't have such a right; who is somebody
useful to the Jewish community and who isn't?

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The order said that the certificates had to be
distributed only among the artisans and their families; but could one decide that all the rest,
including the Jewish intellectuals, would perish
completely? Any moment terrible questions of
conscience and terrible tragedy which could not
be solved, rose to give certificates to the
whole family or to limit the number only to
one, two or three members of the family? To give
certificates also to the babies, the old people,
the chronically ill - or give them only to healthy
and adult people. It was the first time that the
ghetto came upon the question of the lonely
women. They were, for the most part, widows of the
first victims of the Nazi terror - of the pogrom
in Slobodka, the massacre in Fort Seven and the our?
action of the seventh of August, and the murder
of the 534 intellectuals who were taken to arrange
the Lithuanian archives and never returned.

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Those women had no husbands who could be recognised officially as artisans. Was it right to leave those poor widows and their orphan children without any protection? In the circles of the Ältesten Rat a radical suggestion came up - to return all the 'Jorganscheine' - the Jorgan certificates - to the Germans and announce to them that the Ältesten Rat cannot see any way of distributing them. There were even those who went further and offered to burn all the white certificates. The reason was, they said, that if the whole community of Kovno had to perish it was immoral that one-sixth of it should have the advantage because they were needed by the Germans for their own purposes. "If we all have to perish, we will perish all together" the people with those suggestions claimed.

The knowledge spread in the ghetto immediately that the Ältesten Rat was discussing the suggestion and many artisans started to protest heavily. "What kind of right do you have to take away from me and my family the possibility of survival?"

they demanded strongly to be given the certificates which were intended for them, and besides it turned out that many of the ghetto people who

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already had the certificates received them from the committee because of the demands of the German employers. After long discussions the Ältesten Rat came to the decision that they did not have the moral right to condemn to death also the 5 000 Jews who could survive, but at the same time the Ältesten Rat decided to distribute the certificates not only to the artisans but also among the others, and to assume full responsibility for this." p28

ARCHIVES

GARFUNKEL 9

I. "During the whole night the sentries who stood around the barbed wire did not stop shooting. Nobody in the ghetto could close an eye in this terrible night. Not the happy ones who already had the white certificates - many of them were ashamed to look in the face of the condemned. And of course not the condemned, who had no certificates.

The shots near the fence were a kind of opening out to the scene of blood that was intended for the next day. During 16th September they did not manage to distribute all the white certificates; therefore, the next day, 17th September, at

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id.

Sync 6 o'clock in the morning, immediately the storming of all the people in the ghetto started on the offices of the Ältesten Rat. They demanded to be given certificates, and of course this time the demand was more vehement and more strong and violent than the day before. The sword was already on the neck. The day before, the Ältesten Rat could still control the situation to a certain extent, but in the early hours of this dark morning, the Ältesten Rat lost control completely. The situation came to a climax when the information came that the Germans were already putting up the machine guns around the ghetto and that a unit of Germans and Lithuanian collaborators was entering the ghetto and the action was starting. At that moment they started to grab the certificates from the members of the Ältesten Rat and its employees, and in one moment not one single certificate was left. But the desperate crowd, which was left of course for the most part without a certificate, didn't want to believe that there were no certificates left. The people burst into all the rooms with hysterical cries; they were breaking tables and breaking all the windowpanes. The Chairman of the Ältesten Rat, Dr. Elkers, had a heart attack and

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fainted. After he was given an injection his friends took him out of the offices with great difficulty. The member of the Ältesten Rat, Goldberg, was thrown down by the crowd. He also fainted and was lying there, for a long time, unconscious. In the meantime the action started. Germans and Lithuanian collaborators entered the small ghetto and ordered all the people to get out of their homes and stand in a certain place outside the ghetto. Those who had the certificates were put up on one side, and all the others on the other side. From the hospital which was established in the small ghetto by the Ältesten Rat the sick were brought on stretchers and they were also put on the bad side, where the people without the certificates were standing. This was also done to the children and the babies who were in the children's home in the small ghetto. About 3 000 people were already in the square. By the order of the German officer in charge of the action, the soldiers and Lithuanian collaborators started to load the Jews of the bad side on trucks. Some of the trucks already left, filled up with Jews, in the direction of Fort Hine. The crowd was standing there paralysed. There were people standing there

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GARFUNKEL 10

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saying their confession or praying, reciting the psalms. Jews of the other quarters of the ghetto were looking from far away at what was going on, frightened and trembling. They waited, terrified, for the moment when they would be the ones to go. All of a sudden a German officer came from town, went to the officer in charge of the action, whispered a few words in his ear. At first the officer was a little confused, but then he announced in a loud voice "The whole thing is cancelled - everybody go home". The first moment the crowd did not understand his words and nobody moved."

ask by here ...

Return on foot about

Fin bloc 3

C.L. You have written a ...?.. book.

G. It's not me.... You know, all the feelings, all the goings-on...

C.L. Did you keep a diary in the ghetto?

G. ...?...

il hok

C.L. Did you write this in Yiddish?

G. No, I began in Yiddish, in the ghetto, of course clandestinely. Because the Germans...

Four chapters and then came the liquidation of the ghetto so it was impossible to take the and all this were burnt ~~what~~ we were already free I began...

C.L. But tell me: you were present yourself this day

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G. Of course.

C.L. And you were in the discussion of the Altstein Rat?

G. In the discussion? Of course. I was the vice-chairman...

C.L. What was your own position? What did you think?

Were you of the opinion that one had to refuse all this or that one had to save what could be saved?

G. What is possible to save. And this is also.....

C.L. One has to save the Jews who can be saved?

G. What is possible.

C.L. Yes, but it is a...

G. It's a terrible thing, you know, when I have to decide: this man is entitled to live, this man is not entitled to live.

C.L. It is impossible.

G. An impossible decision. And what, of the children and the widows?

C.L. I have read that in Vilna, for instance, they were the artisans - the people that had the Scheine - the pink or yellow Scheine - they had the choice of leaving with their wives or their mothers or their daughters but not everybody.

Yes, and which daughter?

C.L. Which daughter?

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panic
clan

6 PG

G. Which daughter? Sarah is entitled to leave; and another daughter, Rikke, is not entitled. The parent has to decide. *this*

C.L. It is an impossible dilemma.

G. I cannot understand how still have not brought It is a bit of time....

C.L. There were people who were losing their minds? And how do you explain this panic of all these Jews?

G. The panic was impossible to explain. You have seen a crowd of thousands

"Give! Give!" impossible to explain.

C.L. But your opinion was one has to save.

G. My opinion: what is possible to save, we must save. There is also a possibility: who is saving one Jew will have the ... in paradise.

C.L. But this was saving one Jew and killing other Jews.

G. Of course!

C.L. And did you have at this time - another question, excuse me - the feeling that what was at stake was the destruction of the whole Jewish people?

G. Yes, but the 000 temporarily nobody could... know - could be a prophet, to know what would be the lot of these other people who were saved? Perhaps for a month or two months. But

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so far at this moment it was the possibility of
save five thousand souls.

C.L. Jews, to save five thousand Jews.

G. What is the situation of a captain on a sinking
ship?

C.L. A captain? You say it is exactly the situation
of what?

G. Of the captain of a sinking ship. That's right.

GARFUNKEL 12

I. "Two days before the big action on 26 October 1941, an
employee of the Gestapo, Rauka, the same man who came
on 18 August to take the 500 people of the intelligentsia,
came to the Altesten Rat and announced that he had
been appointed in charge of the ghetto, and that he wanted
to see all the people of the ghetto face to face.
Therefore he ordered the Altesten Rat to announce
that on 28 October at 6 o'clock in the morning all the
people of the ghetto with no exception had to come to the
Democratic Square, on the same day nobody would go to
work."

C.L. The whole population of the ghetto? He wants everybody...

G. All. It was a big square. As he would be in charge of the
ghetto he wants to see .. all the material.

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Sh6 Block

I. "On that same day all the houses have to be left open, the doors unlocked. If somebody is sick and can't come to the square he has to get a certificate from the doctor and put a note on the door of his house that there is a Jew at home. Whoever disobeyed and is found on that day in his flat will be killed on the spot. All the people of the ghetto have to be standing in the square in a certain order, meaning: members of the "Altesten Rat in one group; next to them the Jewish police of the ghetto and employees of the "Altesten Rat according to all the departments and institutions. After them, people working in the airport; after them, the people working in other places in town; and in the last group, those who still have no fixed work. Everyone has to have in his hand all the certificates about his working duty; all members of the family have to stand near the head of the family. The Jewish police has to put everybody in his place and look for the order. He, Reilke, will pass each row and check every man and woman and their certificates. Those found incapable of hard labour will be taken from the ghetto to another place. Where will they be taken? He didn't say exactly, but from what he said, it could be understood that he means the area of the small ghetto. All the rest of the people, he said, will remain in the ghetto; and, since they are going to do hard work, they will also get additional

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Ralke Block

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Ralke's words left a terrible impression on the members of the "Altesten Rat". We assumed that he didn't say the whole truth; perhaps he uncovered something, but he kept the rest secret. There was again the feeling that the brown beast is again thirsty for Jewish blood and that again the ghetto was on the verge of the abyss. The "Altesten Rat" faced at that hour the question of conscience and responsibility at the same time. The tragic question of how to behave: whether to obey the order Ralke gave, meaning to announce to the Jews of the ghetto the demands of the Gestapo and to give the orders to the Jewish police about how to carry out the command; or whether, this time, to apply the tactics of sabotage and disregard Ralke's order completely. It was clear to the "Altesten Rat" that if they go by the first way, then there is hope to save - even only for some time - a part, and perhaps even the bigger part of the ghetto population. But if they go by the other way, meaning the way of sabotage, this could bring terrible persecution against the whole ghetto and maybe its complete destruction. This consciousness and the feeling of responsibility for the lives of thousands of Jews who could still be saved melted together with the traditional Jewish hope that perhaps the Lord would have mercy, and that in the last moment a miracle would happen. All this influenced the standing of the "Altesten Rat" who decided

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- also this time not to go by the way of open sabotage against the Germans."
- (I. et G. discute en hébreu)
- I. "This decision was accepted through terrible torture of the soul and after a long meeting, which lasted for long hours, and after a visit in the night and consultation of the old Rabbi of the Kovno community, Rabbi Shapiro. When the Rabbi heard the members of the "Altesten Rat he was frightened and fainted..."
- C.L. He fainted?
- G. He fainted, of course *an old man*
- I. "After he came to, he asked to be given a couple of hours to check his holy books and see how one has to behave in such an hour, by Jewish ethics." *that*
- C.L. Can you read the sentence through?
- I. "After he came to, he asked to be given a couple of hours to check the holy books to see how one has to behave at an hour of such trouble, by the Jewish ethics. The next morning Rabbi Shapiro announced that if the "Altesten Rat hopes that by obeying Ralke's order they will be able to save even a small part of the ghetto community, they have to have the courage to assume the responsibility to fulfil the order."
- G. (en hébreu)
- I. (It's the announcement the "Altesten Rat put up)..."the same day, in the evening, it became known to all the

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people in the ghetto and it was not secret any more. In different places in the ghetto posters were put up by members of the Altesten Rat in Yiddish and German. This is what those announcements said: "All the people of the ghetto with no exception, including children and sick people, have to leave their flats on 28 October 41, not later than 6 a.m. They have to assemble in the square among the big blocks in Democrato street and stand there according to the orders they receive from the Jewish police. All the people of the ghetto have to stand in the square, family after family, the heads of the family standing in front. The flats have to be left empty and everything unlocked. After 6a.m. nobody is allowed to be at home; all found at home after 6 a.m. will be shot on the spot."

C.L. Excuse me; what do you call the traditional Jewish hope?

G. ^{Optimism} ... perhaps somebody will help...

C.L. A miracle?

G. In Jewish history there were many such things. Many.

C.L. That a miracle ^{flap} will happen at the last moment?

G. Yes. In history there are many, many such happenings.

C.L. But the Jews thought like this?

G. Yes. Perhaps...

I. (Will have mercy)

C.L. Perhaps the Lord will have mercy?

G. Perhaps in the last moment. It has happened many times in Jewish history.

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C.L. Do you think that is why the Jews went to the
without moving, without protesting?

G. Yes.

C.L. Just another question: Rabbi Shapiro wrote in such a
way: he said one has to obey Rauke and maybe something..

G. Maybe... if the Altesten Rat has even a small hope to
save some Jews...

C.L. Yes, but he writes that he goes to the holy books, to
the Torah, ... but Maimonides says completely the
contrary. He writes exactly that if the Gentiles -
the enemies of the Jewish people - ask one Jew to
be killed and (Maimonides says) if the Jews don't give
this man to be killed, they are threatened to have the whole
community destroyed, the whole community must perish.
This is Maimonides.

G. Yes, perhaps he was another... after all, Maimonides
is not Moses,

C.L. Maimonides is not Moses?

G. Yes.... Many Rabbis decided so...

GARFUNKEL 13

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archives

C.L. Of course, Maimonides could not foresee such subjects...

Because he was never faced with the destruction of the
whole Jewish people. A last question - a difficult question...

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G. It is impossible to obligate somebody that he should judge. I understand ... just disappear ...?...

C.L. Do you think this behaviour is a specific Jewish behaviour or that Christians in the same circumstances would have been the same?

G. (I think it is mostly a Jewish behaviour - to save what it is possible to save ... all the diaspora ... to say that this man has to be killed (?)).

C.L. And this hope to the last minute - you think it is a Jewish...?

G. A Jewish characteristic... a long list of

G. And in the last moment, something happened. Perhaps a woman influenced ... just the last moment.

C.L. It belongs to the internal (?) Jewish tradition.

G. Save what is possible. ... Fifteen hundred years ago a poem was written about heroism ... in order to save you all have to commit suicide ... suicide is the only way for a man ... I was elected in order to save people - of course in the frame of possibility.

C.L. Were there many suicides in the ghetto?

G. Almost nothing. In the last days of the ghetto there were perhaps two or three. ... it was also a case of suicide but perhaps it was an unbalanced man. That is also interesting ... the psychological side of this.

C.L. In such terrible conditions the people wanted to live.

G. They wanted to live. Women were even concerned with

mode in the ghetto.

C.L. With fashion?

G. With fashion. Otherwise the Jewish people wouldn't exist.

C.L. Without this optimism? Without this strength the Jewish people would not be living now?

G. a long list of ^{poems} ... perhaps thirty, perhaps forty ... poem for this, and poem for this... They would celebrate... take into consideration...???

C.L. I would like you to read the day of the big action, 28 October, because it's a beautiful thing that you wrote.

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28th October was a cold and cloudy day of Autumn. The sun was hiding as if it was ashamed to appear and its rays did not look out of the clouds. Heavens did not ask for mercy for the poor ghetto Jews, and the heavens were quiet. The ground was covered with melting snow and dirty with mud. In the early hours of this damp morning when it was still dark, thousands of Jews were walking slowly to Democratic Square. They looked like shadows of human beings. The children and the old and the weak were led by hand, the babies in perambulators and the sick ones in stretchers. Around the square in which all the Jews of the ghetto were standing, group after group, according to the order, machine guns were stood up; on the square itself

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6P H German soldiers and Lithuanian collaborators appeared in large numbers. There was also a big group of Gestapo people with Rauke at its head and the people of the Stadtskommissariat with Jorgan. Far away on the mountains there were Lithuanians in a large crowd; they came to watch the scene.

At 8 a.m. exactly it started. The choice: who is to live and who is to die. At first Rauke passed the two groups - the one of the 'Altesten Rat' and its employees, and the one of the police - and sent them both to the good side. Then he gave the order to the rest of the groups to pass him, family after family."

C.L. Pass in front of him?

I. Yes. "He didn't look at all at the certificates about the duty of work, which everyone tried to show him. According to his wish he sent to his right - the bad side - or to the left - the good side - without considering the families. He tore them apart; he separated the man from his wife, parents from their children and sisters from their brothers. All this was done quietly, peacefully, with a diabolical smile without taking the cigarette out of his mouth. When the time for breakfast came he took out of his pocket a sandwich and ate it pleasantly and continued to work." (elle parle à G.)

"Every half an hour his associates would come and give him exact information about the number of Jews

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He had already condemned to die. All the Jews whom Rauke decided to leave alive were put at the edge of the square; there they had to stand, terribly crowded, and wait for the evening until the whole operation was over. The rest were sent, group after group, heavily guarded, to the area of the small ghetto, which on that day was surrounded on all sides by Lithuanians and Germans. Then everybody understood what the purpose of the Germans was in not letting anybody of the population of the town to enter the flats of the Jews who had been taken out of the small ghetto. The Germans needed an empty quarter where they could put in one day a large number of people from the ghetto before they were sent to be massacred in Fort Nine.

In the great confusion and terror which grabbed everyone, many Jews did not know where to go, and instead of standing at the good side, where they had been sent by Rauke, they went out of fright and confusion to the bad side. During the selection, German soldiers and Lithuanian collaborators went in the ghetto from house to house and searched whether Jews were hiding there. The Jews who were very ill and stayed at home their number was not big were put in trucks and sent immediately to be killed in Fort Nine.

The whole horror lasted from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. During all these ten hours in Democratic Square there

was a noise of voices bursting out of thousands of poor people..."

GARFUNKEL 14

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"All this horror lasted from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. All through these ten hours in Democratic Square there was a noise bursting out of thousands of poor people standing on the abyss. This one was screaming, this one was shouting, this one was weeping, another one was claiming (?), pulling out the hair of his head. Others were putting up their hands. All these voices melted into a symphony of death, hell and destruction. Woe to the eyes that saw this sight, and woe to the ears who heard the noises accompanying it. In all those hours, terrible pictures passed the memory: pictures of the middle ages, the times of the crusades in France and Germany, the terrible pictures of the pogroms of Chemonitsky(?) in Ukraine. Also in those days thousands and hundreds of thousands of Jews were led to massacre. But in those days those poor people at least had one comforting feeling which gave them the power and courage to go with their heads held up high to the gallows. They were conscious that they were sacrificing their lives on Kidush Hachem - the sanctification of the divine name - and out of their wish to remain faithful to their people and their people and their

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religion.

Jumping into the fire and stretching out their necks to the swords of the haters and enemies and their soul going out in "Sh'm'a Israel" they gave the proud answer to the murderers who made them face the choice: to convert or to die.

But the people of the enlightened 20th century, the people of the Swastika, did not give the ghetto Jews an alternative, a choice between life and death. The only thing they could do was resist empty-handed against the Germans - to choose one way of dying from the other. But they did not do it, because after all they still hoped for a miracle of the last moment.

In the early morning of that day, 26 400 people left their homes. Late in the evening, 17 400 returned. The flats, which only yesterday were so crowded, seemed all of a sudden half empty. There was almost no house where somebody was not missing. There were many families whose apartments were empty."

C.L. This means they took this day to kill 9 000 people.

G. To kill 10 000. There was a mistake. About 9 700.

It was such a tumult. There was also a question of how to feed these people.

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T6P

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GARFUNKEL 15

C.L. You said nine thousand seven hundred ..

G. They made a mistake...

C.L. And they were killed the following day?

G. They killed only 9-200.

C.L. Yes, but they were killed the following day?

G. Yes ...

C.L. Can you just explain for the people who don't know:

What is Kidush Hachem?

G. They sacrifice their life for the sanctification of God.

C.L. For the sanctity of God?

C.L. What is Kidush Hachem?

G. It is terminology... the Jewish people. A sacrifice their own life in order to sanctify God.

C.L. This is what happened in the crusades, and in Spain, when the Jews...

G. ... If somebody said "I agree to convert" he doesn't die. But it was not an alternative. You can be a religious Jew; you can be converted. ... only alternative.. form of suicide. Instead of hanging himself, he could do something *other*.

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GARFUNKEL 16

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GARFUNKEL 17

(beaucoup de bruits de fond, etc...)

GARFUNKEL 18

GARFUNKEL 19

C.L. It is just at the very beginning...

GARFUNKEL 20

I. This was probably bought from a German...

C.L. Is that the pogroms that were instigated by the Germans...?

G. Here is a German soldier, but here are also ... from the police.

C.L. And the Lithuanians are killing the Jews with clubs, no? And what is this one?

G. This is a part of the ... who were caught ... it was before the ghetto was established ...

C.L. And they were sent to be killed..

G. Yes. They are on the fifth fort ... women and men separately, as I told you... So that if agree to go to the ghetto...

C.L. This is you?

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Reporter Photo G + C

G said are photo (Lithuanians)

G + C -

(Lithuanians)

G. Yes ... De Elkes

C.L. Noble face ...?

G. This is me ... this is Golda ... This was Levy, he was not a member of the Altesten Rat ...?

I. (He was a contact man for the underground)

G. ...

I. (He was a contact between the Altesten Rat and the underground.)

G. As a matter of fact he survived. He managed to escape in the last days of the exodus of the Jews

C.L. What is this?

G. This picture ... the Jewish belongings who are going to the ghetto ...

C.L. The moving inside the ghetto?

G. ...

I. (Here are the empty carts returning and coming back)

C.L. And all the people were removing .. from the city to inside the ghetto.

C.L. What is this?

G.

I. (People are sent to the extermination sites.)

C.L. For the mass killings.

G. ...

I. (The belongings of the prisoners of war in 2)

C.L. German prisoners of war?

G. Of course.

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C.L. And this is a Judenkolonn?

G. ... Jewish forced labour ...

C.L. Coming back after the ...

G. ...

C.L. They are going to be annihilated?

G. To be annihilated ...

C.L. ...

G. That is the orchestra. It is a little strange ... *big volume*

I. (There were many poets ... there were concerts in the ghetto ... many were for it ...)

C.L. You mean there were people who wanted the orchestra and people who didn't want it?

G. Perhaps you have read the book 'The Forty Days' by *W. Gold* Then there also was a very big struggle ...

I. (Those were for it ... In Armenia they didn't have an orchestra. The question was whether to establish a choir.)

G. The same problem was also there in Armenia.

C.L. And you were part ...

G. I was for ...

I. (To raise the morale of the people)

C.L. Who is this? ... Never mind.

G. *(... for the future ...)*

Photo off

C.L. Did you see yourself ... did you witness this yourself?
It is a terrible one, no?

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G. It is most terrible.

C.L. They are killing them with what? Is it wood?

Did you see other pogroms in your life, before? Was this the first one? ... All these people will die.

G. You see, there are only men. As far as it is possible to see, because it is only part...

C.L. There were several thousands.

G. Of course.

C.L. Ah yes, this is the famous picture of the Judenrat - Dr Elkers. A beautiful man. He died in Dachau. Were you there when he died? Yes?

G. It was a branch of Dachau.

C.L. But you were there when he died?

G. This I have seen ...

C.L. Did you have a good flat before the ghetto? Did you live in a nice place?

G. ...

C.L. action ... selection.

G. After the selection ...

C.L. And they are brought to the fort to be killed?

G. ...

C.L. They had the Judenstern on the back.

G. Here also.

C.L. Two? On every piece of clothing?

G. On the coat ...

G. This is ... I am not sure. And this is Stiefel.

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C.L. Did he die?

G. No. After the liberation, in there was organised by the Jewish orchestra in the ghetto a survivors' orchestra, and he was the 'dirigent'...

(fin de l'interview GARFUNKEL)

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