

October 12, 1976

• Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL
STATEMENTS ON EASTERN EUROPE

EASTERN EUROPE

Administration Position

The President said on April 2, 1976:

"It is the policy of the United States and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe, with whom we have such close ties of culture as well as blood, by every proper and by every peaceful means.

"My policy, America's policy, toward Eastern Europe is fully, clearly and formally documented. It is a creative and cooperative policy toward the nations of Eastern Europe. It is the policy that embraces our most important ideals as a nation.

"I have followed this policy in my visits to Eastern Europe and in my meetings with Eastern European leaders here as well as overseas. Our policy in no sense -- and I emphasize this -- in no sense accepts Soviet dominion of Eastern Europe Nor is it in any way designed to permit the consolidation of such dominion. On the contrary, the United States seeks to be responsive to and to encourage as responsibly as possible the desires of Eastern Europeans for greater autonomy, independence and more normal relations with the rest of the world.

"This is the policy that I will continue to pursue with patience, with firmness and with persistence -- a policy from which the United States will not waiver."

Presidential Documents

Vol. 12, no. 15, pp. 537-538

The United States interest in Eastern Europe is due not only to considerations of foreign policy but also to the fact that millions of Americans' ancestral homelands, relatives and friends are there. The President believes that efforts to settle political conflicts and improve relations with the countries of Eastern Europe contributes to their peaceful evolution toward more openness and to their efforts to define their own roles as sovereign nations in the affairs of Europe.

The President's policy toward Eastern Europe is fully, clearly, and formally documented.* It is a policy of positive action and a policy embracing America's most important ideals. It is a policy the President has repeated in messages to Americans of Estonian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian ancestry in recent months. The United States strongly supports the aspirations for freedom and national independence of peoples everywhere -- including the peoples of Eastern Europe. The President is totally opposed to so-called spheres of influence by any power. He has manifested this policy in his visits to Eastern Europe and in his meetings with Eastern European leaders in the United States.

United States policy in no sense accepts Soviet "dominion" of Eastern Europe nor is it in any way designed to seek the consolidation of such "dominion." On the contrary, the United States seeks to be responsive to, and to encourage as responsibly as possible, the desires of East Europeans for greater autonomy, independence and more normal relations with the rest of the world.

Administration Actions

The Administration has capped a decade of improving relations with Romania with the negotiation of a trade agreement that will promote the continued development of mutually beneficial economic ties and thereby bring the structure of our economic relations into accord with the very satisfactory state of our political relations. These relations have been advanced further by President Ford's wide-ranging discussions with President Ceausescu in Washington and Bucharest.

President Ford's talks with Polish First Secretary Gierek in Washington in October 1974 and again in Warsaw in July 1975 have affirmed the desire we share for further improvements in relations between our two countries, and have provided for the further development of commercial, economic, cultural, scientific and technological cooperation.

The President's meetings with Yugoslav leaders have provided a welcome opportunity to assess continued progress in our bilateral relations, including the substantial growth of trade in recent years. We have reaffirmed our mutual intention to encourage cooperation, not only in bilateral matters but also for the preservation and consolidation of peace.

The President's meetings with ethnic leaders in the United States have provided welcome occasions for a discussion of U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe.

* Tab A -- Remarks of the President to the Polish-American Congress
September 24, 1976

Tab B -- President's Captive Nations Week Proclamation
July 2, 1976

Tab C -- President's Message to American Latvian Association
April 27, 1976

Tab D -- President's Remarks to Greater Milwaukee Ethnic Organizations
April 2, 1976

Tab E -- President's Message to Americans of Lithuanian Ancestry
February 26, 1976

Tab F -- Statement by the President on Policy Toward Eastern Europe
July 25, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL QUADRENNIAL CONVENTION
OF THE POLISH-AMERICAN CONGRESS

THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HOTEL

10:35 A.M. EDT

Your Excellence Cardinal Krol, Senator Schweicker, Congressman John Heinz, distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen:

I feel great. How do you feel this morning?

I am greatly honored by your invitation to address the Convention of the Polish-American Congress, and I am mighty proud to be here, not just as President but as a friend of American Polonia.

It has been the policy of mine -- and the policy of my Administration -- to listen carefully to the voice of Polish America. When it comes to sacrifice and achievement, you have given more, far more, than your share in making this the greatest country in the history of mankind.

Fifty-eight years ago another Polish-American conference was addressed by the great patriot Jan Paderewski. His feats as an orator were no less stunning than his genius as a musician and as the leader of the Polish-American people.

His address to his audience in Polish for over two and a half hours -- I will not try to emulate that performance.

However, let me repeat a few of Paderewski's comments and observations. He said, and I quote, "The Poles in America do not need any Americanization. It is superfluous to explain to them what are the ideals of America. They know very well, for they have been theirs for 1000 years."

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Another Polish American leader put the same thought this way. "I feel I am 200 percent American because I am 100 percent Pole."

Much of what America celebrates in its Bicentennial year we owe to Polish Americans. Before the Pilgrims even landed at Plymouth, Poles had already first built the first factory in America in the colony at Jamestown. Poles had already pioneered American civil liberties demanding and receiving from the Virginia colony a voice in their own government.

For more than 3-1/2 centuries, Polish Americans have been working hard to build a better life for themselves and for their children. You have been soldiers and settlers, teachers and clergymen, scientists, craftsmen and artists. You have earned a distinguished place in the new world as your ancestors did in the old.

Yet today, you are troubled. You look abroad and see friends and relatives who do not fully share your freedom in America. You look at home and see too many of your neighborhoods deteriorating. I share your deep concern and I am also troubled.

But there is much we can do, as much as we have been doing, both at home and abroad. In the first two years of this Administration, I have worked hard to build a positive and expanding relationship with the people and the Government of Poland. A powerful motivation for that policy has been the knowledge that for many, many Americans, Poland is the home of their ancestors and their relatives.

I have sought to tie our countries closer together economically and culturally. In the last two years, trade between our countries has almost doubled. For America, that means more jobs and more production. For Poland, that means a higher standard of living and greater exposure to the American way of life.

A valuable worker in this important task has been the head of the Small Business Administration, Mitch Kobelinski. Last week in Washington, I met with Mitch. He told me personally how badly he wanted to be here this weekend, but this week, he is in Poland discussing how and by what means we can expand trade between our two peoples. My own meetings with Polish officials in Washington in 1974 and in Warsaw and Krakow in 1975 have led to a better understanding between our two countries.

In 1974, we signed a Joint Statement of Principles of Polish-American relations. In that statement, I reaffirmed for the United States the importance we attach to a sovereign and independent Poland. That statement was a part of a broader policy I have advocated throughout my entire life. The United States must continue to support by every peaceful and proper means the aspirations for freedom and national independence of peoples of Eastern Europe. As I have said many times before, as I told a group of Polish-American leaders at the White House just two weeks ago, the so-called Sonnenfeldt Doctrine never did exist and does not exist. The United States is totally opposed to spheres of influence belonging to any power. That policy is fundamental to our relationship with Poland and that policy will continue as long as I am President of the United States.

In my several meetings with Polish leaders, I also stress the importance that all Americans attach to humanitarian issues. People everywhere should have the right to express themselves freely. People everywhere should have the right to emigrate and travel freely. People everywhere should have the right to be united with their families.

I will continue to see that humanitarian matters are treated with the highest priority, not only in our relationships with Poland, but with the rest of the world. If we are to keep the respect throughout the world that the United States has today and must maintain, we must keep America strong. We must make sure that America not only has strong defenses but a strong heart.

Polish Americans know what it means to be strong. Many of your families came here without material wealth. In the countryside you cleared the land and made productive farms. In the cities you built neighborhoods you could be proud of. You built and paid for your own churches. You built your own schools and financial institutions. You built orphanages for the young and hospitals for the aged. You built your own institutions, the great fraternal organizations represented here today.

We must insure that what you have done, what you have earned, what you have built, will be here for your children to enjoy -- these wonderful young people here on this podium and in this hall. We must insure that your families will have the neighborhoods they need to build a decent life of their own.

A family needs a neighborhood that is safe. A family needs a neighborhood that is stable. A family needs a neighborhood with local churches, local shops and local schools.

Some of the healthiest neighborhoods in our cities are Polish-American neighborhoods, but today too many neighborhoods are threatened by urban decay. You are paying a terrible price in lost property values -- property you worked hard to buy and maintain and that you love.

In cities like Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, too many young men and women are finding it impossible to remain in the neighborhoods where they were raised. Too many parents are forced to watch helplessly as all they have worked and saved to build up is eaten away.

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This does not have to happen. I will continue to do everything in my power to see to it that it does not happen.

On the first day of this year I signed into law the Mortgage Disclosure Act to prevent redlining and neighborhood decline. Last month I met with the ethnic leaders to see what more we could do. As a result of that meeting, I created the President's Committee on Urban Development and Neighborhood Revitalization. I charged that committee with developing a sound Federal policy to help preserve our neighborhoods. That policy will be based on local initiative and local control.

Revitalizing our neighborhoods will help preserve your investments in your homes, your churches and your community facilities; it will help keep families together; it will help keep America together. America itself is a wonderful family. We must keep that family close -- closer in the future than it has been in the past.

As a young boy in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I was very fortunate to have as close friends Americans from many backgrounds. In high school I was lucky. I worked as a part-time waiter and a dishwasher in a restaurant owned by a man named Bill Skouges, who was of Greek descent. That was in 1929 and 1930, when jobs and money were not easy to come by. I earned \$2 a week and my lunches, and Bill Skouges earned my admiration and affection and respect.

As a young Congressman, my first administrative assistant was my long and dear friend John Milonowski, who is incidentally running for probate judge out there, and let's get him elected. John and I worked together for many, many years, and on my recommendation he became our United States District Attorney in the Western District of Michigan. I was proud of the job he did, and it earns him the opportunity to be one of our three probate judges in the City of Grand Rapids.

But, as President of all of the people, I am determined that every voice in the American family must be heard. The voice of American Polonia will be listened to because all of us are proud of the red, white and blue. We should be proud of the great heritage of the red and white.

Thank you very, very much.

END. (AT 10:50 A.M. EDT)

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

CAPTIVE NATIONS WEEK, 1975

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

This year we mark the beginning of our third century as an independent nation. Two hundred years ago our Declaration of Independence declared that "all men are created equal." It did not say "all Americans" but embraced all men everywhere. Throughout our history we have repeatedly demonstrated our conviction and concern that men and women throughout the world should share the full blessings of liberty.

As we celebrate our Bicentennial, it is important that we let the world know that America still cares, that the torch in the Statue of Liberty still burns brightly. The world should know that we stand for freedom and independence in 1975, just as we stood for freedom and independence in 1776.

For two centuries, the fundamental basis of American policy toward other nations has remained unchanged: the United States supports the aspirations for freedom, independence and national self-determination of all peoples. We do not accept foreign domination over any nation. We reaffirm today this principle and policy.

The Eighty-Sixth Congress, by a joint resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), authorized and requested the President to proclaim the third week in July of each year as Captive Nations Week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GERALD R. FORD, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate the week beginning July 18, 1975 as Captive Nations Week.

I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities and I urge rededication to the aspirations of all peoples for self-determination and liberty.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of July in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundredth.

GERALD R. FORD

April 27, 1976

With fond memories of my participation in your meetings five years ago in Grand Rapids, I am delighted to greet the delegates at this Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Latvian Association.

I am very much aware of your great anxiety concerning your ancestral homeland, families and friends who have been, and still are, profoundly affected by East-West political developments in Europe. Earlier this month in Milwaukee, and last summer just before departing for Helsinki, I met with a number of Americans of East European background to discuss their concerns and to reaffirm the continuing United States support by every proper peaceful means for the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the people of Eastern Europe. I assured them -- even as I want to assure you now -- that the United States has never recognized the Soviet incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and is not doing so now.

As we celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of our independence, we are more than ever mindful of the ethnic diversity that has always been such a source of national vitality and strength. Your Latvian-American activities during this Bicentennial year appropriately focus attention on the remarkable efforts of many talented and hard working individuals who have helped to build America into the great nation we know today.

I welcome this opportunity to applaud the American Latvian Association on a quarter century of important accomplishment in preserving a cherished Old World heritage and in enriching our American way of life. I wish you a most successful and memorable session.

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GREATER MILWAUKEE ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS

MADER'S RESTAURANT

12:55 P.M. CST

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me express my appreciation for your being here, and after I make a few prepared remarks I will look forward to the opportunity to responding to any questions, whether it is on the subject matter that I am speaking on or any other subject, whether it is domestic or international matters.

I am reminded, as I see some of the faces here, of the meeting that we had, with some of you at least, in the Cabinet Room at the White House on July 25, as I recollect. At that time some 30 leaders of the Eastern European community met with me to discuss problems relating to Western Europe and related matters. I understand, however, that that was the very first time that a President of the United States met with leaders representing the interests of so many Americans concerned about Eastern Europe.

I think on our Bicentennial Anniversary it is particularly appropriate that we in Government recognize the great contributions of our citizens from Eastern Europe. Before the departure for the European Security Conference in Helsinki last July I stated my policy very categorically in reference to Eastern Europe, and at this time let me reiterate that statement. I worked on it myself, I am very proud of it and I think oftentimes it is not read in proper context.

It goes like this: It is the policy of the United States and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe with whom we have such close ties of culture as well as blood by every proper and by every peaceful means.

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(OVER)

I stated my hope and expectation that my visits to Poland, Rumania and Yugoslavia would again demonstrate the friendship and the interest in the welfare and progress of the fine people of Eastern Europe. This remains my policy, regardless of what any Washington experts or anti-Washington experts may say or write.

On July 29, 1975, in the market square of Krakow, Poland, I told a good many thousands who were assembled there that I was standing only a very few feet from the flag marking where General Kosciusko stood and took his famous oath to fight, to regain the independence of Poland and the freedom of all Poles. I said I was very proud to be in a place so rich in Polish history and so closely associated with the Polish hero in our own struggle for independence in the United States.

During my visit to Belgrade I said that Americans particularly admired Yugoslavia's independent spirit. I said whenever independence is threatened, people everywhere look to the example of Yugoslavian people throughout their history. They take strength and they take inspiration from that example.

America's interest in Yugoslavia's continued independence, integrity and well-being, expressed often in the past, remains undiminished.

In the Joint Communique which President Ceausescu and I signed in Rumania we emphasized our support for a just and equitable international order which respects the right of each country regardless of size or political or economic or social system to choose its own destiny free from the use or threat of force.

When I returned from Europe, I told the American people that I was able to deliver in person a message of enormous significance to all Europeans. My message was very clear: America still cares. And the torch and the Statue of Liberty still burns very brightly. We stand for freedom and independence in 1976 just as we stood for freedom and independence in 1776.

I have recalled these events because they underline the fact that my policy, America's policy, toward Eastern Europe is fully, clearly and formally documented. It is a creative and cooperative policy toward the nations of Eastern Europe. It is the policy that embraces our most important values as a nation. It is a policy that I have repeated in messages to Americans of Estonian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian ancestry, and I add the Latvian people whom I know so well in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, know of my deep concern and devotion and friendship with them.

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What it amounts to -- there is no secret Washington policy, no double standard by this Government.

The record is positive, consistent, responsive to your concerns, and I say it is indisputable. The United States strongly supports the aspirations for freedom, for national independence of peoples everywhere, including the peoples of Eastern Europe. I have followed this policy in my visits to Eastern Europe and in my meetings with Eastern European leaders here as well as overseas. Our policy is in no sense -- and I emphasize this -- in no sense accept Soviet dominion of Eastern Europe or any kind of organic origin.

Nor is it in any way designed to permit the consolidation for such dominion. On the contrary, the United States seeks to be responsive to and to encourage as responsibly as possible the desires of Eastern Europeans for greater autonomy, independence and more normal relations with the rest of the world.

This is the policy that I will continue to pursue with patience, with firmness and with persistence -- a policy from which the United States will not waiver.

Thank you very, very much.

END

(AT 1:10 P.M. CST)

February 26, 1976

TO AMERICANS OF LITHUANIAN ANCESTRY

As we celebrate the birth of freedom in America, more and more of our people are mindful of their bi-national heritage. Your Lithuanian-American activities call attention to the remarkable efforts of millions of talented and hard-working individuals from all over the world who built America into the great nation we know today.

I am keenly aware of your great anxiety concerning your homeland, families and friends who have been and are still profoundly affected by East - West political developments in Europe. Last summer, just before departing for Helsinki, and before that in February of 1975, I met with your leaders to discuss these concerns and to emphasize that the accord I would sign in Helsinki was neither a treaty nor a legally binding document.

The Helsinki agreements, I pointed out, were political and moral commitments aimed at lessening tensions and opening further the lines of communication between the peoples of East and West. I assure you again that there is no cause for the very understandable concern you raised about the effect of the Helsinki Declarations on the Baltic nations. The United States has never recognized the Soviet incorporation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and is not doing so now. Our official policy of nonrecognition is not affected by the results of the European Security Conference.

It is the policy of the United States--and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life--to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe by every proper and peaceful means.

I commend you for your continued contributions to our national legacy and to our durable system of representative government. Today, I salute you for your struggle on behalf of all human freedom.

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
AT 11:00 A.M., EDT

JULY 25, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am glad to have this opportunity, before taking off for Europe tomorrow, to discuss with you frankly how I feel about the forthcoming European Security Conference in Helsinki.

I know there are some honest doubts and disagreements among good Americans about this meeting with the leaders of Eastern and Western European countries and Canada -- 35 nations altogether.

There are those who fear the Conference will put a seal of approval on the political division of Europe that has existed since the Soviet Union incorporated the Baltic nations and set new boundaries elsewhere in Europe by military action in World War II. These critics contend that participation by the United States in the Helsinki understandings amounts to tacit recognition of a status quo which favors the Soviet Union and perpetuates its control over countries allied with it.

On the other extreme there are critics who say the meeting is a meaningless exercise because the Helsinki declarations are merely statements of principles and good intentions which are neither legally binding nor enforceable and cannot be depended upon. They express concern, however, that the result will be to make the free governments of Western Europe and North America less wary and lead to a letting down of NATO's political guard and military defenses.

If I seriously shared these reservations I would not be going, but I certainly understand the historical reasons for them and, especially, the anxiety of Americans whose ancestral homelands, families and friends have been and still are profoundly affected by East-West political developments in Europe.

I would emphasize that the document I will sign is neither a treaty nor is it legally binding on any participating State. The Helsinki documents involve political and moral commitments aimed at lessening tensions and opening further the lines of communication between the peoples of East and West.

(MORE)

It is the policy of the United States, and it has been my policy ever since I entered public life, to support the aspirations for freedom and national independence of the peoples of Eastern Europe--with whom we have close ties of culture and blood--by every proper and peaceful means. I believe the outcome of this European Security Conference will be a step--how long a step remains to be tested--in that direction. I hope my visits to Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia will again demonstrate our continuing friendship and interest in the welfare and progress of the fine people of Eastern Europe.

To keep the Helsinki Conference in perspective, we must remember that it is not simply another summit between the superpowers. On the contrary, it is primarily a political dialogue among the Europeans, East, West, and neutral, with primary emphasis on European relationships rather than global differences. The United States has taken part, along with Canada, to maintain the solidarity of the Atlantic Alliance and because our absence would have caused a serious imbalance for the West.

We have acted in concert with our free and democratic partners to preserve our interests in Berlin and Germany, and have obtained the public commitment of the Warsaw Pact governments to the possibility of peaceful adjustment of frontiers--a major concession which runs quite contrary to the allegation that present borders are being permanently frozen.

The Warsaw Pact nations met important Western preconditions--the Berlin Agreement of 1971, the force reduction talks now underway in Vienna--before our agreement to go to Helsinki.

Specifically addressing the understandable concern about the effect of the Helsinki declarations on the Baltic nations, I can assure you as one who has long been interested in this question that the United States has never recognized the Soviet incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and is not doing so now. Our official policy of non-recognition is not affected by the results of the European Security Conference.

There is included in the declaration of principles on territorial integrity the provision that no occupation or acquisition of territory in violation of international law will be recognized as legal. This is not to raise the hope that there will be any immediate change in the map of Europe, but the United States has not abandoned and will not compromise this long-standing principle.

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The question has been asked: What have we given up in these negotiations and what have we obtained in return from the other side? I have studied the negotiations and declarations carefully and will discuss them even more intensely with other leaders in Helsinki. In my judgment, the United States and the open countries of the West already practice what the Helsinki accords preach, and have no intention of doing what they prohibit -- such as using force or restricting freedoms. We are not committing ourselves to anything beyond what we are already committed to by our own moral and legal standards and by more formal treaty agreements such as the United Nations Charter and Declaration of Human Rights.

We are getting a public commitment by the leaders of the more closed and controlled countries to a greater measure of freedom and movement for individuals, information and ideas than has existed there in the past, and establishing a yardstick by which the world can measure how well they live up to these stated intentions. It is a step in the direction of a greater degree of European community, of expanding East West contacts, of more normal and healthier relations in an area where we have the closest historic ties. Surely this is the best interest of the United States and of peace in the world.

I think we are all agreed that our world cannot be changed for the better by war; that in the thermonuclear age our primary task is to reduce the danger of unprecedented destruction. This we are doing through continuing Strategic Arms Limitations talks with the Soviet Union and the talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe. This European Security Conference in Helsinki, while it contains some military understandings such as advance notice of maneuvers, should not be confused with either the SALT or MBFR negotiations. The Helsinki summit is linked with our overall policy of working to reduce East-West tensions and pursuing peace, but it is a much more general and modest undertaking.

Its success or failure depends not alone on the United States and the Soviet Union but primarily upon its 33 European signatories, East, West and Neutral. The fact that each of them, large and small, can have their voices heard is itself a good sign. The fact that these very different governments can agree, even on paper, to such principles as greater human contacts and exchanges, improved conditions for journalists, reunification of families and international marriages, a freer flow of information and publications, and increased tourism and travel, seems to me a development well worthy of positive and public encouragement by the United States. If it all fails, Europe will be no worse off than it is now. If even a part of it succeeds, the lot of the people in Eastern Europe will be that much better, and the cause of freedom will advance at least that far.

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I saw an editorial the other day entitled: "Jerry, Don't Go."

But I would rather read that than headlines all over Europe saying: "United States Boycotts Peace Hopes".

So I am going, and I hope your support goes with me.

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