



SECOND UNITED FRONT

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A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you all to the Second United Front Crisis Committee on behalf of the crisis team. My name is Priscilla, and I am pursuing a double-major in Economics and Public Policy here in the University of Toronto, 23 hours flight from my hometown. I'm proud to introduce your amazing crisis team this year, who has dedicated a great amount of time and passion to bring this committee to life: Jacky, our Moderator, Shamal, our Crisis Manager, and Marcella, Griffin, Alex, and Selin, our analysts!

The history of modern China started to have an intriguing appeal to me in the beginning of high school, mostly because I knew close to nothing about it. In the midst of its complex narrative, the Second United Front stood out as one of the key moments defining the trajectory of Chinese history; it seemed like an entangled mess of constantly-evolving political, ideological, military, and economic threads as the interests of the various actors seem to all lie on different planes. It is in this type of scenario that true statesmanship and skillful diplomacy prove to be essential to find the intersection, or to build one to bridge them. Historically, what followed the Second United Front (1937-1945) was the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949). Here, at this table, we are given a second (no pun intended!) chance to relive and recreate this critical moment in Chinese history.

The Second United Front is a difficult topic to discuss, and it would most definitely not be easy for us to explore. But at the same time, it offers limitless possibility for exploration. As your director and fellow member of this crisis committee, I would highly encourage you to embrace the challenge and enjoy the learning process.

In this committee, you will all be split into two parties, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Nationalist Party of China, which we will refer to as the Guomindang (GMD), whose interests you will represent during the discussion around the table.

To help you through your research, I would encourage you to keep in mind a question: "what would my character think and how would he/she feel as an individual living in the context of the time?" Think about the historical, social, economic, intellectual context and, if applicable, the character's personal history. Bear in mind that our committee will not adhere strictly to the factual course of history. Whether the outcome will change is up to you. So, think beyond *what* happened, and ask *why* it happened, and from there, let your thoughts and ideas explore how we, the Second United Front, can bring about the best possible outcome given the challenges presented to us. Welcome to China 1937.

On behalf of the crisis team, I wish you a fantastic time!

See you at the table,

Priscilla Layarda

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SECOND UNITED FRONT: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

FALL OF QING DYNASTY AND THE RISE OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Through a series of mutinies and demonstrations throughout 1911, which are now known as the Xinhai Revolution, the rule of the Qing Dynasty, which lasted for nearly three centuries, was brought to its end.¹ In January 1912, the Republic of China was officially proclaimed with a former Qing military general, Yuan Shikai, as the first President. However, his rule appealed more to dictatorship and the ways of the dynastic past than it did to the values of a modern republic: he allegedly ordered the assassination of Song Jiaoren, an extremely prominent figure in favor of parliamentary politics in China in 1913 and dissolved both the parliament and the provincial assemblies in 1914. In 1916, Yuan established himself as Emperor through the Glorious Constitution. In reaction to his policies, rebellions and protests emerged in the provinces, the most significant being the “Second Revolution” in 1913, in which 7 provinces declared their independence from Yuan’s government, highlighting the increasing provincial power within China. This political fragmentation and instability were exacerbated by Yuan’s death in June 1916, which left a vacuum of power in the central government of China.² As such, a period of decentralization and disorder often referred to by historians as the “Period of Warlordism” began.³ Between 1916-1927, executive, legislative, and jurisdictional decisions in China were made by provincial military leaders, the warlords, who were only nominally submitted to the central government. In short, from its creation through 1927, the Republic of China lacked centralized leadership and maintained little power over China.⁴

FOREIGN ENCROACHMENT IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY CHINA

Throughout the 19th century, there was a strong trend of foreign encroachment in China, not dissimilar to the Scramble for Africa during the same period. By 1911, China had made significant concessions to foreign powers, including its railway system, extremely low tariffs on foreign goods, payments for absurd indemnities,⁵ and territories, including Weihaiwei to the United Kingdom and Qingdao to Germany.⁶

¹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 575.

² *Ibid.*, p. 576-583

³ *Ibid.*, p. 584

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 585

⁵ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1990), p. 223, 235.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231

Following the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), Japan gained treaty port rights in China as well as concessions in Taiwan and Pescadores.⁷ Again in 1905, following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan gained a lease of Liaodong Peninsula as well as concessions over the trans-Siberian railway at the South Manchuria Railway Zone.⁸ In 1915, Japan presented the infamous Twenty-one Demands to Yuan,⁹ in which Japan demanded further control over China. Yuan's acceptance to the 21 Demands brought spontaneous boycotts on Japanese goods, leading to a 40% fall in Japanese exports. It also led to the organization of a rebellion led by the Yunnan National Protection Army against Yuan Shikai in 1915. At the Paris Peace Conference (1918-1919), Japanese delegation fought with Chinese delegation over control of Shandong, which was formerly a German concession. As the right was given to Japan, there was a general strike and demonstrations across China, involving students, workers, and businessmen, known as the May Fourth Movement. Under this mass pressure, the government did not sign the Versailles Treaty. The movement revealed the first spark of Chinese nationalism.¹⁰

CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY OF CHINA (GMD)

The GMD was formed in 1912 by Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen), who is often regarded as the Father of the Chinese Revolution.¹¹ It was formed through the amalgamation of various revolutionary parties that masterminded the downfall of the Qing Dynasty. After the alleged assassination of GMD co-founder Song Jiaoren by then-President Yuan Shikai, Sun staged a failed attempt at ousting Yuan and fled to Japan in 1913.¹² In 1917, Sun returned to China and resurrected the GMD under the title of the "Nationalist Party of China." The new GMD founded its own military government based in Guangzhou to rival the existing Beiyang government in Beijing that was headed by warlords who were formerly subordinate to Yuan.¹³

The reorganized GMD proclaimed Sun's "Three Principles of the People": "Nationalism, Democracy, and People's Livelihood" as its guiding dogma. Sun outlined his vision for China's future in 3 stages. First, Sun demanded the military unification of the nation through the elimination of warlord powers. This was to be followed by a period of political tutelage where the

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 223

⁸ R. M. Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and the Tumbling Bear—A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904–5*. (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 272.

⁹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 580

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 579-583

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 552

¹² "The song of Song", *The Economist*, 22 December 2012, <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2012/12/22/the-song-of-song> (Last Accessed: 21 November 2018).

¹³ Edward A. McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism*. Berkeley. (California: University of California Press, 1993), p. 225

Chinese people would learn the principles and workings of a democratic state. Finally, China would eventually complete its transformation into a modern, democratic nation.¹⁴

Realizing his need for Soviet aid to revitalize the party, in 1923, Sun opened the GMD to cooperation with the Soviet Union and the CPC, allowing for the formation of the First United Front in 1923.¹⁵

CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA (CPC)

The Communist Party of China was founded by Chen Duxiu in 1920, but the first congress meeting was held in 1921 where they made two main decisions. The first was that the CPC “was a party of the proletariat and should involve itself actively in labour movements”¹⁶. The CPC mainly focused on the interests of the workers and peasants¹⁷. The second was that the CPC should cooperate with Sun Zhongshan yet remain critical of his teachings¹⁸. Representatives of the Communist International (Comintern), who were sent by Moscow, were also in attendance¹⁹. The CPC then entered into a United Front with the Nationalist Party as urged by the Comintern in 1923²⁰.

During the United Front, the CPC adopted the ‘bloc within’ strategy where they maintained their structure during their alliance with the Nationalist Party²¹. At this point, the CPC was divided into two camps: Li Dazhao who believed in the “bourgeois, natural revolution”²² model, and Chen Duxiu who believed strongly in anti-imperialism²³.

THE FIRST UNITED FRONT (1924-1927)

The relationship between the CPC and the GMD in China was a rocky one. From the onset of the First United Front in 1924,²⁴ the CPC’s motivation to participate in national

¹⁴ Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, *The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat-sen; an Exposition of the San Min Chu I*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), p. 213

¹⁵ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu. “The Rise of Modern China, Second Edition”. New York: Oxford University Press (1975). p. 626-628

¹⁶ Colin Mackerras, *China in Transformation, 1900-1949* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 60

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹ Delia Davin, *Mao: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 16.

²⁰ Colin Mackerras, *China in Transformation, 1900-1949* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 60.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²² Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (S.I: Harvard University Press, 2014), pp 37.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.

²⁴ Jack Gray. *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1800s to the 1980s*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 221

reunification was driven by their objective to strengthen and eventually mobilize the proletariat.²⁵ Because they were such a small party, their instruction was largely taken from the Comintern in Moscow, who insisted upon the CPC's joining in the reunification initiative.²⁶ The GMD agreed to allow CPC members to join the united front as individuals, while remaining CPC members, in exchange for Soviet aid. By joining the First United Front, the CPC were able to familiarize themselves with their future opponent, the GMD, and were supplied with training and recruitment opportunities to broaden their organization within the national revolutionary movement.²⁷

The First United Front was preceded by Russian relations with Sun Zhongshan, the leader of the GMD.²⁸ A relationship between Sun and the Bolsheviks was mutually beneficial at the time, especially for the Soviet goal of distorting public opinion of Beijing, whose central government Sun's own powers in Guangzhou opposed.²⁹ Guangzhou was the primary base of nationalist power. Because of the essential role that Sun played in the maintenance of the alliance, his death in 1925 foreshadowed the fall of the First United Front. When he died, the ideological tensions between the right-wing of the GMD and the CPC communists came to a head. Beginning in 1925, the CPC was forced to change from a party of government to a party of insurrection because right-wing members within the Nationalist Party made a decision to eliminate communist influence within the party and called for an expulsion of CPC members.

Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), the new GMD leader, led the Northern Expedition intended to fend off warlordism and imperialism in China. This expedition was a success which led to international recognition of the GMD as a political party.³⁰ To the Comintern, however, this success meant an opportunity to fan the flames of an anti-capitalist revolution in China.³¹ As a response, in 1927, Jiang Jieshi launched a purging of all communist influence from within the GMD, which forced the CPC into hiding and officially ended the First United Front.

²⁵ Yin Ching-yao, "The Bitter Struggle between the KMT and the CCP," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 6 (1981), p. 625.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2643790.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad48a29a1b010e4e7920b0d0155fec3c9> (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

²⁶ Bruce A. Elleman, "Soviet Diplomacy and the First United Front in China," *Modern China* 21, no. 4 (Oct., 1995), p. 450-480. https://www.jstor.org/stable/189387?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

²⁷ Yin Ching-yao, "The Bitter Struggle between the KMT and the CCP," *Asian Survey* 21, no. 6 (1981), p. 626.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2643790.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad48a29a1b010e4e7920b0d0155fec3c9> (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

²⁸ Bruce A. Elleman, "Soviet Diplomacy and the First United Front in China," *Modern China* 21, no. 4 (Oct., 1995), p. 450-480. https://www.jstor.org/stable/189387?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018), p. 452.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 451.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 472.

³¹ *Ibid.*

SECOND UNITED FRONT: CURRENT SITUATION

DYNAMICS OF CPC-GMD RELATIONSHIP (1927-1937)

This GMD purge against the CPC began with the Shanghai Massacre on April 12th, 1927. The Nationalist party had taken the opportunity to expel the communists from their ranks, and this expulsion sent many communists into the countryside, where attempts were made at the mobilization of the peasantry.³²

These rural soviet bases, the largest of which was dominated by Mao Zedong, were subject to the Jiang Jieshi's five extermination campaigns.³³ The success of the fifth campaign successfully forced the CPC soviets to migrate from their southeastern bases to Northern Shaanxi. This journey was popularized as the Long March (1934-1935). The heroism associated with this hard-fought trek attracted many Chinese youth to the CPC.

Jiang's extermination campaigns and the CPC's Long March took place alongside the increasingly threatening reality of a Japanese invasion of China, with the Japanese having taken Manchuria in 1931.³⁴ It is a testament to their disdain for one another that despite the Japanese advancements, both the KMT and the CPC saw one another as primary opponents.³⁵ However, the CPC was more opposed to the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek than they were to a unified resistance to Japan.³⁶ The CPC called for resistance to Japan, a movement widely supported by the rise of nationalism in China, inclusive of all allies with the exception of fringe-right anti-communists, like Jiang Jieshi,³⁷ as proclaimed August 1st, 1935, during the seventh Comintern congress.³⁸ There is significant debate over how large a role, if at all, Moscow played in the formation of the Second United Front between the GMD and the CPC.³⁹

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA (1927-1937)

Following the Shanghai Massacre in 1927, CPC attempted to continue its pursuit of a proletariat revolution. But, the GMD was successful in eliminating these labour movements,

³² Lyman P. van Slyke. "The United Front in China," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 3 (1970): p. 120. <http://www.jstor.org/myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/259678> (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³⁹ John W. Garver. "The Origins of the Second United Front: The Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party," *The China Quarterly*, no. 113 (1988): 29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/654264> (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

which enlarged disagreements within the CPC of whether it should seize cities or expand into the countryside.⁴⁰ The Comintern advisors did not agree with Mao who emphasized the role of the peasantry, nor did they agree with the CPC for completely ignoring the peasantry.⁴¹ By 1930, the Red Army, which was created in 1928, was gaining strength and Li Lisan proposed a policy to attack and capture cities.⁴² Ultimately, a failed attempt to gain the key city of Chungsha and an eventual forced retreat by Jiang Jieshi led to a “relatively long-term strategy of encircling the cities from the countryside”.⁴³

In 1931, Mao Zedong convened a congress which resulted in the Chinese Soviet Republic. This was a state within China that had its own constitutions, labour laws and land laws⁴⁴. The constitution aimed to overthrow the rule of the Nationalist Party and Imperialism. However, by 1934, Jiang Jieshi managed to destroy Mao’s Chinese Soviet Republic and this prompted the Long March on October 16th, 1934. The path of the Long March is shown in *Figure 1* below. During the Long March, the CPC was severely weakened in numbers. They began the Long March with 85,000 men, and ended with only 8,000 survivors.⁴⁵ Yet, in the 1935 Zunyi Conference, Mao emerged as a leading voice in the CPC,⁴⁶ although some factions of the party, namely the 28 Bolsheviks, remained at a disagreement with Mao over the role of the peasantry in the Chinese Revolution. Furthermore, during the march CPC treated the local communities with respect, a contrast to the treatment by GMD troops or warlords. This would eventually help them propagate their ideals and gain popular support.

In December 1936, the CPC moved their base to Yanan and started to rebuild and reorganize.⁴⁷ Beginning in 1936, the CPC began to promote collaboration with all groups to fight Japanese imperialism under the slogan of “Chinese must not fight Chinese”.⁴⁸ In their attempt to spread the united front propaganda, the CPC succeeded in winning over two of GMD’s generals: Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, who were the key figures in radically changing the GMD policy towards Japan in December 1936.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ Colin Mackerras, *China in Transformation, 1900-1949* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 62.

⁴¹ Delia Davin, *Mao: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27

⁴³ Colin Mackerras, *China in Transformation, 1900-1949* (London: Longman, 1998), pp 63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63

⁴⁵ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 674-675

⁴⁶ Lyman P. van Slyke. “The United Front in China,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 3 (1970): p. 122. <http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/259678> (Last Accessed: 25 November 2018).

⁴⁷ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 675.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 678.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 678-679.



Figure 1: The Long March ⁵⁰

THE RULE OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY OF CHINA (1927-1937)

China in the period 1927-1937 was officially ruled by the Nationalist Party (GMD) under the leadership of Jiang Jieshi. During its rule, GMD had strengthened the Chinese financial structure, communication infrastructure, and education.

A modern financial structure was created. The Central Bank of China was created in 1928 and a national currency, the silver dollar (yuan), in 1933. These financial structures allowed for extensive nation-building programs, such as the 3,000 miles of railways addition from south to west China from 1930-1938,⁵¹ and gained China the recognition of its tariff autonomy by foreign powers as early as May 1929.⁵² It was a great contrast to the economic uncertainty during the Warlord period.

Foundations were laid to improve education. Ministry of Education was reorganized, secondary education grew 4-5 times, and schools and colleges featured sports grounds and labs. By 1934, modern education was available to every 213 in 10,000 students in cities like Shanghai. However, alongside this improvement was an increasing social disparity between the urban and rural areas. By 1934, modern education was only available to every 4 in 10,000 in rural areas such as Shaanxi, Guizhou, and Gansu. Furthermore, during the 1931-1935 agricultural depression and the 1931 floods in 5 provinces, no government help was received. Lastly, the GMD maintained an extremely high tax on the peasants: 40-60% of the annual crops as rental and 35-350% of the annual rental tax as land tax and surtax.⁵³ This highlights GMD's failure to

⁵⁰ "Long March". Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_March (Last Accessed: November 25th 2018).

⁵¹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 680.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 681

⁵³ Shanti Swarup, *A Study of the Chinese Communist Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 52.

gain the support of the peasants. As they made up 80% of China's population, they served as a great potential of power for the CPC. By the start of the Long March, CPC had gained a significant number of supporters from its rural soviets.

During his rule, Jiang managed to suppress domestic revolts, including the 1929 February Guangxi group revolt, and the 1930 July "Enlarged Conference Movement" which united his main oppositions: Feng Yuxiang, Yan Xishan, left-GMD under the Western Hills group, and the right-GMD under Wang Jingwei. Moreover, the GMD military had wiped out the Jiangxi Soviet and forced the CPC into the Long March.

INCREASING JAPANESE AGGRESSION AND THE RISE OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

Manchuria was a region in the northeast of China, rich in raw materials and resources. After three failed attempts at establishing "Manchuria-Mongolia Autonomous Movement" in 1912, 1916, and 1928, Japan's Guangdong Army invaded Manchuria in September 1931 under the pretense of "self-defence" following the Mukden Incident of September 18.⁵⁴ On January 28th, 1932, Japan invaded Shanghai.⁵⁵ In May, Japan agreed to a truce in which they evacuated Shanghai. But, on March 9th, 1932, they established the independent nation of Manchukuo in Manchuria with the late emperor of the Qing dynasty, Pu Yi, installed as the puppet leader. Between January and February 1933, Japan occupied Jehol Province and in May 1933 agreed to the Tanggu Truce, which demilitarized Hebei from both the Chinese and the Japanese army.⁵⁶ In 1935, the He-Umetzu agreement was signed, forcing the withdrawal from Hebei and Chahar forces unfriendly to Japan. In 1936, the final straw was laid as the new Hirota government in Japan adopted a policy of unrestricted expansion into China.⁵⁷

In their response to this looming threat, the GMD government adopted a general policy of appeasement towards Japan and remained focused on exterminating the CPC. Jiang privately expressed the rationale behind this policy: "the Japanese are a disease of the skin. The Communists are a disease of the heart."⁵⁸ This policy received strong disapproval from the public as well as factions within the GMD. There were oppositions towards his leadership for this, within the public and his supporters. In 1933 his troop at Fujian rebelled and took Jiang a year to suppress it. On December 9th, 1935 there were thousands of students protesting in Beijing against Japanese aggression. This was followed by 30,000 people protesting in a second

⁵⁴ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 660- 661.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 665.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 696.

⁵⁸ William B. Hopkins., *The Pacific War: The Strategy, Politics, and Players that Won the War*. (Minneapolis: Voyageur Press, 2008), p. 161.

demonstration also in December. Thousands more protested in the Nationalist capital Nanjing, Wuhan, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou.

The incident that turned the tide, often cited as the genesis of the Second United Front, was the Xi'an incident in December 1936. On December 12th, Jiang Jieshi was kidnapped by two of his generals, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng, who pressured him to reorient their efforts from suppressing Chinese communists to defending China against the Japanese. Zhou Enlai, a prominent member of the CPC, played a critical role in Chiang's release and subsequent cooperation with the CPC's vision of a United Front. After his release on December 25th, Jiang declared that the GMD would allow the CPC to participate in future wars against Japan given that they pledge their support to Sun's "Three People's Principles".⁵⁹ As such, although the GMD blockade of CPC's base continued, the anti-Communist campaigns stopped and the era of the Second United Front began.

⁵⁹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 679.

ADVICE FOR RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What is the best course of action your party should take right now, after the Xian Incident?
2. What are your party's interests? Would you prioritize them? How? What about your character's interests?
3. What are the resources that you have at your disposition at this point in time?
4. Why does your party support the second united front? What about the character you represent?
5. How is public opinion on the second united front? What about the international views?
6. Is the Chinese army ready to face the growing threat of Japanese invasion? Is diplomacy an option?

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