

## NEW QUALITY OF THE ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF BATA BOROVO FACTORY

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**Abstract:** Large multinational company Bata is little known in the business world, as successful and at the same time lasting one in the field of footwear industry. Although this is an industry in the areas of fashion, this empire has managed thanks to good market research, and creation of the shoes. For current and future managers, the fact how Tomas Bata and his associates worked and behaved is very important.

Bata factory in Borovo, near present Vukovar, Croatia, is an organization that in many respects shares some common characteristics with other factories in the world, which is natural, because every part of a whole carries some of its features more or less. However, Bata Borovo had its own capabilities in relation to other plants, since it was a different environment in which the plant operates. It turns out that some organizational management solutions were unique in the results or effects that were achieved. How much the impact the Bata organization had to creating of a socio-economic system of the former Yugoslavia, it can be seen from the indisputable fact that the economic model of organization units from Bata - Borovo, was mostly taken in the design of organizational settings Belja from Osijek, and later called for designing a self-organization, which has shown its advantages in comparison to conventional forms of organization.

The paper attempts to address some of the settings in the Bata organization in Borovo and their effects, so their experiences can be used in the theory and practice of organization and management of business in other organizations.

**Keywords:** Bata Borovo, Tomas Bata, household economy

### 1. BATA'S FACTORIES ARE A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF A HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

The founder of the empire for manufacturing and trading of footwear was Tomas Bata. He came from a family of shoemakers, originating from 17<sup>th</sup> century, in a place where it was located almost desolate valley of Moravia. After the sudden death of Thomas Bate in 1932, his half-brother, Jan continued to manage it as well as Tomas did. Therefore, the new boss replaced the old one and continued in the same manner of operation.

Bata knew that it was necessary to expand, and that the greater expansion has to go beyond Zlin and Czechoslovakia. Therefore, he opened factories in other countries, including the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Bata has bought an uninhabited part of the Slavonian

plain, on the lower bank of the Danube River near Vukovar, Croatia. Construction of the factory began in a small village Borovo, which was uninhabited, undeveloped and rural area, i.e. a larger village typical of this area.

Thorough research and analysis shows that many Bata's factories showed that the whole his philosophy was based on the principles of the household economy, which still has its basis in antique economy<sup>1</sup>. It was the interest groups of associated individuals and businesses based on factory or industrial way of doing things. It turns out that the interest is the healthiest cohesive tissue that connects people in the organization. In other words, the organization is the people who come together and connect to the most efficient and effective way to achieve their goals and interests. Bata was aware of the law of compensation, according to which there is no receiving without giving. Therefore, in order to get something, he has to give. That is why he was stimulating the buyers through the selling modalities, but in that way he got about a hundred times more. If this were not done, the factory would not be economically stable, or socially secured.

Bata's organization was much more advanced than any other footwear manufacturer, but also with regard to other sectors. Bata has perfected its organizational setting and in accordance with the introduction of innovations, tried to change the habits of workers, having in mind Ford's famous saying, "Mexico cannot be changed without changing the Mexicans." It turns out that the abandonment of old habits is much more difficult than accepting the new ones. Therefore, the problem of forgetting and abandoning the outdated is much more complex, due to which is necessary to invest much more effort to make sense of technological, organizational, and above all innovation in philosophy of managing factories. The key question was how to leave the family habits in which there are family and friendly relations and accept default behavior, which was based on interests, especially in terms of traditional society; such was in Borovo and the surrounding area at the time. The problem was complicated because Bata's factories were families, in a sense of, because entire families were employed there, i.e. parents and children, and their friends. Of course, a decisive influence on changing bad habits had the factory management, which is natural, since it has a vision, where the factory should be and the mechanisms by which this can be accomplished. It turns out that this principle later will be accepted by many of the large business empires in the world of banking, hotel, shops, etc.<sup>2</sup>

To illustrate these claims, we will use the example of Maksimovic, the director, and the way he changed the behavior and actions of the Slavonians into quality new habits and behaviors. Slavonians are accustomed to eat substantial amounts of fat or bacon and hot sausage. Employees tried to bring those family habits in his factory, so they brought from home sausage products as a snack, often wrapped in newspaper. The problem is complicated because the offices and factory facilities could not support storing snacks, considering the Spartan environment.

In these circumstances, the only option was a locker where they held the writing materials, given the fact there was no writing paper. Upon arrival at the job, workers were taking out the writing material, and putting snack in the locker. The smell of meat products spread throughout the room. To solve this problem, management decided to form a restaurant where the workers could eat. Tables in the restaurant were covered with ironed white ta-

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<sup>1</sup> M.I. Finley: "The Ancient Economy", University of California, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Sender, Isabell, „The Bata Empire: A World Apart," Footwear News, July 3, 1995, p. S38.

blecloths. It was a sign it was not allowed to enter the restaurant wearing dirty clothes and having dirty hands, even though it is a dirty industry.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, Bata informed employees how they need to behave. Everyone had to clean table after eating, because when the next shift come they will be angry if tablecloths are dirty. Thus, the experience gained in the factory restaurant has been passed in a homey atmosphere i.e. dining at home. It is shown that in the family is much more comfortable to dine setting at the table covered with clean tablecloth. In other words, Bata was trying to transfer some elements of default behavior into families.

### 1.1. CARING FOR PEOPLE

In order to establish a better socialization of the organization, in addition to shoe factory, Bata build a housing project, by the standards of comfortable flats. In this way, Bata's organization differed from the others, because its workers lived in comfortable apartments, while the accommodation of workers in other companies was in temporary barracks, in modestly furnished rooms without sanitation devices. This is significant, because the Bata's workers were proud to be employed in such high quality and successful organization. They feel safer and feel like the factory is their household. That feeling increases due to fact that the principle of employee participation in management structures begin to develop at the plant. Toma Maksimovic, the former factory director, had a day in a week, so-called "Open Doors Day". On this day, each employee could directly contact him to express its personal or family problem, but also a problem in the workplace among colleagues. Most individuals came to suggest a better way of completing tasks. Any proposed idea was discussed and there was a general feeling of accepting. The managing director was saying, "There are no stupid questions, only stupid answers." In such an atmosphere, everyone was trying to suggest the idea, but many ideas are transformed into actions, whereby individuals are made more powerful, because they were happiest when they or their ideas make better performance. Using this mode, Japan has prospered in the fifties of the last century, because they particularly appreciated the ideas, the ones that were based on the principles of creative imitation. Therefore, many workers analyzed the original innovations, and sought to improve their functional performance. Thanks to "the creative imitation", Japanese society and economy made a big step forward after the end of World War II in a short time.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2. SOCIALIZATION OF THE ORGANIZATION

Although the Bata system relied on the autocratic leadership, the fact is that in a shoe factory in Borovo, there was no ordering and commanding as usual styles, which were accepted in traditional leadership and organization. In general, they insist that all the problems be solved with mutual consent and with the compromise, especially when it comes to interesting problems and questions. Therefore, there was no compromise or it can be one in solving the problem, because in solving them the final say have professionals and specialists. If between production and sale, i.e. distribution problem arose, in its resolution

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<sup>3</sup> Personal records and archive by the author

<sup>4</sup> Радосављевић, М., „Необходимости изменения отхощений к имитации“, МК Strategični imperative sučasnog omenedžmentu – vol.2, Kiev 2012., p.133-142.)

were to participate uncompromisingly only experts in the field of production and trade. However, when it comes to the problem of people, especially those relating to the interests of employees, Bata and his associates tried to come to an agreement.

Although at the level of the company as a whole, a special attention was paid to technological progress and innovation in the factory Borovo, most attention was paid to human resources. It can be seen from the fact that the standard of employees and their families was constantly promoted, along with good working conditions. Bata had the hospital staff, and provided the school education for workers. However, Bata was sending employees or children of employees in the public schools and colleges. What is particularly significant is that each university education was a ticket to enter the factory, but whether and how to stay in it was depending on the people. Of the commitment of each individual depended on his progress, because the actual skills and the results that individuals have in their work place were appreciated. This principle becomes dominant today in the management of human resources, and in the future will gain even greater significance.<sup>5</sup>

During the period of dynamic development of Bate, the problem of insufficient numbers of housing objects merged. To solve this problem, Bata started the construction of houses for two or four families. Houses had comfortable apartments, and a piece of land on which they could plant flowers, gardens and plants. For the management of Bata Company in Borovo was important that the families socialize in their free time, exchange experiences and helping each other about solving individual problems. That factory organization expands its borders and the impact on households and families and working families integrate into Bata's factory.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3. ORGANIZATION OF THE GENERAL MANAGER'S OFFICE

In addition, it is useful to note that in the general manager's office was only one chair, the one on which he was sitting. It was often surprising for a large number of partners and others who came to the Bata's system. Everyone who came to see the director had to stand and to speak to him and in a short time. In this way, he made it clear to all employees that the time is an expensive resource, and there is no time for long conversations and chatting. Employees had a short time to present a problem, propose a possible solution to the problem and wait for the decision of the general manager. If he knew of the problem but not the solution for it, then for Maksimovic a problem did not exist. The idea of a one office chair is still popular. A large office with a long table and usually with ten chairs and ashtrays, equipped with buffet and drinks is the place where precious time is lost, and so is the full table with chairs where people strive to satisfy with food, drinks, etc. That is why when making important decision, a better solution is to celebrate it with cocktails, so no chair, so the event ends as soon as possible. Therefore, Bata's management saw a big problem in sitting in chairs.

It should be noted that the offices were modestly furnished. The table could have only one drawer in which necessary accessories to perform office duties, such as machines to

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<sup>5</sup> Radosavljević, D., „Innovativity and motivation as the key factor of success“, *International Journal of Economics & Law* – vol. 3, Faculty for Education of the Executives, Novi Sad, 2012., p. 118-120

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Cekota, „Tomas Bata, pioneer of self-government in industry“, in *The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture, 1964*, chapter 4, pp. 342-349

connect documents, paper clips, pens, chopping, erasers, writing paper needed, and so on could be placed in. Bata knew that tables with multiple drawers, cabinets and other office furniture are a great danger for office administration, because this equipment allows them to leave the document and the individual act and not to respond in time. Thus, the act left in drawers or closets is often forgotten so they do not react in time. It turns out that the biggest problem of forgetting is the fact that is forgotten what is forgotten. Bata also took into account the family habits of its employees, where in making snacks they often used drawer as storage for food, supplies, etc. sought ways to change that.

The management of the factory was practiced that all meetings are held outside working hours. Here a household economy prevailed and rationality in communications. If meetings were scheduled during the working hours, they tend to prolong, because it was more comfortable to be at the meetings, and not to work using a machine. In this situation, the overall intention was those meetings to be short, thematic and problem solving oriented, to present a problem and find the alternatives for its solution, and finally making the decision. The rule was, that the need for the meeting questioned until the meeting is about to begin. It was better to postpone the meeting if it is determined that there is no need for it, but maintain it just because it is planned.

How much previous measure was necessary and beneficial to the business success of Bata company, can be seen in the fact that in the former Yugoslavia, "five hundred to six hundred thousands of people attended meetings every day, which shows the irrationality of the organization, because as long as the meetings of the economic activities are performed, the production was undisturbed although many employees are attending various meetings. It has been shown that such a mass assemblies, causing extra costs for their development and maintenance, but the costs were high, the employees were not working. In this way, the politicization in companies implemented where the political elite imposing political behavior patterns.<sup>7</sup>

#### 1.4. UNION ORGANIZING

In Bata's organization there was no place for unions and union activity, although the trade union existed. The reason of this is in the indisputable fact that when management takes care of the employees, the union has nothing to do. It turned out that the union leadership and integrated work do not have conflicting goals, as many of the leaders, or union leaders think. Therefore, the goal is to be more competitive and better than others are, and on that basis to exercise additional benefits, which will be directly reflected in higher wages, higher living standards and better working conditions. To illustrate the relationship of trade unions and the management of the factory, it is enough to cite the statement of Josip Cazi, who was then the president of union regarding the organizing of the union meetings. Namely, the general manager banned trade union president to hold meetings in rural and dirty inns, and told him that meetings must be held in the factory. If the union has any special needs or problems, the factory manager was requested to be informed so he could solve problems together. Then the president of the union informed the general manager that the union wants to establish cultural association and sports game association.

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<sup>7</sup> V. Vučenović: Međuzavisnoststrategijerazvoja i organizacionestrukture" Zbornikradova, Strategijarazvoja I organizacionastrukturajugoslovenskogpredzeća, EkonomskifakultetBeogradl, 1990. str. 75

The result of the conversation was that Borovo build and equip a special cultural center with all the necessary amenities and facilities. In this object, they organized cultural and sports activities through several sections, tamburitza orchestra, the folk orchestra, and a rich library. The reason of this is clear. It is better for the employees and their members, and other citizens to be integrated into the system of Borovo, then to be bored or spend time in dirty and smoky pubs. For sports activities, a modern stadium has been built. Particular interest was shown for the management of a football club, which had all the selections. Senior teams competed in the first national league, under the name Bata. In this way, Bata has provided promotion of their empire. The quality of the team and the organization of the club largely reflect the organization and success of the Bata organization. Every detail on the equipment and uniforms, boots, etc. was reflecting the identity of Borovo, which was very acceptable by the club's supporters, and beyond.

It should be noted that the Bata Borovo was thinking on the long run, because a great pace of development was achieved in a relatively short period. For example, Bata Borovo in May 1931, employed 120 workers, and in June 1942, 8680 workers, which was more than the population of the Borovo, which makes it one of the largest shoe factory then in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.5. ORGANIZING OF SALES SERVICE

The particular attention deserves the sales organization of the final product. Bata knew that this was the most important functions in any company; it is futile to produce a quality product at a certain price, if it could not be sold. To ensure a successful placement i.e. sale, Bata started from the statement of Frank Bettger borrowed from Dale Carnegie, "There are only one way to indicate that someone does something. Only one way, and that is exactly what he wanted to do. Remember, there is no other way. When someone points out what he wants, he will move heaven and earth to get it."<sup>9</sup>

In this context, Bata was trying to organize its retail network, not just to round off the supply, production and trade, but above all to control this element of the business and to impact on raising sales. It should be noted that from the standpoint of science, integration of production and distribution has certain problems, from the standpoint of providing retail facilities, personnel, etc. leads company in the neglect of specialization, so Bata started from the practical side of this phenomenon, considering that the one who manages sales, manages company. All the major towns have had retail stores, with a clear Borovo sign, with wide, perhaps the widest range of footwear.

Particular attention Bata directed to the stimulation sellers. He knew that only a satisfied seller could make a satisfaction to potential buyer, i.e. to turn a potential buyer into a real one. In this context, Bata constructed the first model of sales prices that ended with the 9. For example, shoes were sold at a price of 99 dinars, which were later adopted by other retailers worldwide. The idea was that such a price is an incentive for the seller, while other retailers this model is introduced to make clear, how much the company is accurate. Therefore, Bata's model of the formation of the selling price stimulated each seller to sell as many pairs of shoes, because the buyers usually paid the shoes with 100 dinar notes. When

<sup>8</sup> Bohumil Lehar, „The Economic Expansion of the Bata Concern in Czechoslovakia and Abroad (1929-1938)”, *Historica*, n°5, 1963, pp. 147-188

<sup>9</sup> Frank Bettger: “How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling”, Global Book, p. 134

the cashier tried to return the change of one dinar, the buyer would usually insist that to keep it. If the seller is able to sell 10 pairs of shoes per day, he was able to save 10 dinars, which was equal to a per diem payment or salary.

This is enough to explain how much the seller is interested in selling and converting potential customers into actual. In this way, the benefits are provided for the salesperson and for the factory. If the seller earns 10 dinars, the factory will earn 1000 dinars, and vice versa. If the seller does not earn anything, or sell a single pair of shoes per day, the plant will not have any income, but will have lease costs, staff, heating, etc. In this way, the principle to which once Adam Smith pointed out realize, that what is useful to the individual, and it is useful for the organization, but also for the country, as well as at the global level. In other words, what is wrong or harmful to the individual, is harmful for both the organization and the state. Therefore, the interest of the individuals of crucial importance, because if the plant consists of a happy and successful people, i.e. wealthy individuals, then it will be happy and successful, but also rich.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, the functions of traffic integrate to Bata's factories. The higher sales of shoes by the retailer directly stimulated production, because an additional quantity of shoes to fill the shelves was ordered. Seller orders the kind and amount of footwear for which is sure that is going to be sold, and the factory produces shoes for which they are certain to find affordable demand. It turns out that the real purpose of stimulating sales is in the market research. In this way, the plant is released of market research costs; and on the other hand, it shows that stimulating the seller performs the customer, not a factory.

These examples of organizational modalities largely show and prove how it is possible to achieve business success and that often innovations are self-funding, but the wisdom and the ability to sense the business and act effectively.

For many, this businesses model would be ethically problematic, because the tip is illegal and should be prevented, primarily from the viewpoint of system rules. However, Bata systematically allowed the tip, because through the formed price Bata allowed the vendor an award for selling a pair of shoes or other footwear. On the other hand, Bata was thinking that only the satisfied person would leave the tip, i.e. one who is satisfied with the quality of sales, courtesy of the sales staff, etc. Of course, these specific qualities are not that necessary in production because the workers in the factory cannot meet with customers as the most reliable part of the assets of any organization. They do not have to be smiling and friendly, while it is necessary in the shop, because nobody wants to buy from a person who is rude, serious and with grim face or difficulty communicates with the buyers, and so on. Later, this practice will be accept by other companies and in '70s, marketing concept in making management decisions appears that was based on the customer or the market as the main factor that determines what and how to produce. Under the present conditions, a special segment of marketing developed, it is behavior, or consumer psychology, which examines the different groups of consumers and their buying behavior. It is curious that the Bata dealt with consumer psychology, but the sales staff too for more than seventy years, though is not discussed about this phenomenon. In the last decade of the new millennium, behavior or consumer psychology has gained in importance, but the big problem was its practical application. It is shown that the mindset of the consumer, and

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<sup>10</sup> Ž. Radosavljević: Menadžment u modernom biznisu, Privredna akademija, Novi Sad, 2006

the mentality of management and managers, is essential to establish a leadership position in the company, but also on the market.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.6. ECONOMIC UNITS AS THE NEW ORGANIZATIONAL FORM

The first experiments on introducing enterprise organization by economic units began in 1956, in the Belje state farm from Belje. The basic design of the organizational setting of this experiment was taken from the Bata's organization. Belje farm disposed of approximately 30,000 hectares of arable and fertile land. Had 19 organizational units, with separate administrations, which mean it was relying on decentralized organization. Such organizational structure of the agricultural complex served to constitute as an economic unit with a relatively wide autonomy. This was the logical outcome, given the fact that the economic dimension is primary in every shape and part of the organization. Therefore, the administration too, and manufacturing, transport and logistics components must have in mind the economic dimension, i.e. to achieve the greatest possible success with limited resources. Designing governments as economic units or profit centers in the contemporary understanding, become even more important, as critical factors for business success are in the managerial structures. In other words, the administration has a dominant influence on the determination of the strategic direction of the organization.

It should be noted that the economic units or profit centers are rounded out techno-economic areas or parts within which it is possible to measure and express the results as the basis for allocation under the principles of their participation in the exercise of certain effects. In the period before the formation of economic units, Belje recorded the average yields of wheat, about one and a half tons per hectare, about two tons of corn, about three tons of sugar beets. About a thousand liters of milk a year per cow was realized. The introduction of economic units, these yields multiplied. The main, or one of the main reason cited is that the system of payment was based on two-input tables, which determined the progressive participation of payroll, depending on the increase in production and actual costs. Thus, each worker was interested to realize a higher production with lower expenses. At the beginning of the application of economic units in Belje, there was a need for training of tractor drivers for the successful use of the available equipment. Then was organized a special training center for a tractor in Osijek. It is interesting that this center soon transformed to the school of agriculture in Osijek and then in the Faculty of Agriculture in Osijek.

Successful business of Belje initiated the introduction of economic units in other farms and cooperative organizations, which is especially obvious on the Belgrade agricultural complex, where the world records in agricultural production were achieved. What kind of impact it has, illustrates the fact that the Belgrade agricultural conglomerate realized 8,000 liters of milk per cow, which was surprising for that time, but for the present too, where the agro-technical and other conditions are much more favorable.

It is important to note that the experiments in the introduction of economic units in Borovo were intensively developed and applied in other industries and businesses. Therefore, in the second half of the twentieth century there was a political decision that all businesses must be organized on the model of economic units of Bata Borovo. This political decision

<sup>11</sup>M. Radosavljević i drugi: *Mentality as a factor of personal and business success*, MK Strategični imperativ sučasnog omenedžmentu – vol.2, Kiev 2012., p.419-428.

allowed Yugoslavia to become a medium developed country with doubled rate of economic growth and to be the first in the world on that basis. National income per capita for that period in Yugoslavia was higher than the national income in Japan.<sup>12</sup>

The above economic and political trends have led to a situation that economists are more interested in the organization of enterprises by economic units. At the same time, they were getting more independent and did not go to committees as centers of political decision-making, seeking directives and acting accordingly. Politicians responded by introducing economic reforms with which they are returning to traditional forms of organization, which is a big step backwards, with enormous implications for the future. Of course, politicians are in a position to manage the economy, with the established ideological and political affiliation, as one of the most important criteria for the selection and appointment of managers, including the general manager. To this practice in the Republic of Serbia in the present context was given even greater degree of ideologization and politicization.

The outcomes of this situation are well known. There was a break down of relatively well-established relationships in organizational systems, reduced work productivity, business inefficiency at all levels and segments of the economy and society, and thus reduced standard of living and general well-being. Instead of the household relations and economics, the consumer economy and other speculative transactions were introduced.

The above indicates that the removal of the principles of the household economy, which has largely been applied in Bata's organization in Borovo, inevitably leads to a crisis, not only in the organization of the economy, but also in all aspects of the social order. This is logical, because it shows that the household, i.e. the real economy, is the basis of all the economies and that without it, no one can be successful, both personally and on a business level.

## 2. RESUME

Analysis of the Bata Company has shown this is a very progressive company, not only for that time in which it has existed, but also for the future. The principles applied by Tomas Bata at the level of the whole system but also in Bata Borovo, were taking into account the specific characteristics of the environment in which the system is operated. Thanks to high-quality solutions, Bata organization was one of the largest in Europe, with more than eight thousand people, with a strong pace of development, in company, and in the environment.

The special quality of the organization Bata was the use of economic units, as forerunners of modern profit centers. They were clearly defined accountability for the business results, and there was a possibility of distributing the results of the individual contributions in the creation of joint effects in consultation with management. Method of forming sales prices and stimulating the sales staff, i.e. sellers, as the attitude towards tips are also interesting questions, especially since this issue deals with the ethical point of view and that some companies not only did not approve tip, but it was prohibited. However, instead of allocating money to stimulate the sellers, Bata permitted the tip, with which the customers rewarded seller for good service.

Organization of the general manager's office, particularly modest equipment, eliminating the privileges of the founders and management, the principle of a one chair in the office is

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<sup>12</sup>M. Dostič: *Preduzetništvo i menadžment u malobiznisu*, Autor, Sarajevo, 1996. Str. 35-37.

the way to eliminate the “gap” that exists between the top and bottom of the organization and speed in decision-making. Here comes into play the so-called personal example, i.e. the principle which how the other constituents in the organization should behave.

It turns out that the general managers have no moral right to act immediately, and to require different behavior from the employees, from respecting of the technical and technological regimes, to performing tasks, meeting deadlines, etc.

Many experiences and practical solutions in the organization and management of the organization Bata are accepted in contemporary management, primarily in the Japanese management, which is certainly considered the finest in the world. Thanks to a healthy and ecological basis on which the Bata system was based, this organization has provided for a bright future.

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