

## HISTORY OF MEDICINE

*Ağayev Elnur<sup>1</sup>, Rusanov Constantin<sup>2</sup>*

# “WHITE RUSSIAN” DOCTORS IN CYPRUS: THE FATE OF SIX GRADUATES OF IMPERIAL KHARKOV UNIVERSITY (PART 2)

<sup>1</sup> European University of Lefke, Faculty of Arts Sciences, Department of History, Cyprus;

<sup>2</sup> Independent researcher, Kharkiv, Ukraine

**Abstract:** The article discusses the fate of physicians who graduated the medical faculty of Kharkov University before 1917 and immigrated to Cyprus in 1920. For three of them the island became the second home. Apart from Pavel Smitten (we described his biography in the first part of the article), physicians Mark Freiman and Boris Vroblevskiy decided to live and work in Cyprus. The former had medical practice there, though in Kharkov he was engaged in real estate and became famous due to excavations of the city catacombs. Vroblevskiy worked in hospitals, supervised by Smitten, and after the death of the latter independently, until 1956.

Three of the physicians were unable to find work in Cyprus, and in 1922 the British authority moved them from the refugee camps to Balcans. Sergey Kozentsov served as a surgeon in Kharkov Red Cross hospital for many years. Mkrtych Arevshatians before immigrating worked in Tiflis City hospital; Alexey Ivanov served as a country doctor in Ukraine. After the departure from Cyprus Kozentsov lived in Dubrovnik, where he died in 1942. There is no information on the fate of the other two doctors who left Cyprus.

**KeyWords:** Alexey Ivanov; Boris Vroblevskiy; Cyprus; graduates of medical faculty; Kharkov University; Mark Freiman; Mkrtych Arevshatians; physicians; Sergey Kozentsov; White emigration.



## INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the first part of this article, in May-July 1922, the British authorities forcibly evacuated the vast majority of «White Russian» refugees from Cyprus to the Balkans; also 7 of the 11 doctors were evicted, arrived on the island in the spring of 1920. Just as importantly, 3 out of 4 physicians who were granted permission to stay in Cyprus after 1922 [1] and who worked there for 20-30 years, were graduates of the medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University.

One of three former Kharkovites was Mark Isaakovich Freiman who left Russia on March 8, 1920 aboard the ship “Kherson” and arrived in the Cypriot port of Famasusta on March 22 [2]. He registered his medical diploma and, after receiving permission, began to work as a doctor [3]. The reports in the press show that in November 1922 M.I. Freiman continued to work in Famagusta [4].

History has preserved almost no other information about the life of Mark Freiman in Cyprus. It is only known that this native of Kharkov continued working on the island as a doctor in 1940 [5]. Although in the early 1930s, his name was not found in the lists of physicians in Cyprus published by the British administration [6] - perhaps Freiman at this time refused to provide medical service or left the island. Thus, we do not know when and where he finished his life journey.

Mark Freiman, who was born in Kharkov in 1886, was the son (and heir) of a businessman, well-known in the city. In the official list of University students [7, p. 274] Mark's father is named “a retired Lieutenant of Jewish faith”. But we find a much fuller description in Freiman Senior's obituary [8]:

“Isaac Isidorovich Freiman, an outstanding Kharkov merchant, the Director and Head of Kharkov offices of Tsintenhof manufactories, as well as of Joint Stock Company “Leonhardt Welker and Herbardt” died on the night of 24 June, 1912, in province of Livonia” The deceased was

*Corresponding Author:*

*Rusanov Constantin, local historian, Kharkiv, Ukraine.*

*E-mail: [construsanov@yandex.ru](mailto:construsanov@yandex.ru)*

about 58 years old. In Kharkov I.I.Freiman owned three houses at No. 6, Sumskaya Street, on Rymarskaya Street near the Commercial club (former Kirsten house), and at No. 28, Rybnaya Street. Being a Jew, he volunteered in the army in the 1870s, and then was promoted to a Lieutenant and retired. The deceased left a widow, a son and three daughters”.

Moreover, Mark's father served with distinction during the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878, and he was awarded the rank of an officer. In those days Russian Jews could receive it only in individual cases and by personal permission of the Sovereign.

Apart from the buildings, mentioned in the obituary, the Freimans also owned other houses in the city centre; most of them are still preserved today.

Mark Freiman continued his education, staying away from the family business. At first he studied in the 3rd Kharkov gymnasium, and in 1904 he entered medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University. During this period M.I.Freiman sometimes took care of patients. As in summer of 1908, when he worked in the surgeon C.A.Isakovich's "Hospital and Office for electro-, photo- and hydrotherapy" in the city of Vladikavkaz, and in 1909, during typhoid fever epidemic in Kharkov at the faculty of Internal Diseases of the University. The student Freiman was awarded the faculty gold medal for the essay "The value of various methods to determine blood pressure for clinics". In 1910 he graduated from the university with the title of a specialist in internal medicine and in 1911 M.I.Freiman became a full member of Kharkov Medical Society [9].

The young doctor opened up a University career, but it turned out otherwise. Mark's father, suffering from arterial sclerosis and kidney disease, died suddenly, and the son had to assume the leadership of a newly initiated project, particularly the construction of a multistorey apartment house at No. 23, Rymarskaya Street.

In 1914 the building was completed, and since then has embellished the historical center of Kharkov. Some doctors rented there the offices for their medical practice. For instance, Dr. Goldinger's X-ray room was located there

from 1915.



**Fig.1 "Freiman's house"**

"Freiman's house" as well as the name of its owner remained in the history of Kharkov as when laying the underground service lines for this luxurious building the production workers unearthed ancient tunnels. Kharkov fortress which marked the beginning of the city was constructed on this very place in the 17th century [10]. Mark Freiman invited University historians and the finding was examined by a scientific board. City newspapers wrote articles regarding the finding. So today M.I.Freiman is remembered in Kharkov as a person who unearthed medieval dungeons, not as a medical practitioner. That was why Freiman was listed in medical, urban, as well as in national directories [11, p. 464; 12, p. 501].

However, with the beginning of World War I Mark Isakovich was drafted into the army as a doctor. M.I.Freiman served in the army. The message is preserved, stating that on 29 May, 1915 he arrived to Kharkov from the theater of military action with a large number of wounded soldiers [13].

There is no information on the life of the future White Russian Cypriot in the period of revolutions and Civil War. However, we can confidently say that in the summer of 1919 Mark Freiman was once again drafted into the army, this time in the Armed Forces of South Russia. The retreat of this army brought the doctor onto the board of "Kher-son" ship along with other refugees.

By circumstantial evidence it can be assumed that long before fleeing from the Bolsheviks M.I. Freiman shrewdly sold his estate in Kharkov and transferred the money to one of the Western banks. In any case, in Cyprus he clearly had the money without the need to earn a living.

The most significant part of B.M. Vroblevskiy's life, the youngest of six graduates of the medical faculty in Kharkov, who arrived to Cyprus in 1920, took place, in contrast to M.I. Freiman, on the "Island of Aphrodite". As P.N. Smitten (see the first part of this article), B.M. Vroblevskiy is remembered by the inhabitants of the region of Lefke for his health care service and for his practice as a physician at a major U.S. mining company, Cyprus Mines Corporation (CMC).

At the same time, only a little is known about his life before immigrating to Cyprus. Boris Mikhailovich Vroblevskiy was born in 1895 in the town of Shchigry, Kursk province, in the Orthodox family of an official. Boris finished the 3rd Kharkov gymnasium and entered medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University in 1913 [14, p.50].

Memoirs, written in 1945 in Paris [15] by his classmate at Kharkov gymnasium, P.V. Pashkov mention that 38 students graduated from the gymnasium in 1913 and they were "extremely brilliant in their success in sciences and in the number of received awards: 7 gold and 11 silver medals". In autumn they entered high school, mainly Kharkov University, but with the beginning of the World War I most of Pashkov's classmates, united by a patriotic impulse, voluntarily went to military schools, although they had an exemption from military service until the end of the University course. Four of them, including Boris Vroblevskiy, became military doctors:

"In spring of 1917 these four doctors graduated from the accelerated 4-years (instead of 5) course at medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University with the rank of "zauryad vrach". All four doctors served in the Black Sea Navy: Boris Vroblevskiy (senior physician at the battleship "Rostislav", then the head of the medical regiment of the Don army during the Civil War), Vladimir Mal'tsev (at the battleship "Three hierarchs"), Egon Yatsunskiy (died in 1919) and Mikhail Popov (then in the civil service in Yugo-

slavia)".

The fact that in autumn of 1917 Boris Vroblevskiy served as a doctor (however, as a junior one) on the above-mentioned ship, is testified by the literary sources [16]. Unfortunately, the evidence on B.M. Vroblevskiy's supervision of the medical service of the Don army (Armed Forces of South Russia) has not yet been found.

But we know that the Civil War forever separated Boris Vroblevskiy and his older brother, also a doctor. Petr Mikhailovich Vroblevskiy (born in 1885) graduated from medical faculty of the same University in 1911, specializing in skin and venereal disease. Then he worked at Kharkov University under the guidance of Professor N.S. Bokarius. Having stayed in the country under the Bolsheviks, P.M. Vroblevskiy became a quite famous forensic doctor, authoring several publications in this field that are still referenced today. Petr Mikhailovich worked in Kharkov until at least 1935.

The life of his younger brother turned out in a different way.

Having arrived to Cyprus in spring of 1920, the immigrant Vroblevskiy registered his medical diploma of Kharkov Imperial University and started to work as a general practitioner [3]. There is information in a newspaper that in 1922 he worked in Margo village [4].

When in the early 1920s, P.N. Smitten was granted permission to open his own hospital in Nicosia (see the first part of this article), B.M. Vroblevskiy began working in this private healthcare institution [17, p.252].

Later, also under the charge of Smitten, B.M. Vroblevskiy served from 1932 in the CMC hospital in Pendayia. At first the head of hospital instructed Boris to conduct rehabilitation services for the employees of the company. But then B.M. Vroblevskiy became a full-fledged Smitten's assistant in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. Boris Mikhailovich continued to work at the Pendayia hospital after Smitten's death in the 1940s and 1950s [18].

| PENDAYIA HOSPITAL June 3rd., 1943              |  | PENDAYIA HOSPITAL May 31st., 1944          |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| Debtor Sourayia Mehmet                         |  | Debtor Sourayia Mehmet                     |  |
| Abode Lefke                                    |  | Abode Lefke                                |  |
| To DOCTOR B. SMITEN B. Vroblevsky              |  | To DOCTOR B. SMITEN B. Vroblevsky          |  |
| Diagnosis: Myoma uterini, haemorrhage          |  | Diagnosis: Myoma uterini, haemorrhage      |  |
| From 1st. June to 3rd. June 1943               |  | From 11th. May to 31st. May 1944 included, |  |
| 28 days. Hospital fees and Dr's fees           |  | 15/- per day                               |  |
| 3 days. Hospital fees, Dr's fees and medicines |  | oxygen                                     |  |
| 8 0 0  |  | Physiological serum 2000                   |  |
| TOTAL 8 0 0                                    |  | Calcium dijonat 10 amp. 10 c.c.            |  |
| PAID on 2/6/44 8 0 0                           |  | Fees for blood transfused                  |  |
| TOTAL 1944                                     |  | Fees for plasma transfused                 |  |
| PAID on 2/6 1944                               |  | 250.0 Dry Human serum frogs                |  |
| C L  |  | Camphora and caffeine ergolin canadiale    |  |
|  |  | Liver extract aqueous                      |  |
|  |  | Complete blood analysis                    |  |
|  |  | Blood count and urine tests                |  |
|  |  | TOTAL 228 19 5                             |  |
|  |  | EXHIBIT                                    |  |
|  |  | Paid in advance 200 00 0                   |  |
|  |  | Remains to pay 28 19 5                     |  |
|  |  | TOTAL 193                                  |  |

Fig.2 Medical records of Dr. B.M.Vroblevskiy

At the same time B.M.Vroblevskiy kept a private hospital in Lefke. He rented a place in a building, built in the style of Ottoman architecture, which is now called “the House of the Pharmacist, Mr. Kemal”. A pharmacist’s son Kemal Bey, Mr. Feridun Kemal Feridun, reported the following (F.K.Feridun was born on 30.06.1952, living in Yedidalga. These information was quoted from an interview conducted on 09.04.2015. - E.A.):

“My aunt, a pharmacist Mustafa Effendi’s daughter and Mrs. Ülfet, Beria Hami and uncle beha Hami constructed a house in Lefke. However, they could not live in this house since they took a loan from the bank and had to pay their debt. Dr. Vroblevskiy, a White Russian living in Lefke, working in CMC and owning a private clinic, saw and liked the house and offered a rent that was not possible to refuse. The house had all the things that he asked for; the ground floor of the house had a big room for his clinic with the toilet and bathroom inside of the house as he wanted, as all the houses built in Lefke until that time had toilet and bathroom outside. Vroblevskiy found everything that he asked for in the building and rented the house for 10 liras and started to use it as a clinic”.

Following the opening of his private hospital in Lefke, Vroblevskiy made good relations with the public, examined the residents and became the guardian of their wellbeing. Most probably because of such positive manners, he still

had the same positive image. Harid Fedai, a Cypriot researcher and writer, who was examined by Vroblevskiy when he was a child, recalled the Russian doctor in Lefke as “his doctor Vroblevskiy” (Harid Fedai, born in 1930, from Lefke, living in Nicosia. This information was quoted from an interview conducted on 13.10.2012, and his letter sent to us on 17.02.2013. - E.A.):



Fig.3 Dr. B.M.Vroblevskiy's private hospital

“In the beginning of 1920s, in 1930s and 1940s, there was a doctor Vroblevskiy, a White Russian, working in the hospital owned by the CMC located in Pendayia (now known as Cengiz Topel Hospital). Apart from his duty at this hospital, he had a clinic, where my mother took us whenever we would fall ill.

The doctor was a middle-height, medium build, and good-humoured person. There was a phrase that he always repeated, “yes orayıd, kam burayıt, tam turayıt”. Whenever he would welcome the patients, he was using this phrase. Of course, as a child, I could not understand the meaning, and we did not ask him. Then I thought that it might be something ironic.

We saw him drinking from his flask at every visit as he repeated, “yes orayıd, kam burayıt, tam turayıt”. He was squeezing something into his tea, which then I learnt that it was a lime. I then had the same tree in my garden in Lefke and had my tea as he did.

Dr. Vroblevskiy learnt to speak Greek. He was talking

one by one. He was inserting a couple of Turkish words in between. He was smiling and humorous. He was always wearing his glasses above his nose”.

One of Vroblevskiy's significant contributions to the health care service in Lefke region was to encourage the residents to give birth in Pendayia hospital. He provided better conditions and facilities in the hospital, making the process of labor safer for women, and his initiatives paid back [19]:

“Recently Dr. Vroblevskiy told us that 217 children were born in Pendayia hospital in 1951. This was the biggest number in the history of the hospital. Before the war, people were opposed to giving birth in hospitals, with the biggest number of birth of only 4 children born in hospital in 1927. The doctor indicated that since the women were informed about the benefits of giving birth in hospital, the number increased”.

Dr. Vroblevskiy finally stated: “Since the hospital had all the required facilities, the wives of Cyprus Mines Corporation workers understood that the hospital was the safest place to give birth”.

Vroblevskiy resigned from the Pendayia hospital in 1953, after working for 20 years [20]. Then CMC newspaper announced about his intention to leave Cyprus:

“Doctor Vroblevskiy is leaving Cyprus. He worked as a doctor in Cyprus since 1920 and he worked for the hospital owned by the mines corporation. Many of his friends are upset by the news and wish him good luck”.

However, Vroblevskiy continued to work in Cyprus as a doctor also after the dismissal by the mining company, at least till 1956 [21].

We have not yet found any data regarding the subsequent years of Vroblevskiy's life. According to the information given by Behich Hasan (Behich Hasan was born in 1946, living in Doğancı. This information was quoted from an interview conducted on 15.02.2015.- E.A.), Vroblevskiy was married to a British lady and lived in Karaman (former name Karmi), Kyrenia, where British people lived until 1980s. He died in those years and was buried in the UK.

Three graduates of medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University went from Cyprus to the Balkans in 1922. These

doctors were not able to find work in their fields on the island. Or they probably did not want to spend the rest of their life among the non-Slavic population of Cyprus. In this sense, Serbia and Bulgaria were closer to former Khar-kovites with their languages similar to Russian.

We were able to track the life path of one of them from the beginning to end.

In his autobiography, written in 1906, Sergey Nikolaevich Kozentsov reported [22] that he was born on 9 February, 1881 in the city of Vasil'kov, Kiev province, in the Orthodox family. In 1899 after finishing a gymnasium in Elizavetgrad, Kherson province, S.N.Kozentsov entered medical faculty in Kharkov, graduating in May 1904 as a physician. After the graduation he began to work as an assistant in the surgical hospital of Kharkov branch of the All-Russian Red Cross Society. During the Russian-Japanese war of 1904-1905 Kozentsov, as well as Smitten (see the first part of our article), voluntarily went to the Far East.

After returning to Kharkov in October 1905, he resumed his work at the same place. In 1906 S.N.Kozentsov joined Kharkov Medical Society and worked as a junior resident in Kharkov surgical hospital of the Red Cross till the revolutions of 1917 [12, p. 226; 23, p. 194].

Kozentsov was recommended to become a member of Kharkov Medical Society by M.I.Selikhov, the head doctor of Kharkov Red Cross Society, who also supervised the inpatient hospital of the Society from 1904. The surgical clinic with 9 wards, provided with water, gas and electricity was from 1898 located in a two-storey building on the corner of Vozneseniya (Ascension) Square and the homonymous street. The best Kharkov surgeons worked in the Red Cross hospital, sharing experience and skills with S.N.Kozentsov.



**Fig.4 The building of Kharkov Red Cross hospital (up to 1912).**

In 1914 Kharkov Red Cross hospital moved to a new, much more spacious and well equipped building, located at the same place (at present it serves as Southern Railway

hospital).

Soon afterwards the World War I began. S.N.Kozentsov worked in Kharkov Red Cross hospital up to 1917; then the revolutions forever separated the doctor with his beloved place of work.



**Fig.5 The new building of Kharkov Red Cross hospital, which was erected to 1914 (at the same place).**

S.N.Kozentsov suddenly became a senior doctor on a warship of the Black Sea Navy. His name appears at number 24 on the list of officers of the battleship “Rostislav”, standing in 1917 at Odessa Harbor [16, 24].

We do not know where Kosentsov was during the Civil War. Probably he took the side of the White movement. And when in early 1920 it suffered defeat, the former doctor of Kharkov Red Cross was forced to emigrate.

Most likely, he arrived in Cyprus on 22 March, 1920 on the ship “Kheron”, which was called the hospital ship [25, p. 1]. It is definitely known that in 1920 S.N.Kozentsov, as the other doctors-immigrants, registered his medical diploma in Famagusta [26] and had an opportunity to work in his field.

It is entirely possibly that for some time he worked in Nicosia hospitals, under the guidance of another former Kharkovite, P.N.Smitten (see the first part of the article). However, apparently, Cyprus and the British administration were unsuited to Kozentsov, and in 1922 he left the island, preferring life in Dubrovnik, soon-to-be Yugoslavia.

According to literary sources [27], S.N. Kozentsov “settled well” in this seaside town, as well as other “educated

and resourceful Russian people". Engaged in medical practice, he lived in exile more than 20 years. The doctor died during the World War II, surviving his wife Maria Mikhailovna for a year. The couple was buried at the Orthodox cemetery Boninovo in Dubrovnik.

As for two other doctors, who studied in Kharkov, it is possible to tell with confidence only that in spring of 1920 they came by sea to Cyprus, and in autumn of 1922 they no longer lived on the island.

M.Arevshatyants was one of them, having registered in Famagusta his diploma of Kharkov Imperial University and received permission to medical practice [3]. However, no information about his work as a doctor in Cyprus has been preserved. Only a little is known about his life before emigrating from Russia. Mkrtych Arutyunovich Arevshatyants was born in 1884 in Armenian-Gregorian family in the city of New Bayazet (now Gavar) in Yerevan province. He finished a gymnasium in Baku and entered medical faculty in Kharkov in 1906 [7, p.10].

M.A.Arevshatyants graduated from Kharkov Imperial University in 1912, and moved to the Transcaucasia, where he worked until the beginning of the war and revolutions. There is evidence that he served as a senior doctor of the city hospital in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) [12, p. 16; 28, p. 16].

We can assume that M.A.Arevshatyants served as a military doctor during World War I on the Caucasian front. However, it is clear that the Civil War forever severed Arevshatyants from his native Armenia, though the Bolsheviks came there later than to the North Caucasus and the Crimea. Anyway, M.A.Arevshatyants did not stay long in Cyprus and spent the subsequent years in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, or the Middle East, where the Armenian Diaspora has always held key positions.

As for Alexey Ivanov, another graduate from medical faculty, Cypriot sources have not preserved more information than on Arevshatyants. And even less, because the note on registration of Ivanov's medical diploma in Famagusta in 1920 did not specify the patronymic (middle) name of the Russian immigrant [26].

The surname "Ivanov" is very common in Russia. In the 1910s there were at least 10 doctors, called Alexey Ivanov

with different middle names. It fell out that two of them graduated from Kharkov gymnasiums and entered Kharkov Imperial University in the same year, where both studied at the medical faculty [7, p.98].

One of them had the patronymic Georgievich and was born in the town of Slavyansk in 1883, in a noble family. Other one, Alexei Mikhailovich Ivanov, was born in 1884 in Kharkov, in the family of a Colonel. They both graduated from the University in 1910 and became rural ("zemskiy") doctors [29, p. 167]: A.G.Ivanov worked in the village Zhyrkovka of Konstantinograd County ("uyezd"), Poltava province; A.M.Ivanov served in the settlement Shandrygalovo of Lzyum "uyezd", Kharkov province.

With the beginning of the World War I, Alexei Mikhailovich Ivanov stayed in the same place of Kharkov province. Alexey Georgievich Ivanov moved to Gomel [12, p. 187], closer to the frontline (apparently, he was drafted into the Russian Imperial Army).

As concerns the subsequent years of the two doctors with the name Alexey Ivanov, we can only say that they both no longer worked in the homeland under the Soviets, and that the path of one of them ran through Cyprus into exile and then to the Balkans. But who of them, Alexey Mikhailovich or Alexey Georgievich, we hardly know.

At the best case, another former Kharkovite was also able to flee the Bolsheviks. At the worst, he was killed in the war, died of typhoid fever, was repressed by the Soviets. But anyway the final point of his life remains unknown.

In some respects the fate of the "bifurcated" doctor Alexey Ivanov is symbolic for dozens (maybe even hundreds) of students, graduates, professors and assistants of the medical faculty of the former Kharkov Imperial University and for thousands of doctors of the former Russian Empire.

## CONCLUSIONS.

White Russians, who were defeated in the Civil War in Russia, were forced to leave their homeland for fear of repressions, and settled in different countries of the world. One of these countries was Cyprus: in March-April

1920, the island took 1500-2000 refugees, soldiers and civilians, wounded and sick, women and children. Among them were officials and businessmen, doctors and priests, Christians and Muslims. All of them had no place in Bolshevik Russia. They lived in Cyprus, trying to rebuild their lives, until in 1922 the British authorities had evicted the Russian refugees to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

Among the White Russians, who arrived to Cyprus, were a lot of doctors and nurses. We identified the names of 11 doctors, 6 of whom graduated from the medical faculty of Kharkov Imperial University, namely Pavel Smitten, Sergey Kozentsov, Alexey Ivanov, Mkrtych Arevshatyants, Mark Freiman and Boris Vroblevskiy.

Doctors assisted their compatriots in the refugee camp, registered their diplomas in Cyprus, received permissions to medical practice, and treated the local residents until July 1922, when the White Russians were evicted to Balkans, including 7 of the 11 doctors.

However, three former Kharkovites stayed on the island and for many years continued to treat its residents: Smitten (who left an outstanding mark in history), Vroblevskiy and Freiman.

Today Cypriot community continues to remember these doctors with gratitude. The Cypriots have not forgotten the assistance provided to the local population by the graduates of Kharkov Imperial University.

On the other hand, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the students who graduated medical faculty in 1900-1917 received thorough training and skills (and some solid practical experience) in Kharkov. This allowed them, having left their homeland, not to be lost in the most difficult conditions of life and to bring benefit to other people, even being in a foreign land.

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