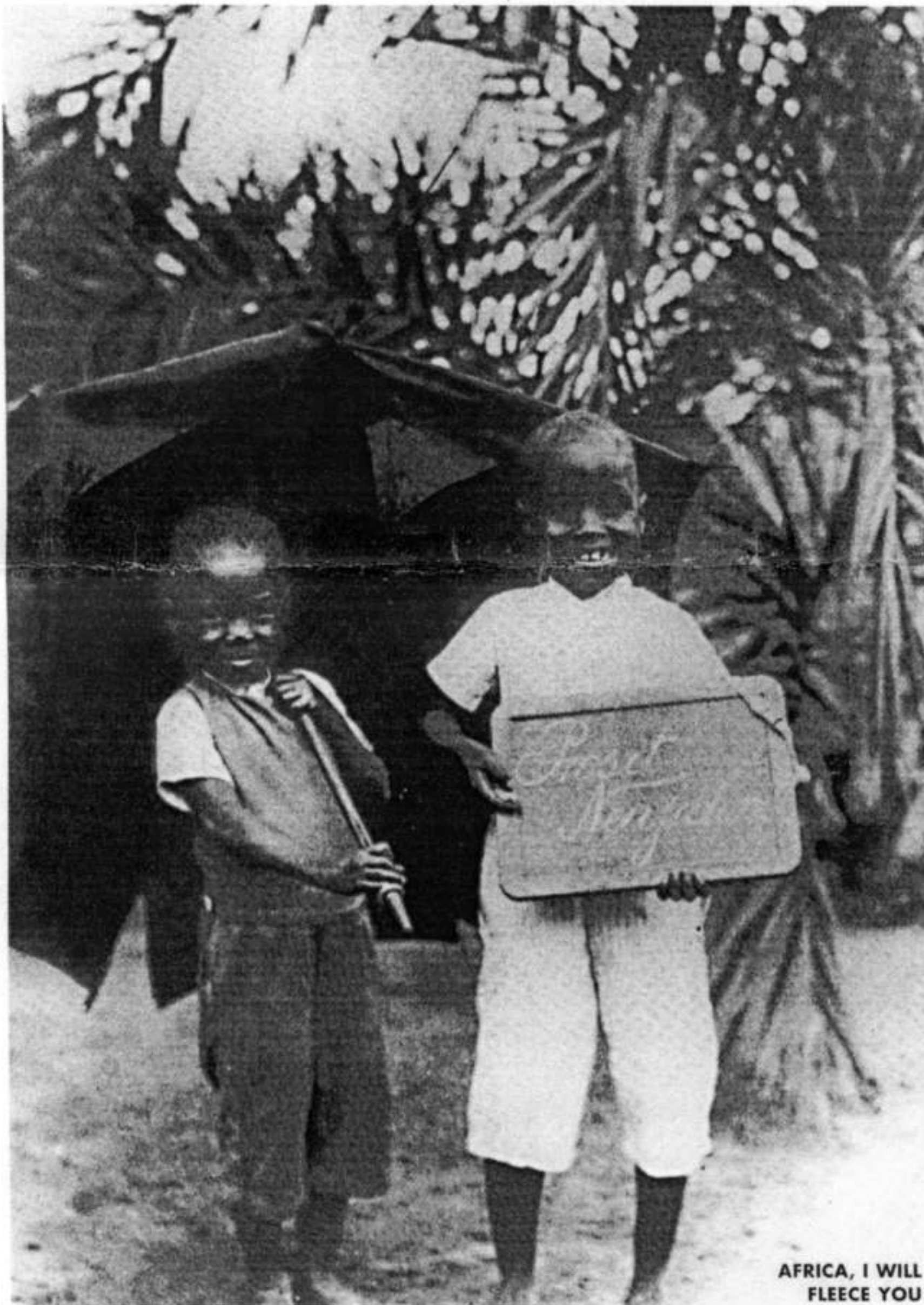


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JEAN-MARIE TENNO

CHRONICLER OF AFRICAN MODERNITY



Jean-Marie Teno will visit four venues in North America in the month of June. He is a featured guest at the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar and an artist in residence at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, California. Directly following his screenings at The Museum of Modern Art in New York City, Teno will join us in Toronto and give a lecture on his vision for documentary film in Africa. Cinematheque Ontario is delighted to have this rare opportunity to host Jean-Marie Teno and present a fair selection of his films, including several prints specially imported from France.

Born in Famleng, Cameroon in 1954, Jean-Marie Teno studied communications at the University of Valenciennes (France), then began work as a film critic for the magazine *Bwana*. In 1985, he was hired as an editor at FR3 (French National Television), where he worked until 1997. Teno made his first film, the documentary short *SCHUBBAH*, in 1983. Since then, he has directed both documentary and fiction, most often working in the form of the cinematic essay. His films, frequently shot by himself, bear the trademarks of first-person cinema. Lyrical and provocative, Teno's cinema is rooted in post-colonial experience and attempts to come to grips with societal issues facing contemporary Africa. He has tackled such topics as cultural censorship (*AFRICA, I WILL FLEECE YOU*), emigration trends (*CLANDO*), human rights and equality between the sexes (*CHIEF!*), the impact of a global economy on the developing world (*A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY*), as well as polygamy and ritual (*ALEX'S WEDDING*). The corruption found in various sectors of society (government, business, tribal leadership) is an underlying theme in much of his work. With his latest film, *THE COLONIAL MISUNDERSTANDING*, Teno presents a sharp critique of the role of nineteenth-century German missionaries in Africa, which led to colonial conquest.

Teno's cinematic essays are motivated by his own interest in fighting inequality. What is most striking about his films is their vitality, eloquence, and thoughtful political discourse, which frequently suggests strategies of resistance and change. Taken together, Teno's films provide us with a candid portrait of daily life in contemporary Cameroon, where a new generation is making up for the mistakes of the past.

– Susan Oxtoby

Cinematheque Ontario thanks the following individuals and organizations for their help with this retrospective: Margarita De la Vega-Hurtado, International Film Seminars (New York); Kathy Geritz and Laura Deutch, Pacific Film Archive (Berkeley); Sally Berger, The Museum of Modern Art (New York); Cornelius Moore, California Newsreel (San Francisco), and Isabelle Erchoff, Les Films du Raphia (Paris).



"Surely one of the freshest talents currently working in the African cinema." – Richard Peña, Film Comment

"CHEF! and LA TÊTE DANS LES NUAGES together with his earlier AFRIQUE, JE TE PLUMERAI offer the most searching critiques available on film of the political and economic stagnation besetting many African states." – California Newsreel

"One hears the voice of Africa expressing itself in the first person and taking the risk of its subjectivity, without using the excuse of poverty or relying on folklorism. This is, above all, very courageous." – Libération

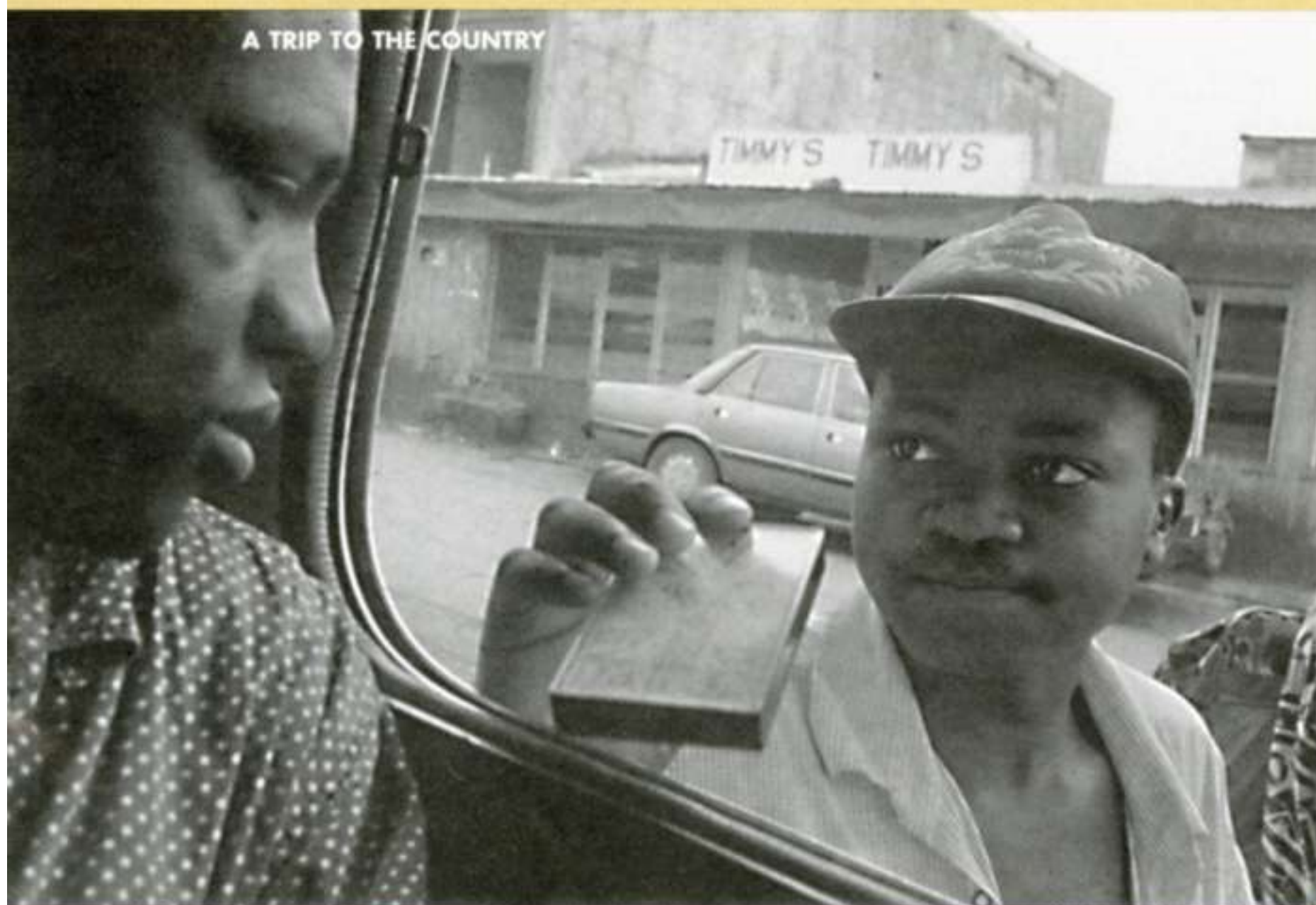
35MM IMPORTED PRINT!

A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY

(VACANCES AU PAYS)
Director: Jean-Marie Teno
Cameroon/France/Germany 2000 75 minutes

A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY, which has not screened locally since it played at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2000, is a cinematic voyage in search of the "modern" Cameroon. With a camera on his shoulder, Jean-Marie Teno returns to his native country, where he retraces the travels of his youth from the capital city, Yaoundé, west to his former village, Bandjoun. Along his trek he witnesses the lives of ordinary people and "listens to their hopes, disappointments and frustrations in the face of a changing society" (Teno). His portrait is both affectionate and tinged with irony. We see images of society's crumbling infrastructure and encounter corrupt government officials. A TRIP TO THE COUNTRY shows some of the delusions of modernity: Western consumerism has replaced the social fabric of the village, yet it offers little improvement to the lives of the local people. "Teno reveals a new generation of Africans acutely aware of their nation's mistakes and filled with ideas about how to make up for them. This trip to the filmmaker's past becomes a vision of his country's possible future, and the delicate balance between past and future that informs so many African films finds here a stirring new expression." – Richard Peña, *Film Comment*

Thursday, June 16 8:15 p.m.



35MM PRINT!

CLANDO

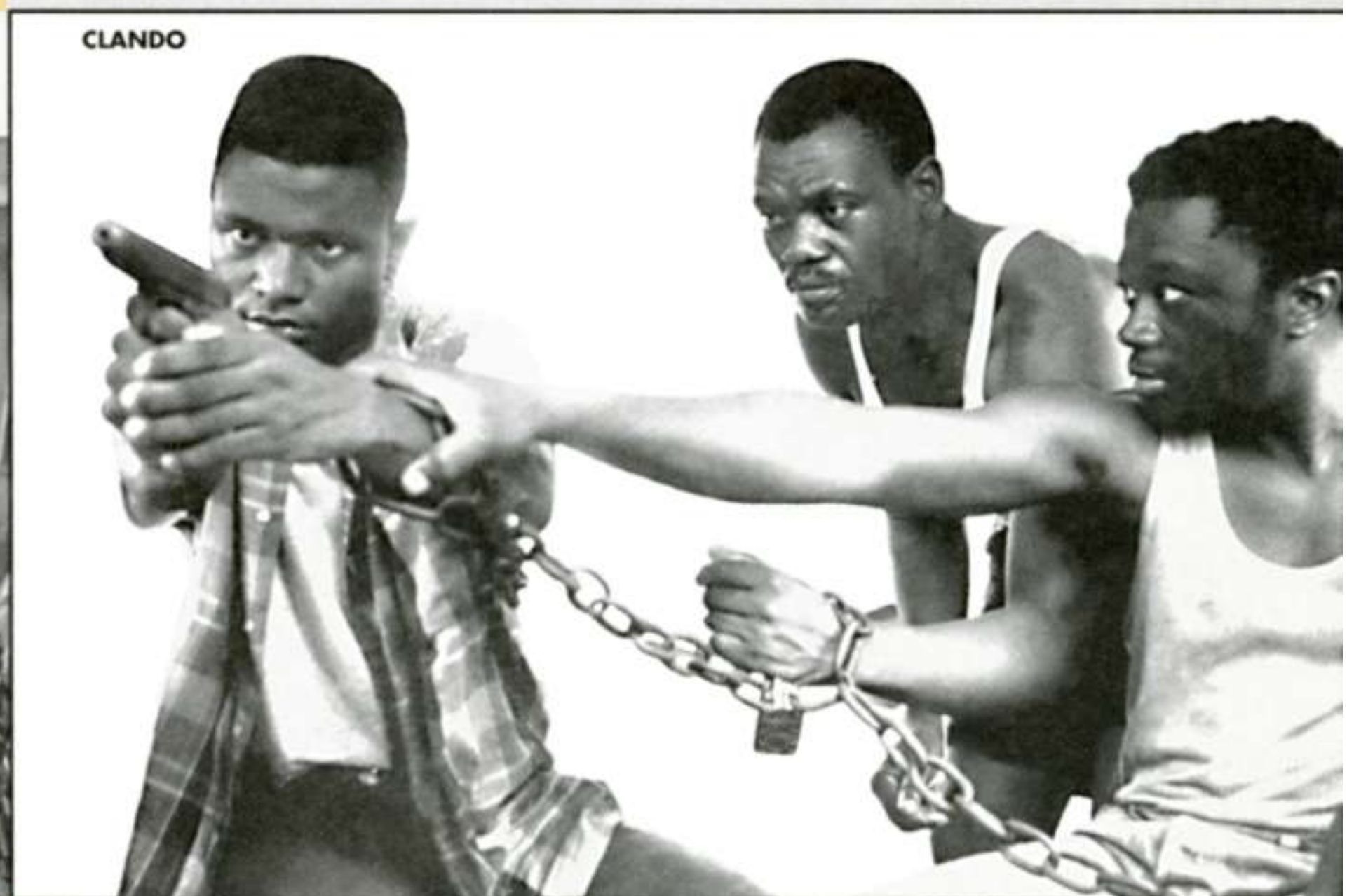
(a.k.a. CLANDESTINE)
Director: Jean-Marie Teno
Cameroon 1996 98 minutes
Cast: Paulin Fodouop, Henriette Fenda

"CLANDO dramatizes how global forces can reach right into a man's psyche. Teno's first feature film confirms his position as one of African cinema's most exciting directors." – Cameron Bailey

CLANDO begins in medias res: a chaotic, disorienting, urban present where people are so busy surviving they don't have the time to confront the underlying causes of their desperation. The central character, Sobgui, a former computer programmer, has, for reasons not yet clear, been reduced to driving a "clando" or gypsy cab through Douala's anarchic streets. He is clandestine, not just because his cab is unlicensed, but because he is hiding from his own past. When a radical political group involves him in the revenge slaying of an informer, Sobgui knows it is definitely time to get out of Douala. A wealthy elder from his village provides the chance when he asks Sobgui to go to Germany to buy more cars – and to try to locate his long-lost, prodigal son, Rigoberto.

– California Newsreel

Friday, June 17 6:30 p.m.





JEAN-MARIE TENO

JEAN-MARIE TENNO

CHRONICLER OF AFRICAN MODERNITY

AFRICA, I WILL FLEECE YOU

(AFRIQUE, JE TE PLUMERAI)
Director: Jean-Marie Teno
Cameroon 1992 88 minutes video

"Provocative, idiosyncratic, playfully arch and sardonic . . . Even 30 years after independence, this African nation is searching for its identity."
– Philadelphia Inquirer

An accomplished work, AFRICA, I WILL FLEECE YOU established Jean-Marie Teno as a critical commentator on European colonialism and the current state of political (and cultural) affairs in Cameroon. This powerful film essay provides a devastating overview of one hundred years of cultural genocide in Africa through its examination of press censorship, government-controlled publishing, and the flood of European media and books. "Teno uses Cameroon, the only African country colonized by three European powers, as the basis for a carefully researched case study of the continuing damage done to traditional African societies by alien neo-colonial cultures. Unlike most historical films, AFRIQUE, JE TE PLUMERAI moves from present to past, peeling away layer upon layer of cultural forgetting. Teno explains: 'I wanted to trace cause and effect between an intolerable present and the colonial violence of yesterday . . . to understand how a country once composed of well-structured traditional societies could fail to succeed as a state.'" – California Newsreel

Tuesday, June 21 6:30 p.m.

JEAN-MARIE TENO IN PERSON JUNE 29-30

CINEMATHEQUE ONTARIO LECTURE SERIES

LECTURE BY JEAN-MARIE TENO

"New video technology may permit us to break the cycle of media dependency . . . We can tell our own stories, our way, within our own means." – Jean-Marie Teno

In addition to his work as a filmmaker, Jean-Marie Teno is also a writer and film critic. Following the screening of CHIEF!, Teno will present a lecture on his vision for documentary film and comment on the conditions for film production and distribution in Africa. Approximate length of the lecture will be 30 minutes.

Teno's article *Imagining Alternatives: African Cinema in the New Century* can be found at the following website: <http://www.newsreel.org/articles/teno.htm>

CHIEF!

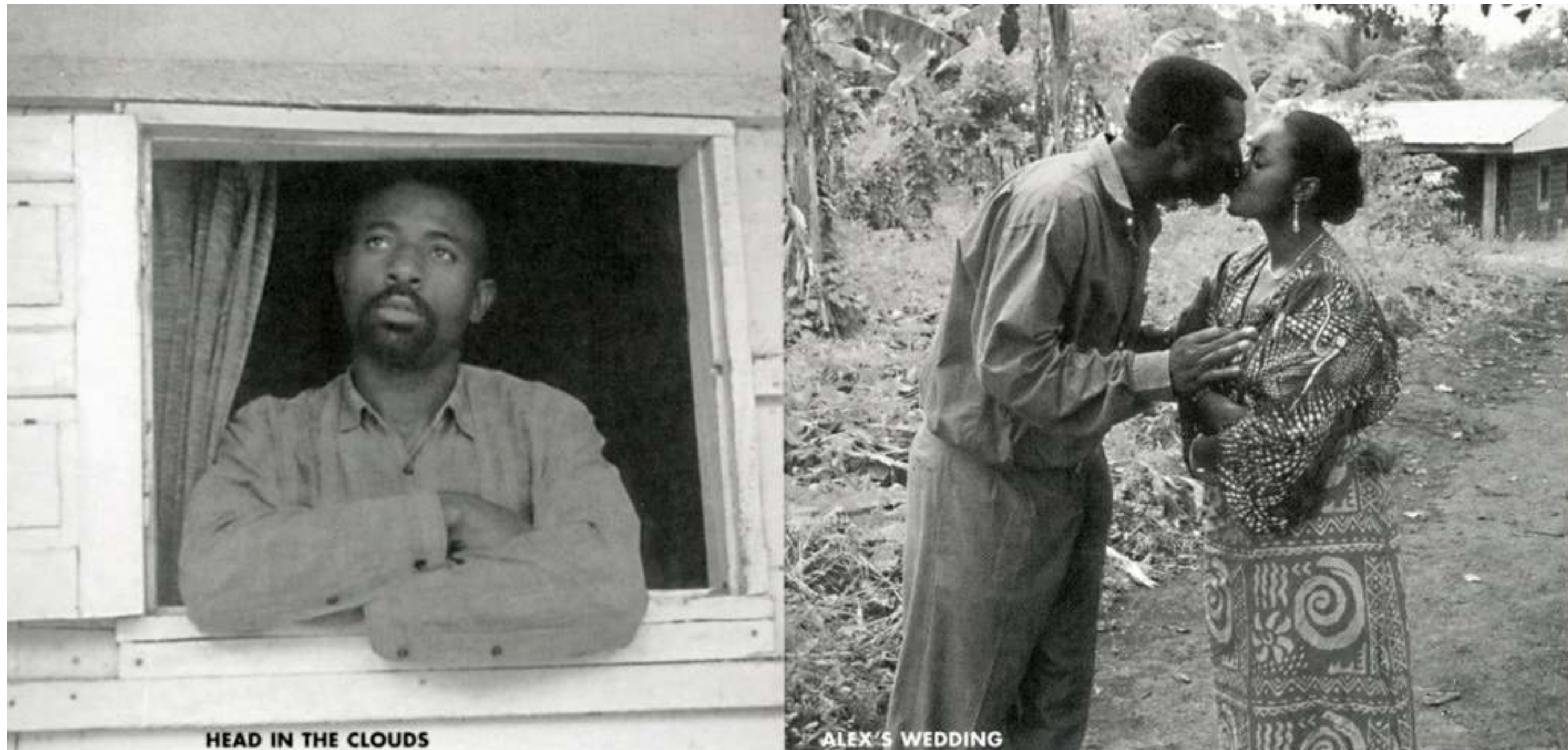
(CHIEF!)
Director: Jean-Marie Teno
Cameroon 1999 61 minutes

"Very powerful and eloquent . . . [CHIEF!] underscores, in a neat presentation, the challenges Africa faces in establishing rights and accountability at the village level, between the sexes and for persons of power – be they traditional or political."
– Adotei Akwei, Amnesty International

I traveled to my village to attend the inauguration of a monument honoring one of our past chiefs. I planned to spend several days videotaping dances. However on the morning of the second day of festivities, I happened across a scene of vigilante justice during which a 16-year-old boy nearly lost his life for stealing one hen and four chicks. Several hours later, I bought a souvenir calendar and discovered inside the 'rules and regulations of the husband in his home' – a series of exceptionally misogynous 'articles' defining the conjugal relationship. These events became the starting point of a reflection on abuses of power in Cameroon – country of chiefs, country of inequalities. – Jean-Marie Teno

Wednesday, June 29 6:30 p.m.

Single tickets are \$10.25 (including GST) for Cinematheque Ontario members and \$15.50 for non-members. Purchase a subscription to the Cinematheque Ontario Lecture Series and secure your seat at 7 events between June and December 2005. Members can subscribe for \$68.60; non-members for \$103.60.



HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

ALEX'S WEDDING

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

(LA TÊTE DANS LES NUAGES)

Director: Jean-Marie Teno

Cameroon 1994 34 minutes video

Teno investigates the ties between unaccountable government and an unproductive economy in LA TÊTE DANS LES NUAGES. Kleptocracy has become an accepted fact of Cameroonian life described by the proverb: "The goat grazes where it is tied." The government controlled formal sector, like its colonial predecessor, is essentially parasitical. . . . Cameroon's bifurcated economy is also reflected in its schizophrenic education system. Cameroonians flock to the universities to acquire a neo-colonial education which ill-prepares them for the actual needs of the local economy. . . . Teno concludes that Cameroon's economy is like a man with his feet in trash and his head in the clouds with nothing but chaos in between. – California Newsreel

followed by

TORONTO PREMIERE! IMPORTED 35MM PRINT!

ALEX'S WEDDING

(LE MARIAGE D'ALEX)

Director: Jean-Marie Teno

Cameroon 2002 45 minutes

Jean-Marie Teno chronicles dramatic changes in the lives of three people over the course of one afternoon. Filming his friend Alex's wedding, Teno witnesses a polygamous marriage ceremony, initially with humour then with increasing critical distance. "I was concerned about respecting people's choices and didn't want to be accusatory. I positioned myself as an observer, capturing the reality of the event – the official speeches and traditional rituals, as well as the unspoken pain that was palpable throughout the evening. The film presents a ceremony ostensibly in celebration of love, but during which 'duty' and 'submission' were the preferred words" (Teno).

Jean-Marie Teno will be in attendance at this screening.

Thursday, June 30 6:30 p.m.

TORONTO PREMIERE! IMPORTED 35MM PRINT! THE COLONIAL MISUNDERSTANDING

(LE MALENTENDU COLONIAL)

Director: Jean-Marie Teno

Cameroon/Germany/France 2004 78 minutes

Teno's latest documentary is an examination of colonial Africa and the role of German missionaries. Starting in the early nineteenth century, the German city of Wuppertal was a centre for missionaries who would depart for countries such as Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, and South Africa. Shifting between cynicism and altruism, the Church both set out to "civilize" and bring Christianity to the African people. Germany's genocidal war against the Herero people in Namibia (1904-1907), during which Africans were forcibly interned in concentration camps, foreshadows similar atrocities under the Nazi regime. Teno visits archives, churches, and historical sites; his film essay "uncovers the breaking point where missionaries of God became ambassadors of Country, and where souls to be saved became workers to be exploited" (Jason Sanders, Pacific Film Archive). Through interviews with experts from Germany and Africa, Jean-Marie Teno presents a sharp critique of the relatively short but nevertheless horrific colonial history of Germany in Africa.



Jean-Marie Teno will be in attendance at this screening.

Thursday, June 30 8:45 p.m.



THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GROUP IS A CHARITABLE, CULTURAL, AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN FILM AND THE MOVING IMAGE.

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