

March 18, 1964

Dear Mr. Ishikawa,

Thank you for sending us the enclosed material. It has been read with care and interest but unfortunately it does not meet our present editorial requirements.

We appreciate your wish to have it considered by The Reporter.

Sincerely yours,

*Louisa Messolonghi*

for The Editors

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Approximately 1400 words

### THE BEAR WHO SPOKE RUSSIAN

Once there was a grizzly bear who was hibernating in his lair in the Canadian Rockies. It was early spring, and he was just beginning to shake off the effects of his winter's sleep. As he was awakening, he became aware of voices. Opening one eye experimentally, he realized that his cave was being shared by two boy scouts and a scoutmaster.

"Must be from the States," he thought, "no Canadian boy scout would be looney enough to go batting around up here this time of the year."

And sure enough, one of the boys verified this fact by whining, "I sure wish I was back in Pocatello."

"Don't worry," said the scoutmaster reassuringly, "This blizzard has just about blown itself out, and we'll be back in camp in no time."

"Boy, I sure hope there aren't any bears in here," said the other boy, looking about uneasily. The grizzly, safe from detection in the darkest recess of the cave, shut his eye so it would not reflect the little campfire the scouts had managed to build. Having learned of the blizzard, he tried to get back to sleep, but could hear the scoutmaster lecturing the boys on the habits of bears to calm them down and to help pass the time away.

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"...So much for the black bear, and the honey bear; the grizzly bear, on the other hand, is quite fierce but normally not dangerous unless attacked or cornered. The grizzly is the most intelligent of the bears," continued the scoutmaster as the bear felt his chest swelling with pride. "He looks a great deal like the Siberian brown bear but is probably not as strong." The bear felt his chest deflate.

The bear finally fell asleep again, and when he awoke, it was in the middle of spring and the boy scouts had gone. The bear thought that he might have dreamed about the scouts, but he found the cold ashes of a fire to prove that they had indeed been in the cave. After going out and foraging for food with which he broke his fast, he began to recall some of the things the scoutmaster had said about bears and again felt a thrill of pride as he remembered that the grizzly bear possessed the most intelligence.

"Well," he thought, "this intelligence should be cultivated and nurtured and not allowed to waste away in this wilderness."

With this thought in mind, he came down from the mountains and went to the city where there was a library. Naturally, his first thought was to find out more about bears, and to his surprise, <sup>he</sup> discovered that the bear was a symbol of Russia. So he looked up Russia and found that there were many bears in Russia who performed in circuses, that they were popular animals in Russian zoos; he also found that the scoutmaster had been right about the prodigious strength of the Siberian brown bear.

Being very curious about a country that would use a bear for a symbol, the grizzly decided that he would like to visit Russia. But

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first, he decided that it might be a good idea to learn Russian; after all, it shouldn't be too difficult for the most intelligent of bears.

So he went off to the university to enroll in the Russian language class. The professor was not particularly surprised to see a bear in his class because he had all kinds; people who were secretly Russian sympathizers took his course in order to be prepared for the Russian invasion and occupation of Canada; people who hated Russia took his course in order to be prepared for the Canadian invasion and occupation of Russia; people who were neutral took his course in order to prepare for peaceful coexistence with the Russians; then there were inevitably coeds looking for a husband. So why should a bear's presence seem unusual?

In any case, the bear took the course, and while he did not perform brilliantly, he did become sufficiently proficient to receive the professor's assurance that he could go at least to the major cities of Russia and get along.

"At least you know enough to order in a restaurant; so you will not starve although you may get tired of borscht," chuckled the professor. It was his one stock joke and not a very good one; no one ever laughed unless his grade were in jeopardy.

Armed with this assurance, the bear departed for Russia. He took the shortest route which was via the Bering straits and came to Nizhne-Kolymnsk which was the first town of any size; there was a kind of flea-bitten carnival there and he thought that he might try his Russian there. Sure enough, there was a bear doing a kind of cyde dance, but when the grizzly tried to engage him in conversation, he got nothing but

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a cold stare. But this didn't faze him; he went to Verkhoyansk where he got the same kind of treatment from a bear riding a bicycle; he went to Yakhutsk where the bears in the zoo didn't pay any attention to him at all. These discouraging experiences were repeated with slight local variations at Dudinka, Tomsk, Novosibirsk, Stalinsk, Omsk, Minsk and Pinsk.

"Well, what can you expect from these hick towns?" thought the bear, "I should've gone to the big cities right from the beginning; these peasant bears probably speak only backward provincial dialects."

And he stormed into Stalingrad and went to the finest circus he could find. He found a bear doing a balancing act and tried to start up a conversation, "Hello, there," he began in his best Russian, My name is --" and he was stuck because he realized he didn't have a name, but recovering quickly he added "John" taking the name of his Prime Minister. "What is your name?" But the balancing bear ignored him completely.

"I suppose that act does take a good deal of concentration," thought the grizzly; "I'll go find the bears in the sideshow; they don't have an act." But he got the same reception there too.

"Perhaps I ought to introduce myself as Ivan instead of John," thought the grizzly as he trudged wearily toward Moscow.

But the reception there was exactly the same both at the zoo and at the circus.

Finally deciding that he had been tricked by his Russian professor, he headed back without even bothering to try Leningrad. On the way he ran into some of the powerful brown bears and was impressed by their strength but couldn't communicate with them either.

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It was late fall by the time he got back to the university. He stormed into the office of the professor of Russian. "What kind of a phony are you?" demanded the bear, grabbing the professor by the lapels, "I wandered all over the Soviet Union, got blisters and calluses all over my feet and shin splints besides, but I couldn't communicate worth a darn. No one understood one word I said!"

The professor blinked his surprise. "You did quite well in class; your vocabulary could have been bigger, but your accent was almost perfect. Do you mean to tell me that the people in Russia couldn't understand you?"

"People!" roared the bear, "Who cares about people? I went over to talk to the bears to see how they got to be such big shots there! I didn't talk to any people!"

"Well," said the professor, "there's your trouble; the only Russian I know is people Russian, not bear Russian. If you want to know bear Russian, you'll have to get another teacher." And with that, he removed the bear's paws from his lapels, brushed himself off and ushered the bewildered bear out of his office and closed the door behind him.

In dejected resignation, the bear went back to his lair and started to hibernate. Just as he was dozing off, he thought of something, roused himself and posted a sign at the entrance of the cave that read: "No camping."

The end