

## LESSON TWO

### THE MOST INSPIRING LETTER EVER WRITTEN TO WINSTON

*After John Pittman*

The following text is based on an article published in the Daily Worker. Its author, John Pittman, met Henry Winston, one of the leaders of the American Communist Party on his visit to the Soviet Union.

One day recently the usual daily mail for a patient in a Soviet sanatorium contained a letter that was to attract world attention.

The patient is Henry Winston, the heroic American Communist leader who became blind in a United States prison as a result of brutal neglect and mistreatment by the prison authorities. Winston was imprisoned during the McCarthy terror against the American people. After his release he came to the Soviet Union for treatment and rest. He has received hundreds of letters from Soviet citizens and each day people from various parts of the USSR send him wishes for health and happiness.

The letter which was to be publicized around the world was, in Winston's own words, "the most inspiring letter ever written" to him. It was written by a young girl of twenty, Rosa Shafigulina, a student of the foreign languages department of the Teacher Training Institute of Tomsk, a Siberian city. It was short, direct, simple.

It said:

"You are a real Communist, and I am a simple Soviet girl, a student. I am living for the people and therefore I offer you my eyes. I am young and my eyes can see beautifully. You need them for your forthcoming struggles and so you must consent. Please answer and I shall come wherever you may be."

And a postscript said:

"Please believe I shall not be afraid of the operation."

Understandably, it took some time for Winston to answer

Rosa Shafigulina. He says it was difficult to find an answer. Try, reader, to imagine yourself in Winston's place.

"Let me confess that your offer made me weep," he finally told her. "I am happy to say I cannot accept it. My problem is not eyes but a nerve atrophy. I am deeply honoured to write to one of the vanguard fighters of today and tomorrow, a young girl of twenty, who is strong and conscious of her mission in life, who has exhibited such strength of character in a physical and mental sense. This means that in order for you to be able to play your role in the future you must remain as you are now. Remember that your eyes shine much clearer than two jewels in any diadem. They must remain so."

Who is the Rosa Shafigulina who calls herself a "simple Soviet girl", but whose simple act brought tears to the eyes of a veteran battle-steeped American Communist leader. Winston has never seen her, perhaps, in future may only shake her hand, but this characterization of her proved correct. "Her act, he said, which can only be created under the banners of victorious socialism is a typical example of the spirit of the Soviet youth..."

The "Pravda" correspondents who visited Tomsk to meet Rosa Shafigulina wrote that they encountered many young girls on their way to Rosa's house in Kaluzhskaya Street, any one of whom might have been the young letter writer.

Rosa's life led through kindergarten, school, the young Pioneer organization and the Young Communist League to the Teacher Training Institute.

How many Rosa Shafigulinas are there in the Soviet Union? Millions and millions.

Of course, the particular conjuncture of character which brought Rosa Shafigulina into international prominence is rare. Likewise with Juri Gagarin and German Titov; the first flight by man into outer space can only happen once, the first multiple-orbiting of the earth in a state of weightlessness can only be recorded once.

But the same qualities which inspired the exploits of the cosmonauts, which moved Rosa to offer her eyes to Henry Winston, are to be found in many millions of Soviet young people. Those who speak of the "new Soviet man" do not exaggerate.

#### Words and Expressions <sup>[ɪnˈspʌrɪŋ]</sup>

inspiring [ɪnˈspʌrɪŋ]  
mail  
to contain  
to attract attention

вдохновляющий, волнующий  
почта, корреспонденция  
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привлекать внимание

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