Verbatim text of Miss Susan Clement's letter to the Hungarian Freedom Fighters Federation, Inc. and her questions to the Hungarian Communist Delegation to the United Nations and their answers.

April 22, 1960

Hungarian Freedom Fighters Federation
P.O. 218
Gracie Station
New York 28, New York

Dear Sirs,

I am a 16 year old Penfield High School junior. Last year I wrote a 3,500 word paper for my World History term project which gave a factual account of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Now, as an American History student, I must write on a phase of American foreign policy. My term project is, "Should the United States have intervened in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956?"

It is difficult for me to obtain information on this topic, as our Rochester, N.Y. Public Library has practically nothing. Last week I was given the address of the Hungarian Mission to the United Nations here in New York, as a possible source of information. I wrote to the Mission requesting an interview which I had this morning. I did not realize that was a Communist organization until I was speaking with Mr. Joseph Tardos and Mr. Tibor Keszthelyi. The information they gave me in answer to my questions made me very anxious to have the very same questions answered by an organization such as yours. I have enclosed my questions with their answers in brief.

Mr. Tardos and Mr. Keszthelyi also gave me five paper-bound volumes of "The Counter-revolutionary Forces in the October Events in Hungary," published by the Information Bureau of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic. I would be very grateful if you could send me printed matter on the subject, since it is so difficult to find information.

Respectfully,

Susan Clement
Miss Clement's questions to the Hungarian Communist Delegation to the United Nations and the Delegation's answers.

Did the U.S. promise aid to the revolutionaries?

Sometime around October 29 or 30 President Eisenhower made a speech promising $20,000,000 to the government. However this was never received because the government was only temporary. This was the only United States aid promised.

Would U.S. aid have influenced the success of the revolution?

It would not have had a direct effect on the revolution but it might possibly have led to a world war.

Has U.S. foreign policy to Hungary changed since Oct. '56?

The U.S. has had poor relations with Hungary all through the 1950's.

I am especially interested in learning the answers to the above questions. The following information was brought out during the rest of the talk.

Had the revolution been a success, would it have turned out to work for the good of the people?

A revolution helps society to go further. In 1956 a counter-revolution occurred, at which time the conspirators attempted to establish a Fascist type regime. Nagy wanted to establish the old regime as a so-called "republic". Cardinal Mindszenty, legitimist, wished to re-establish the Hapsburg monarchy.

Who actually brought about the revolution?

Social circles, whose purpose was to restore the old Fascist regime pushed the revolution, as well as America, (through agents within the country, (Hungary) Radio Free Europe and their allotment of $100 million to subversive countries.) There is proof that the majority of the people did not support it, in that it was crushed so quickly and effortlessly. "It is impossible to crush with an
atomic bomb a movement that is popular." Even if the revolution was successful immediately, the new government wouldn't have lasted long because it was constantly going to the right. There is proof that the revolution was not spontaneous because ammunition was distributed before the 23rd. The masses which demonstrated on the 23rd were not demonstrating for a new government, but for simple social reforms. The New Socialist Hungary has brought these. Today 80% of the people are covered by Social Security. Percentage-wise, there are three times as many children enrolled in school.

Do Hungarians have freedom of speech?

There is freedom of speech "for those whose speeches don't poison public opinion." For example, speeches for Anti-Semitism are outlawed. The punishment is severe.

Who determines what will "poison public opinion?"

City councils. There are also general rules. Parliament has passed a Peace Act, which "prevents war propaganda."
May 10, 1960

Miss Susan Clement
59 Collingsworth Drive
Rochester 10, N.Y.

Dear Miss Clement:

We read your letter in which you tell us about your adventures with the representatives of the Hungarian puppet regime with great pleasure. We were very glad to see how shrewd and politically mature questions you asked from these U.N. delegates. They were certainly most embarrassed.

We are always pleased to see young Americans being interested in the events that took place in October-November 1956 in Hungary. Some thirty thousand Hungarians, mostly young boys and girls, sacrificed their lives so that their country may be independent and free. They fought for political ideals and a way of life which you, Miss Clement, and American youth enjoy. We are convinced of the importance that the youth of free countries know what is going on on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Peace and the freedom of the American people are not secure as long as a hundred million once-independent -east European peoples are forced to live under a hated foreign dictatorship.

Here are our answers to your questions:

/Did the U.S. promise aid to the revolutionaries?/

The United States Government did not offer any political or military assistance to the revolutionary Hungarian government. The $20 million mentioned by the Communist agents was exclusively designed to provide food, clothing and medical supplies for the people of Budapest. This assistance was purely humanitarian which could not have any effect on the events. One should also remember the framework in which this generous U.S. offer was made (for particulars see The New York Times of October 29-November 3, 1956, or write to the Department of State for the relevant announcement by President Eisenhower): many governments of free countries and even that of Poland making similar gestures, Red Cross and other private societies collecting food and medical supplies to be sent to Hungary.
Would U.S. aid have influenced the success of the revolution?

First of all, one should keep in mind that the revolution was victorious in its first phase, Oct. 23-Nov. 4. Victory was complete by Nov. 4. The Hungarian Communist party was dissolved by its own Central Committee (Politbureau). This was a shining acknowledgement of the fact that the Hungarian people did not accept Communism.

(The great majority of the rank-and-file party members actively participated in the revolution and in the fight against the Russians.)

In the entire country, in townships, counties and cities councils were formed whose members were elected by acclamation or delegation. These democratic bodies replaced the Communist administration and ended up by supporting without exception the government of Imre Nagy. This government, finally composed of representatives of several political parties, functioned as the legal government of Hungary and was recognized as such by foreign powers, including the Soviet Union.

The Soviet armed forces were beaten by the Freedom Fighter groups. An armistice agreement was concluded on Oct. 28 between the Hungarian government and Anastas Mikoyan, envoy of the Soviet Union. According to the agreement the Soviet Union declared its readiness to withdraw all its forces from Hungarian territory (this was also published in Pravda on Oct. 30). Fighting stopped on Oct. 29. On Oct. 30, Soviet troops left Budapest.

Maintenance of public order was entrusted to the "Hungarian National Guard," recruited from Freedom Fighter groups. By Nov. 3 the conditions for returning to normal life were assured.

On Nov. 4, the Russians launched their surprise attack with some 16 fresh divisions brought into the country in violation of the armistice agreement. They swept away our consolidated parliamentary political and social order, brought with them a puppet government and restored the Communist system.

For answering your question, first of all a fact should be established: the Soviet leadership hesitated for some time before deciding for massive intervention to restore the old system. This was natural in view of the gradually developing situation in Hungary, with every hour bringing new developments, but if there was any doubt on this point Premier Khrushchev himself answered them during the Hungarian Communist party congress in Nov.-Dec. 1959. (I am enclosing an issue of one of our publications. You will find on page 3 the relevant quotation from K's speech.) It is quite clear that even when finally deciding in favor of attacking (despite loss of prestige, weakening of Communist parties outside the Soviet orbit, frightening away the useful masses of fellow-travelers, etc.), the Soviet leaders still took a calculated gamble. They had every reason to avoid a war in Europe at that juncture. Poland was still in a revolutionary state, ready to follow Hungary in a matter of hours, East Germany was tense, the other satellites uneasy -- Russia would have been caught in a most unfavorable situation with half of its forces deep in enemical territory, cut from their home base.
Secondly, it should be mentioned that the Hungarian government did not ask for aid before Nov. 1. On Nov. 1, repeated on Nov. 2, and subsequently, the Hungarian government officially declared its decision taken the previous day: Hungary had left the Warsaw Pact (military alliance led by the Soviet Union), Hungary became a neutral country, Hungary appeals to the four great powers (including the Soviet Union) to guarantee this military neutrality, this announcement was prompted by the fact that fresh Soviet troops entered Hungary against which the Hungarian government vigorously protested. (This note was also communicated to the General Secretariat of the U.N. with the request to put the question of new Soviet troop movements in Hungary immediately on the agenda of the Security Council and the General Assembly.) On Nov. 4 and in the days following the Soviet aggression assistance was repeatedly asked. Most important in this respect is the personal radio broadcast of Prime Minister Imre Nagy in the morning of Nov. 4, announcing to the world that the Soviet Union committed a clear-cut aggression against the people and legal government of Hungary.

Consequently, U.S. aid political aid, or even a stronger stand favoring the new Hungarian government — prior to Nov. 1 — would have backed up those in Moscow who were against intervention. On Nov. 1 and following that date the U.S. government had a clear invitation from the only Hungarian government that existed at the time (and which was already fully in control of the country) to guarantee Hungary's neutrality against aggression. There were four days to act before the Russians launched their surprise attack. (For the U.N. attitude during this period see "Timetable of a Failure" in Facts About Hungary.) As to speculation whether the Russians could have been deterred without a solemn guarantee by the U.S. of Hungary's neutrality, it is anybody's guess. It seems likely that a strong warning to stop bringing in new troops would have been enough to prevent the Russians from attacking on Nov. 4. In the last resort, implying no commitment whatsoever, some measure of mobilization of U.S. troops in Bavaria or elsewhere in Europe might have been sufficient in those circumstances to make the Russians think twice.

Has U.S. foreign policy toward Hungary changed since Oct. '56? The United States distinguishes between the Hungarian people and the Soviet-imposed puppet government of Hungary. Regarding the Hungarian people, the U.S. formally maintains the Hungarian people's right to self-determination. Following the revolution of the U.S. Congress on May 2, 1960, expressing the "hope" that President Eisenhower will further the cause of reestablishment of fundamental freedoms to the Soviet Union's "captive satellites."

At the same time, the U.S. continues to maintain diplomatic relations with Hungary, though since the 1956 revolution Hungary is the only country among those with diplomatic relations with the U.S. which has no American Ambassador or Minister plenipotentiary. The legation in Budapest was left in charge of a minor official and no American diplomatic representative presented its credentials to the new government.
The fact that the U.S. does not consider the present government of Hungary as representative was made quite clear when sponsoring resolutions in the United Nations. These resolutions pointed out that the Soviet Union deprived Hungary from its independence and the Hungarian people from its fundamental human rights, that it installed a puppet regime in Budapest and that it maintains this regime with the presence of the Soviet armed forces.

/Had the revolution been a success, would it have turned out to work for the good of the people?/
First the revolution was victorious. Even during the revolution important changes took place in the economic and social structure of the country. (Peasants left the collective farms and took back the land they owned, factories were taken over by workers' councils, etc.) The demands and program of the revolution is quite clear, they came from the grass roots, the fight was waged for their realization, they were printed and broadcast, and -- nothing would make sense in the Hungarian events if these demands would not have expressed the wishes of the great majority of the people. If the Soviet aggression of Nov. 4 would not have crushed Hungarian freedom and independence the Hungarian people would be a worthy member of the family of nations.

/What actually brought about the revolution?/
The Hungarian people did not want to start a "revolution." For some time before Oct. 23, 1956, the Communist regime was under increasing pressure from below to introduce democratic reforms. The urging of such reforms were the aim of the mass demonstration which took place in Budapest on Oct. 23. Fighting started when the Communist oppressors of the country ordered the Political Police to open fire on the unarmed demonstrators before the Radio building in Budapest. First the demonstrators fought back with stones, but soon Hungarian army units were called out to help the Political Police restore order. The Hungarian soldiers joined the demonstrators, gave them arms. From that moment on the demonstration became a revolution and the demonstrators "Freedom Fighters." The oppressive system was brought down despite the intervention of the Soviet armed forces to secure it. On Nov. 4 by a treacherous surprise attack with 16 divisions the Soviet started a second row, crushed the dwindling armed resistance with overwhelming force (the population of Hungary is less than 10 million) and ever since maintains the Communist system in Hungary with the presence of the Soviet army.

/Do Hungarians have freedom of speech?/
None. All publications, radio, TV are strictly under the control of the Communist government and party and serve the purposes of Communist and Soviet policies and propaganda.

/Who determines what will "poison public opinion"?/
The Communist party in cooperation with the Soviet occupational forces in Hungary.
Dear Miss Clement, I would like to tell you once again how glad we are that such intelligent young persons as yourself are interested in Hungary. I am sure that you are aware of the considerable literature on the 1956 revolution, some of it good, some rather weak, and that it would be quite impossible to describe the manyfold aspects of such a complex event in a brief letter. Be that as it may, I was trying to do my best, although we are usually not answering such requests, not having the facilities for functioning as an information office.

Best of luck with your term paper.

Sincerely yours,

Maj. Gen. Bela Kiraly
President; Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian National Guard during the 1956 revolution.