

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Special Task
Force on the Development of
Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern
Europe, House of Representatives

April 1992

FOREIGN
ASSISTANCE

Evaluation of Aid to the
Hungarian National
Assembly



146417





United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D.C. 20548

Program Evaluation and
Methodology Division

B-247030

April 29, 1992

The Honorable Martin Frost
Chairman, Special Task Force on the Development
of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern Europe
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In April 1990, the House Special Task Force on the Development of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern Europe was appointed to help build more effective national legislatures in Central and Eastern Europe. The Task Force is responsible for providing direct assistance to the parliaments of those newly democratic nations.

On July 17, 1991, you asked us to evaluate a program of parliamentary training and technical assistance to the Hungarian National Assembly. The project, called "Democratic Institution Building in Hungary," is conducted in Budapest by the Center for Legislative Development of the State University of New York at Albany (SUNYA) and is funded by the Agency for International Development (AID).¹ Members of my staff briefed you on the results of our evaluation on October 23, 1991. As we agreed at that meeting, we have prepared this report to more fully describe the SUNYA program in Budapest and to present the results of our evaluation in more detail. Appendix I documents our methodology and activities.

Results in Brief

Project Effectiveness

We believe that the project of the State University of New York at Albany (SUNYA) in Budapest has been beneficial to the National Assembly and that SUNYA's activities were conducted professionally in the face of substantial difficulties. One major difficulty has been tension between the two principal goals of the project. One goal reflects SUNYA's plan to assist the parliament by building a Hungarian infrastructure for legislative development through long-term assistance to academics and members of parliament and staff. The other goal comes from the U.S. government's

¹In this report, the acronym SUNYA refers only to the Center for Legislative Development, not to other academic units of the State University of New York at Albany.

urgent request that SUNYA provide timely, short-term technical assistance directly to the nascent National Assembly on behalf of the United States.

In our judgment, SUNYA has completed the tasks described in its agreement with AID, and it also has gone beyond those requirements to conduct valuable assistance activities for the Hungarian government in addition to those that it was obligated to perform. SUNYA has successfully focused the attention of some academics and members of parliament on issues affecting the viability of the National Assembly as an institution. However, we believe that the contractually required needs assessment prepared by SUNYA early in the program was not adequate to serve as a clear guide to later activities. Although the needs assessment reflected SUNYA's judgment about the most appropriate course of action at that time, it was not the comprehensive appraisal described in the statement of work, but rather a detailed assessment of the parliament's information needs.

Future U.S. Assistance

Although its activities differ from those of the House Special Task Force, SUNYA's role complements the efforts of the Task Force to develop the infrastructure for parliamentary democracy in Hungary. The House Special Task Force is providing nonpartisan, short-term assistance directly to the Hungarian National Assembly, principally by providing a computerized information system and ensuring access to important data bases, which will increase the parliament's ability to access and disseminate information. SUNYA's primary efforts also are nonpartisan, but they are longer term and intended to assist the parliament indirectly through the Center for Parliamentary Management, an institution established by SUNYA that is affiliated with the Budapest University of Economic Sciences.

The Hungarian parliamentary and American officials we interviewed in Budapest told us that the kind of assistance provided by the Task Force should have the highest priority for future U.S. assistance funds for the National Assembly. However, we believe that SUNYA's long-term institution-building activities are also important to the continuing growth of Hungary's democratic institutions.

Background

To promote the development of democratic institutions in Hungary, AID contracted on April 12, 1990, with the Center for Legislative Development, State University of New York at Albany, to provide training and technical assistance to the Hungarian National Assembly. SUNYA received \$642,000 under the agreement, "Democratic Institution Building in Hungary." The director of the Center for Legislative Development, Dr. Abdo Baaklini, also is the director of the project. The agreement originally called for the work to be performed in an 18-month period ending in October 1991; however, because of travel restrictions in effect during the hostilities in the Persian Gulf, SUNYA requested, and was granted, a no-cost extension of the deadline until April 1992. The agreement was envisioned as the first half of a 3-year project.

SUNYA's Expertise in Legislative Development

At the time that AID first contacted SUNYA, the Center for Legislative Development was not particularly knowledgeable about contemporary Hungarian politics, but it was well versed in comparative politics and especially well qualified to work on legislative development issues. Indeed, according to a study cited by AID, the Albany campus is the only American university with an academic unit dedicated to the study and practice of legislative development. According to AID, SUNYA has a long history of work for that agency, and its methods have met with success in a variety of countries, notably in Latin America. The central goal of SUNYA's approach is to promote legislative development by creating and institutionalizing an "intellectual infrastructure" to teach public policy analysis and to pursue the study of legislative bodies as institutions. This strategy of long-term, indirect assistance to legislatures seeks to bridge the gap between academics and politics by training academics in the analysis of legislative issues, with the goal of enabling newly democratic nations to support and develop their legislatures by mobilizing their own intellectual resources.

SUNYA's Involvement in Budapest

Reflecting the desire of the U.S. government to provide timely assistance to Hungary's emerging democratic government, the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary asked SUNYA to begin work in Budapest well before the democratic parliament was formed. At his request, SUNYA staff first traveled to Budapest to lay the groundwork for providing parliamentary assistance in November 1989, 4 months before the election for seats in the National Assembly. (The first round of voting was held March 25, 1990, and the runoff election on April 9.) Until the election results were known, SUNYA's negotiations concerned the establishment of a "Center for Parliamentary Affairs" at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences (known then as

Karl Marx University). SUNYA's efforts centered on the University because its major purpose was to involve academics in legislative issues and also because the parliament was not yet seated.

The unexpected results of the parliamentary election dramatically altered SUNYA's university-centered plans. Dr. Geza Jeszinsky, the Budapest University official chosen to head the proposed Center, instead accepted the appointment of Minister of Foreign Affairs after the surprisingly strong electoral showing of his party. Subsequently, the location of the proposed Center shifted from Budapest University to office space provided by parliament. This shift reflected the uncertain prospects faced by university faculty and programs during a time of great turmoil and, more importantly, the strong desire of the leadership of the new National Assembly to play an influential role in establishing the priorities of the Center.

As a result, SUNYA proceeded with the establishment of the Center for Parliamentary Management in the parliament's office building. The Center is governed by the Foundation for the Expert Functioning of Legislation, with board members from parliament, Budapest University of Economic Sciences, and SUNYA. The Center receives operating support from Budapest University (through a subcontract with SUNYA) and from the National Assembly. The Hungarian director of the Center is Dr. Laszlo Urban, an economist from Budapest University. According to the parliamentary staff we interviewed in Budapest, Dr. Urban is accepted by all of the political parties, and he has strong connections to both the academic and political communities. A well-publicized inauguration ceremony for the Center was held on October 11, 1990.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the agreement between AID and SUNYA closely follow the outlines of SUNYA's approach to legislative development. That is, the project's objectives are long-term; they are not directed solely at the parliament, but also at the academic public policy community; and the ultimate goal is to develop and institutionalize an indigenous Hungarian infrastructure to support the parliament. The project's dual objectives as listed in the statement of work are:

- "to institutionalize . . . a permanent capability to strengthen and support the Hungarian legislature and its supporting institutions through training, consultation, and public policy analysis" and

-
- “to equip the new Hungarian parliament and its supporting institutions with the necessary institutional capabilities to conduct their various roles as prescribed by the new constitution.”

Contract Requirements

The requirements listed in the statement of work follow SUNYA's approach to legislative development somewhat less closely. The three types of required activities are a mix of long-term infrastructure development activities and short-term technical assistance efforts.

Needs Assessment

The first requirement is for a comprehensive needs assessment of “the functions that the Hungarian parliament is likely to perform, and the manner, methods, and resources needed to perform those functions.” This includes topics such as the history of the legislature in Hungary, legislative-executive relations, legislative staffing patterns, information systems within the legislature, and proposals and strategies for strengthening the legislature. The needs assessment was to have been the product of a joint working group of Budapest University faculty and SUNYA specialists.

Training

The second category of obligations is identified as training. As revised in September 1990, this category encompasses SUNYA's core activities, providing “public policy research and analysis” assistance to members of parliament. This includes providing background information about bills, acting as a liaison between parliament and the academic research community, and arranging for U.S. experts to assist Hungarian research teams. Also included are workshops on “legislative technology” topics for parliamentary staff.

Technical Assistance

The third set of requirements is composed of short-term technical assistance activities responsive to the needs of members of parliament and staff. This provision requires that SUNYA maintain a long-term on-site advisor in Budapest to assist with training and other tasks. This section also describes requirements for producing an information pamphlet for parliament and for procuring equipment for the Center for Parliamentary Management.

SUNYA's Activities and Accomplishments

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment delivered by SUNYA fulfilled the requirements of the contract; however, we found that it was not the comprehensive appraisal and plan envisioned in the statement of work. Instead, it was a detailed assessment of the parliament's information needs. SUNYA saw this as the first of several needs assessments on different topics, but no other needs assessments have been completed.

SUNYA's decision to limit the scope of the needs assessment reflected both the changes in the project's circumstances precipitated by the April 1990 parliamentary election and a strategic judgment to focus its attention on developing Hungarian support for considering "institution-building" issues. The principal change in the project's circumstances was the greatly reduced role of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences in the activities of the Center for Parliamentary Management, in contrast to the close affiliation envisioned when SUNYA expected that the Center would be housed at the University. The University originally was expected to be an equal partner with SUNYA in preparing the comprehensive needs assessment. Additionally, SUNYA convened a decision conference to prepare the needs assessment. Along with that task, SUNYA decided to use the conference for the separate purpose of raising institution-building issues to the parliament by creating an "institutionally focused decision-making structure." SUNYA's objective was "to enlist not only the support of the Hungarians but their direct engagement" through the participation of members and officials of the National Assembly. SUNYA judged that narrowing the focus of the decision conference to the tangible issue of parliament's information needs would serve this goal.

We found that SUNYA's choices regarding the scope of the needs assessment had both negative and positive consequences. Their failure to prepare a comprehensive plan conveyed the impression to later observers that SUNYA's activities lacked focus. However, SUNYA was able to respond more flexibly to the changing circumstances in Budapest. First, in at least one instance, SUNYA suggested revisions to the statement of work that eliminated the requirement for services that were clearly not desired by members of the National Assembly. Second, the group of members and parliamentary officials that SUNYA assembled for the information needs decision conference formed the first nonpartisan group to consider the needs of the National Assembly as an institution. Indeed, the formation of

the decision conference group ultimately led to the creation of the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Information Needs that has since worked with the House Special Task Force. Third, the report on the parliament's information needs produced by the decision group convinced the National Assembly to appropriate some of its own funds to procure the necessary equipment. Subsequently, the House Special Task Force agreed to provide the information system described in the information needs assessment, along with some related training.

Training

SUNYA has undertaken a variety of activities under the training portion of the contract. The Center for Parliamentary Management has cosponsored or participated in several conferences in addition to the decision conference on parliamentary information needs just described. These included an April 1991 conference on "Parliaments and the Transition Toward Democracy," and a June 1990 meeting on the "Allocation of Frequencies and Regulation of Electronic Media." Further, acting as a liaison between parliament and academic researchers, in August 1991, the Center held a decision conference for members of the National Assembly's Budget Committee. That meeting had the dual purposes of helping the Committee formulate its information requests for the Finance Ministry and identifying the most important topics for background information papers to be prepared by academics retained by the Center. Also, the Center has held many workshops and seminars for parliamentary staff. Among these were seminars on the budgetary process, personnel issues, bill-drafting, and other topics conducted by SUNYA's long-term advisor and a 1-week seminar on problem identification in public policy research conducted by David Andersen of the Albany campus.

Technical Assistance

As required in the technical assistance section of the contract, Professor Richard Nunez served as a long-term resident advisor from September 1990 until May 1991. Professor Nunez is a lawyer and professor of public administration. In addition to leading the seminars noted above, he performed a variety of other activities as needed, often providing assistance beyond the scope of SUNYA's contractual obligations. For example, he discussed bill-drafting with staff of the Ministry of Justice, assisted in drafting consumer protection legislation, contributed articles to the Hungarian Political Yearbook, and organized an ongoing roundtable on "Public Policy and Legislative Studies" at the Budapest University of Economic Sciences. Professor Nunez also taught two courses at the Faculty of Law of ELTE University, "American Administrative Law" and

"Parliamentary Law and Process." At ELTE, he initiated a parliamentary internship program that has continued this year, with eight law students working in parliament and paid by the Center for Parliamentary Management.

To fulfill the requirement for an information pamphlet, the Center prepared and printed the first Parliamentary Manual, now the standard reference source for members and parliamentary staff. Additionally, the Center has prepared a data base of information sources in the ministries, institutes, and universities. Finally, SUNYA has procured the equipment necessary for the operation of the Center.

Other Activities

With additional funding from the United States Information Agency (USIA), SUNYA conducted two study tours of the United States for members and officials of parliament during the summer of 1990. The tour groups included members from every party represented in the National Assembly. The participants were the core of the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Information Needs, as the study tours were held in support of the decision conference on the information needs of parliament. To allow them to learn about the roles of information systems in legislative work, the participants visited SUNYA's campus and the New York State Legislature in Albany, other state capitals, and congressional support offices in Washington, D.C. Finally, the USIA grant allowed SUNYA to bring two Hungarian graduate students who have worked with parliament to Albany for advanced study in public policy analysis. The students are enrolled in the program for the master of public administration degree, with a concentration in legislative administration.

Difficulties Faced by SUNYA

We believe that SUNYA's activities in Budapest have been significantly hampered by several factors: (1) the conflict between the two major goals of the project, (2) the many important national problems consuming the attention of parliament in its first year, and (3) the recent extraordinarily rapid pace of change in Hungary's political structure. First, SUNYA's focus and energy were divided between two distinctly different types of activities. One set of activities was intended to assist the parliament indirectly through the long-term nurturing of a Hungarian infrastructure for legislative development. These efforts derived from SUNYA's concept of legislative development. The other set of activities consisted of short-term technical assistance activities resulting from the U.S. government's desire to provide immediate help to the parliament. These efforts were

undertaken in response to the stated or perceived needs of parliament, and they were not closely related to SUNYA's conceptual framework.

Second, SUNYA's efforts to provide short-term assistance were hindered by the overwhelming workload faced by the National Assembly during its first year and the resultant understandable preoccupation of members with legislative work. In contrast to the clear conceptual foundation guiding SUNYA's long-term proactive efforts to develop the infrastructure for public policy analysis, its short-term parliamentary assistance activities were necessarily reactive; that is, specific activities were undertaken in response to the needs of parliament. However, despite SUNYA's best efforts to capture their time and attention, members and officials made few requests for assistance and frequently were unable to attend seminars and programs organized by SUNYA—even those events designed specifically to fit their needs and schedules—presumably because of the urgent business of the National Assembly.

Third, the unexpected results of the April 1990 election clearly interrupted the implementation of SUNYA's plans. As discussed earlier, SUNYA's choice for director of the new Center for Parliamentary Management instead accepted the position of Foreign Minister, necessitating another search for a capable and politically acceptable director. Further, at the request of the new parliament, the Center's focus and even its physical location shifted from Budapest University to the parliament.

Characteristics of SUNYA's Activities

We found that the activities of SUNYA and the Center for Parliamentary Management have been scrupulously nonpartisan in the midst of a vigorously partisan environment. For instance, the Center has avoided attempts by some political parties to use it to gather intelligence about rival parties. According to the parliamentary staff we interviewed in Budapest, the Center's director, Dr. Laszlo Urban, is acceptable to all of the political parties, unlike most university faculty, who are associated with the former government. Finally, the working group assembled by SUNYA for the information needs assessment formed the basis for the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Information Needs, the only nonpartisan organization of members that we uncovered.

Dr. Urban's connections to parliament and to the academic community mean that the Center is especially knowledgeable about Hungarian politics, the activities of parliament, and the academic resources available to

research particular public policy issues. The Center also is knowledgeable about the availability of American policy analysis resources.

Program Funding

Table 1 presents the project's budget and lists expenditures through June 1991. As the second column of the table shows, 42 percent of the funds are budgeted for the salaries and benefits of SUNYA staff and of Dr. Urban, director of the Center for Parliamentary Management in Budapest. SUNYA's overhead costs account for 22 percent of the total budget, while the subcontract with Budapest University of Economic Sciences has 13 percent. The subcontract with Budapest University provides operational expenses for the Center and funds the salaries of the deputy director and an administrative assistant. We estimate that, at most, about \$253,000 can be spent directly in Hungary, not quite 40 percent of the total.²

Table 1: Project Budget and Expenditures

Category	Budgeted amount	Percent of budget	Percent expended ^a
Salaries and benefits	\$269,270	42%	70%
Supplies and equipment	74,190	12	23
Travel and per diem	61,040	10	48
Budapest University subcontract	86,100	13	41
Miscellaneous	8,000	1	29
Indirect costs	143,400	22	63
Total	\$642,000	100%	57%

^aThrough June 1991.

Approximately 57 percent of the funds had been expended through June 1991, the 13th of the project's 24 scheduled months. The investment of SUNYA staff time was relatively heavy at the beginning of the project, before the Center was fully staffed with Hungarian professionals. This means that the budget categories encompassing SUNYA's personnel costs were

²Our upper-bound estimate of this figure is \$252,664. This estimate includes all of the budgeted funds for supplies and equipment (\$74,190), the Budapest University subcontract (\$86,100), and miscellaneous expenses (\$8,000). It also includes 20 percent of the funds in the salaries and benefits category (\$53,854) for Dr. Urban's salary, and one-half of the amount in the travel and per diem category (\$30,520).

depleted relatively rapidly through June 1991; 70 percent of the funds for salaries and benefits had been expended, as had 63 percent of the total available for indirect costs.

Project Effectiveness

Our overall judgment is that SUNYA has provided effective assistance to the Hungarian National Assembly under challenging circumstances. As presented in more detail below, this conclusion is based on our findings that, on balance: (1) SUNYA has completed the tasks described in its agreement with AID, (2) SUNYA's programs have had a positive impact, (3) the activities SUNYA conducted were among the most useful assistance efforts that could have been undertaken, and (4) it is unlikely that another organization could have provided the same range of assistance activities within the required time period. Also, those activities based on SUNYA's clear conceptual framework for developing policy analysis capabilities were more successful than the short-term technical assistance activities offered in response to the parliament's needs.

SUNYA Completed Required Tasks

SUNYA has completed all of the contractually required tasks. The needs assessment prepared by SUNYA fulfilled the terms of the contract, although its narrow focus on information needs meant that it did not serve as a clear guide to later activities.

SUNYA's Programs Had Positive Impact

Our finding that SUNYA's programs have had a positive impact comes from the consensual opinion of those familiar with the program and from institutional responses to SUNYA's efforts. The U.S. Embassy official in Budapest with the most knowledge about the project has a very positive opinion of SUNYA's effectiveness, and his viewpoint is shared by the parliamentary staff and government officials we interviewed. All of the Hungarian respondents had particular praise for that portion of SUNYA's activities with which they were the most familiar, and they all spoke highly of the Parliamentary Manual. The National Assembly has demonstrated its high regard for the project by appropriating funds to acquire the information system that SUNYA's needs assessment decision conference recommended and by providing office space in the parliamentary office building for the Center for Parliamentary Management. The parliament also has chosen to continue the internship program in parliamentary staff offices for law students from ELTE University. Further, the Center itself is now an ongoing institution, an achievement that is noteworthy in light of the many difficulties SUNYA faced during its establishment. Finally, SUNYA

has attracted funds for related activities from another U.S. government entity, USIA.

SUNYA Chose Appropriate Activities

SUNYA's long-term activities—especially developing public policy analysis capabilities—were among the most useful assistance efforts that could have been undertaken. The National Assembly's demands for information encountered government ministries ill-prepared to analyze and disseminate public policy information, a parliamentary library not yet able to quickly compile relevant information, and a small community of issue area experts in the universities who historically have not been involved in legislative activities. SUNYA's concept of policy analysis development was particularly appropriate in this environment. SUNYA acted as a liaison between parliament and academics, helping parliament formulate important research topics and then recruiting researchers with the appropriate expertise to prepare the studies. Public policy experts from Albany then assisted the Hungarian researchers in this work by providing them with on-the-job training. An example of this process is SUNYA's autumn 1991 work with parliament's Budget Committee.

SUNYA's Range of Expertise Was Important

Some of SUNYA's individual efforts could have been successfully conducted by another organization; however, we believe that it is unlikely that the range of activities undertaken by SUNYA could have been accomplished as well by another organization within the same time frame. In particular, SUNYA's special expertise in decision conference techniques was critically important to helping both the information needs assessment working group and the Budget Committee describe parliament's priorities and define research issues. Further, Dr. Urban's exceptionally good reputation in both parliament and the academic community and SUNYA's policy analysis capabilities—especially its prior knowledge, experience, and networking resources—gave the Center an ability to quickly provide effective assistance that could not, we believe, have been easily duplicated by another organization.

SUNYA's On-Site Advisor

As required by the contract, SUNYA maintained a resident advisor in Budapest for the 1990-91 academic year. We found that Professor Richard Nunez played an important role during the parliament's first year, and the Hungarians he worked with clearly valued his technical expertise. He allowed the Center to respond quickly to the diverse and unpredictable demands of the parliament. Professor Nunez also kept SUNYA's academic

programs going during the Persian Gulf hostilities, when specialists from the Albany campus were unable to travel to Budapest.

SUNYA has not maintained a resident advisor since Professor Nunez departed in May 1991 and does not plan to do so in the future, for several reasons. First, SUNYA is able to recruit a wider range of experts for shorter stays in Budapest, for a few weeks or a few months, than for longer periods. Second, the focus of the Center's work has shifted over time, away from the short-term activities of the first year toward an emphasis on policy analysis training, which will include a variety of topics and involve SUNYA specialists with diverse areas of expertise. Third, and most importantly, the Hungarian staff of the Center now has the experience necessary to perform the important functions of the office—monitoring the needs of members and parliamentary staff and identifying the relevant resources at the Center and in Albany.

Future Assistance to the National Assembly

The Future of the Center for Parliamentary Management

The type of assistance the Center provides, and where it provides it, will be affected by four major factors. The focus of the Center's work continues to shift away from short-term direct technical assistance activities, toward long-term efforts intended to build an intellectual infrastructure. This will allow the Center to concentrate more closely on activities matching SUNYA's areas of expertise. Parliament's need for the short-term assistance the Center can provide has decreased, primarily because of the experience gained by members and staff during the National Assembly's first session. Further, the Center has successfully demonstrated some activities that the parliament now will be able to pursue on its own should it choose to do so, reducing SUNYA's future involvement. The Parliamentary Manual is one example of this—the Center's involvement was crucial to the publication of the first edition, but at some point the parliament's staff will be able to produce updated versions on their own.

Conversely, demand is likely to grow for the policy analysis training SUNYA can provide. In contrast to the former system of government, the open decision style of parliamentary democracy requires a number of policy analysts able to collect, analyze, and disseminate information in the ministries, parliament, political parties, and other organizations. Indeed, the largest opposition party in parliament, the Free Democrats, already has

established its own small analysis group, and most of the other parties are following suit in one way or another. There are no effective public policy analysis training programs in Hungary now, and the lack of a critical mass of trained faculty means that Hungarian universities are unlikely to be able to meet the demand for that training in the near future.

Further, the Center's organizational position as an institution connecting parliament and Budapest University probably is untenable in the long run. The Center currently is organizationally a part of the University, but it is located in offices provided by the National Assembly and governed by a foundation with board members from parliament as well as from SUNYA and Budapest University. The Center eventually will face pressures to move closer to either parliament or the University. Indeed, one parliamentary official told us that the National Assembly hopes to be able to fully fund the Center in a few years. However, the Center prizes its independence, and its director, Dr. Urban, told us that the Center would refuse to become a staff office of the parliament. For this reason, and because of the shift of the Center's work toward policy analysis training, we believe it is likely that the Center will move closer to the Budapest University of Economic Sciences, perhaps eventually relocating on campus.

Finally, the Center is not likely to become self-supporting in the near term. Organizationally, the Center must maintain close ties with Albany, as both the expertise of SUNYA faculty and the ability to place students in the graduate study programs there are important to the Center. Financially, it is unlikely that the Center can maintain a reasonable level of effort without U.S. government funds, as the Center does not want to be absorbed by parliament and alternative funding sources are not now available.

The Relationship Between the Center and the House Special Task Force

The House Special Task Force and SUNYA have emphasized different, but complementary, forms of assistance in their efforts to develop the infrastructure for parliamentary democracy in Hungary. The House Special Task Force is providing nonpartisan, short-term assistance directly from the U.S. Congress to the Hungarian National Assembly. The Task Force is providing a computerized information system, access to data bases, and associated training to the parliament and to the parliamentary library. SUNYA's primary efforts also are nonpartisan, but they are longer term, larger in scope, and intended to assist the parliament indirectly by promoting public policy analysis training through the Center for Parliamentary Management. In the long run, the success of SUNYA's

activities, and the similar efforts of others, will significantly affect the ability of parliament to make full use of the Task Force's contributions.

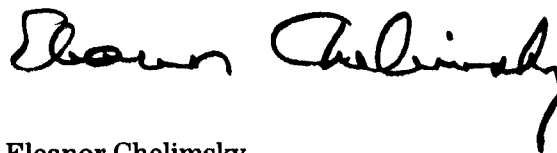
The Hungarian and American officials we interviewed in Budapest agreed that the information system hardware and data base access provided by the Task Force should have the highest priority for U.S. assistance funds for the National Assembly. In our judgment, the assistance provided by SUNYA also is important, especially the long-term "intellectual infrastructure" development activities that SUNYA is notably qualified to perform.

Agency Comments

We received comments on draft copies of this report from SUNYA, AID, and the Congressional Research Service, the administrative agent for the House Special Task Force. None of them expressed substantial reservations about the content of the report. We have incorporated their specific suggestions where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees, and we will make copies available to others upon request. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please call me at (202) 275-1854 or Kwai-Cheung Chan, Director of Program Evaluation in Physical Systems Areas, at (202) 275-3092. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix II.

Sincerely yours,



Eleanor Chelimsky
Assistant Comptroller General

Scope and Methodology

In accordance with the July 17, 1991, letter from the Chairman of the House Special Task Force requesting this study, our findings are based on interviews with relevant individuals and our review of the pertinent documents. We conducted our review in Washington, D.C., Albany, and Budapest between July and October 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

In Albany, we interviewed State University of New York (SUNYA) faculty members and administrators involved with the Center for Legislative Development of the Graduate School of Public Affairs, Nelson A. Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy. In Washington, D.C., we interviewed Congressional Research Service personnel working with the House Special Task Force, Task Force staff, and the project officer for the Agency for International Development (AID). In Budapest, we interviewed the Hungarian director of the Center for Parliamentary Management, a representative of the United States Information Agency (USIA), representatives of the Hungarian National Assembly, a member of the faculty of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences, and an official of the Ministry of Justice. In addition, we reviewed all of the relevant documents, including the agreement between AID and SUNYA, SUNYA's accomplishment reports to AID, papers describing the conceptual basis for SUNYA's work, reports of the program's expenditures, and descriptions of the policies and activities of the House Special Task Force.

Major Contributors to This Report

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