

## **The Ivanaj Foundations of New York and Tirana**

These sister foundations share a common mission: to advance education and culture in and about Albania.

It has been my privilege to follow their development for two decades now, starting during my tenure as the first U. S. Ambassador to Albania and continuing during a personal visit to their Tirana Headquarters last fall. The sustained efforts – and impressive results – exceed the achievements of most other such undertakings.

It took far too long to make them into the fully functional operations they are now, hindered by legal and financial constraints (not to mention obstructionism by entrenched remnants of the ousted communist regime). The endless dedication and motivation of their founder, Drita Ivanaj, and the handful of people she has inspired to help her, have prevailed and the Foundations are now active and will continue to offer additional news about their progress and programs through this site.

Such NGOs providing crucial services are only as good as the motivation and dedication of their staffs, and measuring on such a scale puts the Ivanaj Foundations at the top. Aside from what they have already accomplished, and the further planned projects, the forthcoming Foundations' headquarters in Tirana will soon offer much needed services to the public: a library for researchers and student, a place for meetings, to study, to network, and to exchange ideas globally via computer links, all located on the Foundation's own premises. This 'cultural center' will be a hub of activity pursuing the Foundations' mission, the first of its kind to operate in Albania.

I both endorse and support the work of these Foundations because I have seen the great work they have done so far and their potential to continue to do so in Tirana. I encourage each of you to join me however you can, whether through direct financial support, or in-kind or pro bono contributions to advance education for all these citizens of our NATO ally. These Foundations notably treat equally all comers regardless of their ethnicity, gender or political or religious affiliation.

*William E. Ryerson*

*Ambassador of the United States of America (Retired)*