

JOSEPH J. DIOGUARDI
MEMBER OF CONGRESS (1985 -1989)

As an advocate for the human rights and self-determination of oppressed peoples, DioGuardi has made more than thirty-five trips to the Balkans since 1989. As volunteer president of the Albanian American Civic League, he and the late Congressman Tom Lantos (the Democratic Co-chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus) went to Kosova in May 1990 to challenge then Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic. They also made the first official trip to Albania in fifty years, which helped to open the doors to democracy in this former Communist dictatorship. With the start of the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999, DioGuardi and his wife, Shirley Cloyes, a former book publisher, a writer, and, since 1995, the Balkan Affairs Adviser to the Albanian American Civic League, represented the Albanian perspective on the Balkan conflict separately and together on more than 50 radio and TV broadcasts. In 2002, DioGuardi and Cloyes flew to The Hague to testify against Milosevic at the start of his trial for war crimes. In May 2005, they were responsible for a full House International Relations Committee hearing, focusing on the religious tolerance of Albanians as Muslims, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Jews who have lived side by side in harmony for centuries. Co-chaired by then Chairman Henry Hyde and Ranking Member Tom Lantos, the hearing was a pivotal factor in the Bush administration's decision to support Kosova's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008.