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**THE SERBIAN POLITICAL
EMIGRATION IN WESTERN
EUROPE 1945–1956**



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PREFACE

The book on the Serbian political emigration in Western Europe after World War II consists of two main parts. The first part is devoted to biography of General Miodrag Damjanović; second part explores the forming of the Serbian political emigration after the defeat of Serbian and Yugoslav anti-communist military forces at the end of the war. Political emigration occurred in Italy, Germany and Great Britain. Many of these people later moved to the United States of America and Australia. This book examines their lives.

The biography of Miodrag Damjanović, a General in the Army of the Kingdom of Serbia, presents a life story of a Serbian officer, a representative of the military elite whose peak was reached just before WW II, only to experience a steep downfall that at the same time meant the destruction of their career, as well as of the society whose prisoners they were and whom they served faithfully.

This biography is divided into two uneven segments, stipulated by the nature of the sources and the overall structure of the book. The first part describes Damjanović's life from his education at the Military Academy, his participation in the Balkan Wars and WW I, his career in the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia up to WW II. For this greater part of Damjanović's life sources were very scarce because of the nature of his personality and his army service which did not leave a lot of trace and the condition the Serbian historiography is in, which did not concern itself with General Damjanović. In the contemporary period, historian Mile Bjelajac produced the most complete work on the history of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, its institutions, biographies, biographical portraits and published memoir documents. These works were of great help in the reconstruction of particular elements from the life of General Damjanović in this period.

General Damjanović was a participant of WW II, which caught him on the duty of the Chief-of-Staff of the third group of armies under the command of General Milan Nedić. He then spent the next three years in German captivity, and first-hand accounts from this period of his life are also very scarce. The reconstruction was done partly by procurement, through authentic sources relating to the lives of Yugoslav officers in captivity.

The time period from Damjanović's return from captivity to his emigration, although very short, at the same time represents perhaps the most tempestuous and eventful part of his career. His work in General Nedić's government and there upon his Departure to General Dragoljub Mihailović's headquarters and commanding the army that retreated to Italy and so avoided a tragic destiny of the rest of the defeated nationalist and anti-communist forces at the end of WW II, represents the basis of the biography of General Damjanović.

Sources for this book from the post-war period up to the end of life to General Damjanović, are very extensive. This part of life of General Damjanović can be thoroughly reconstructed because I used the General's personal archives made accessible thanks to Mr. Miroslav Panić and *The Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army „Draža Mihailović“* from London. Last part of his life is emigration is firmly intertwined with the institutional development of the Association, whose founder and long-lasting president was General Damjanović himself.

This book contains, as a special supplement, many chosen documents as well as photographs from General Damjanović's legacy. Documents are related to the period from 1945 to 1948, ending with the forming of the *Association*. Documents are published integrally. Only necessary grammar corrections were made, with the orthography and the manner of expression of those times kept in order to evoke authentic personal and institutional voices, as an illustration for better understanding of the history of the Serbian emigration.

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I. MILITARY CAREER OF THE GENERAL MIODRAG DAMJANOVIĆ

IN THE KINGDOM OF SERBIA AND THE KINGDOM OF SCS/YUGOSLAVIA

Miodrag Damjanović was born on October 16, 1893, in Aleksinac (district of the city of Kragujevac), his father Milan was born in Koštunići and his mother Poleksija, maiden name Filipović, was from Kragujevac. He finished elementary school and six years of high school in Kragujevac and Belgrade, and on September 14, 1909. he enrolled into the 42nd class of the Lower School of the Military Academy. We can assume that his choice of a military career was influenced by the patriotic up-bringing that Miodrag received at home, as well as the popularity of the army profession stipulated by the Serbian national and State ascent. A national ecstasy caught all the classes of the Serbian society, especially after the annexion of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austria-Hungarian Empire.

In the period after 1903. classes at the Academy had no more than 30 to 40 cadets. Since Damjanović enrolled into the Academy after sixth grade of high school, as did all the others, in the first year they mainly supplemented their high school knowledge. Except for basic military training, war service and various rules that were in the competence of officers, the military subjects were tactics, army administration and technical tuition (basics of engineering). The rest of the subjects were mathematics, physics, chemistry, geometry, languages, drawing, horseback riding, combat, gymnastics, playing an instrument and singing.

A positive spirit was maintained at the Academy that bounded the cadets to it, to a military career, to their superiors and their friends. Mladen Žujović, a cadet of the 46th class, wrote the following: „*Friendship is not an empty word at the Academy, among officers and in the Army in general. It is immense and eternal. And what is most important, an indifferent effort for the common thing is being embedded at the Academy. Unhealthy ambitions are suffocated and mercantile views are stigmatised. A spirit of social order was not inspired, it seems, because it was not possible, not because there was no wish to do so. Interest in politics was prohibited while a feeling of care for the common thing was developed. In other words, party politics was forbidden*“.¹

¹ Mladen Žujović, *Ratni dnevnik 1. Srbija u I svetskom ratu*, Vrnjačka Banja 2004, 15.

While he was at school he received three ranks: corporal (March 1, 1910), Junior Sergeant (September 1, 1911) and Sergeant (December 1, 1911). Instead of the final year of schooling, the 42nd class was sent to their first war experience in September 1912-to the First Balkan War. Miodrag Damjanović participated in the war as a Sergeant-cadet in the 1st battalion of the 12th infantry regiment first-call „Car Lazar“, in the Šumadija Division.²

Serbia's preparations for a new war against Turkey began right after 1878. The war plan was determined and finally established on March 16, 1898, at a conference presided by King Milan Obrenović. It was concluded that Serbia could achieve its national aspirations only through an offensive war against Turkey, which was possible in collaboration with the rest of the Balkan countries – Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro.³ Years of negotiations and efforts resulted in the creation of the Balkan Alliance. The ideological creator of this alliance, which will deliver the mortal blow to the Turkish ruling of the Balkans, was the Serbian politician Milovan Milovanović.

The crisis was rapidly intensified in September 1911, when Italy suddenly declared war against Turkey. Debates began about Turkish heritage and an atmosphere of war arose in Serbia. An alliance agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria was signed in March of 1912. With the consequent approach of Montenegro and Greece, the Serbian-Bulgarian agreement became the backbone of the Balkan Alliance. At the beginning of October 1912, Serbia and Montenegro signed a Political and Military Convention. The objective of the planned war was the national liberation of the Christian peoples of the Balkans and the expansion of territories of the Balkan countries. The first to declare war was Montenegro (October 8), and subsequently Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece broke off diplomatic relations with Turkey and declared war.

For the carrying out of war operations against Turkey, the Serbian forces were divided into four armies and one independent brigade. The Šumadija Division, together with Sergeant Miodrag Damjanović, was included in the III Army under the command of General Božidar Janković. The Šumadija Division was added to the Toplica Army group, the commanding officer of the division was Colonel Djordje Mihailović, while the muster area of the division was in Kuršumlija. The total strength of this army consisted of about 63 000 men (50 000 combatants) and 94 cannons. It had the task to

² Military Archives (MA), Belgrade, *Personnel Files Data (PFD) officers of the Royal Yugoslav Army*, 270/119.

³ Aleksandar Stojićević, *Istorija naših ratova za oslobođenje i ujedinjenje 1912–1918*, Beograd 1932, 69–70.

press forward across Kosovo in order to join the I Army. One division was to stay in Priština after its liberation.⁴

The division fought its first battles at Merdarska Kosa. Damjanović's 12th infantry regiment distinguished itself in battles at the Dubnica watchtower and in Podujevo, where an offensive was launched to the flank of the Turkish attack front-lines which opened up the possibility for parts of the Morava division, which were driven backwards to their position. Afterwards a general offensive followed on the entire line of the front held by the III Army. The battles lasted until October 19, when the whole district of Kosovo was conquered.⁵

Miodrag Damjanović was successful in his first combats and, as a symbol of recognition, for the devotion and courage he had shown, he was promoted to the rank of infantry second lieutenant on November 18, 1912, and that was the end of his education at the Lower School of the Military Academy.⁶

With the First Balkan War, the centuries-old struggle of the Balkan peoples for their salvation from Turkish rule came to an end. Soon after, however, disagreements between Serbia and Bulgaria emerged because Serbia requested a revision of the agreement from 1912, since it didn't get a piece of the seashore. With the foundation of the Albanian state, Serbia was left without a great part of its territory. At the same time, Bulgaria pointed out its pretensions towards *Salonika* and some regions along the Aegean coast, which were conquered by Greece. Therefore, Serbia and Greece made a new alliance on June 1, 1913, which was joined later by Montenegro. Serbia accepted Russia's arbitration and made a commitment to respect Russia's decision, whatever it might have been. During the night between June 29 and 30, the Bulgarian Army unexpectedly attacked the Serbian Army on the river Bregalnica, and that was the beginning of the Second Balkan War.

Miodrag Damjanović was with his Šumadija Division on the Bregalnica and Zletovska rivers front at the moment of the Bulgarian attack. The division was then united into the I Army, under the command of the evident heir to the throne Aleksandar, while the division was under the command of Colonel Božidar Terzić. The better part of it was situated in the area of Crni Vrh – the village Gradište.⁷

The Šumadija division (first-call) and the Morava division (second-call) were to attack the Bulgarian troops and push them across the river Zle-

⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 120–121.

⁶ MA, *PFD*, 270/119.

⁷ A. Stojićević, *Istorija naših ratova*, 228.

tovska and advance towards Kočan. An attack on Drenak by the Šumadija Division followed, with great losses (almost 2000 killed) but the Bulgarian army (7th division) was completely battered. Thus the attack operations of the Bulgarian IV Army were crushed. Soon the Šumadija Division got to the river Zletovska and then made an attack on Rajčanski Rit. In combat operations that lasted two days, 4000 Bulgarian soldiers were killed.⁸

The battle at Bregalnica ended in victory for the Serbian Army, which had a total of 16,620 casualties. The I Army, where Damjanović was, lost 5,320 men.⁹ After peace was reached in Bucharest, the Serbian Army was demobilized. They remained as garrison personnel troops in the newly liberated territories. Miodrag Damjanović stayed on duty in his unit. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Adjutant on October 31, 1913, and on November 25 of the same year he was transferred from infantry to artillery. He remained on duty in this unit until February 3, 1914.¹⁰

Until the beginning of WW I, from February 5 to July 13 of 1914, Lieutenant Damjanović was on duty in the 2nd battery of the artillery regiment „Tanasko Rajić“ within the Šumadija Division. Thereupon, on the eve of war operations, he was transferred to the 1st battery of the same regiment (second-call), where he was a Lieutenant Sergeant. This unit was a part of the Užice Army that was under the command of General Miloš Božinović. It covered the area on the outermost left flank of the 1st Army – west of Užice, Bajina Bašta, Rogatica and Priboj. Lieutenant Damjanović remained on this duty till February 14, 1915.

The Serbian war plan against Austro-Hungary was defensive. Operative Serbian troops concentrated along the line: Svilajnac–Palanka–Arandjelovac–Lazarevac–Valjevo. In front of this line a strong natural border (the rivers Danube and Sava) created the front line that gave enough space and time to manoeuvre from depth in required directions („strategic reception and action on the internal operational directions“).¹¹

At the end of September of 1914, together with the Sandžak Army of Montenegro that was under the command of sirdar Janko Vukotić, units of the Užice Army penetrated into south-east Bosnia, reached Jahorina, entered Pale (September 25) and took over Romanija on October 2 and 3. In the second half of October a counterattack was launched against the Užice and

⁸ *Ibid.*, 247–248.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁰ MA, *PFD*, 270/119.

¹¹ A. Stojićević, *Istorija naših ratova*, 311.

Sandžak armies and after the battle at Glasinac, on October 24,¹² they retreated to the right bank of the river Drina.

At the beginning of November an Austria-Hungarian offensive took place from sector Srebrnica–Ljubovija where Damjanović's regiment was stationed. Shortly after that, the Serbian army retreated from the entire line of the front because there was a lack of artillery ammunition. Help from the allies wasn't coming, so an accelerated retreat of the I Army and the Užice Army followed, which led to the withdrawal of Belgrade's Defence. The Capital City remained without defence and the enemy conquered it on December 3, 1914. On that same day, the I Army, with the Užice Army at its left flank, with Lieutenant Damjanović in it, launches a counter-attack under the command of General Živojin Mišić from its position west of Gornji Milanovac. At long last, artillery ammunition arrived from Greece. Shortly the Austria-Hungarian front was shaken and it crumbled.¹³

From February 14 to March 21, 1915, Damjanović was in a combined unit of Belgrade's defence on the duty of an artillery Lieutenant-rapporteur. The unit was under the command of General Mihailo Živković. From March 21 to May 28, 1915, Damjanović served in the 6th battery of the Šumadija artillery regiment (first-call), and from May 28 to July 6, 1915 he served in the „air force battery“ in Kragujevac. He was promoted to the rank of captain second class on June 15.¹⁴

Miodrag Damjanović went through a Golgotha with the Serbian Army in the autumn and winter of 1915–1916. An offensive of the German and Austria-Hungarian army took place in the beginning of October 1915. The forcing of the rivers Danube and Sava and the attack on Belgrade began on October 6. The offensive was lead by the German Field-marshal August von Makenzen. Bulgaria attacked on October 11. The Serbian Army, stretched out on three sides, retreated step by step with the population by their side. Serbia represented a mobile mass of refugees without shelter and food, while the enemy was advancing ever more quickly. The front in Macedonia was penetrated on October 19, when the Bulgarians reached the river Vardar and conquered Skopje. The Serbian Army was cut off from the Aegean Sea.

The Serbian troops and the people poured into Kosovo in the first half of November. The Government and the Supreme Command decided to retreat to the Albanian coast, and arrived there at the end of the first half of

¹² Andrej Mitrović, *Srbija u Prvom svetskom ratu*, Beograd 1984, 111.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴ MA, *PFD*, 270/119.

December. Tens of thousands had died. Preparations for the evacuation from the Albanian coast began on December 29, and on January 8, 1916, a decision was made to transport the Serbian Army to the island of Corfu. The first troops were transported on January 15, while the Serbian government arrived on the island three days later. By the end of February of 1916, 135.000 Serbian soldiers arrived on the island of Corfu, with Captain Miodrag Damjanović among them.

The Serbian Army was reorganized in this period. Considering the numerousness, six infantry divisions and one cavalry division were formed. They were grouped into three armies. Each new division was formed from adequate divisions (first and second-call). Within each division, an infantry regiment (third-call) was formed (consisting of three battalions and four companies).

After his recovery, Damjanović was transported together with his war buddies from Corfu to the Salonika front, and till April 1, 1916, he served in the 1st battery of the Šumadija Division (first-call), which was a part of the II Army under the command of Duke Stepa Stepanović. The division was under the command of Colonel Živko Pavlović and the Chief-of-Staff was Milivoje Uskoković. From then on, until the September offensive in 1918, Damjanović served in the 6th battery of the Šumadija mountain artillery regiment. For a while he was the representative of the commander of the 4th battery of the regiment.

Continuous combat against the Bulgarians lasted throughout the summer and autumn of 1916. Particularly hard battles took place in Katunac. The II Army took position on the routes towards Dobro Polje. There were about 160 000 Bulgarian soldiers on the other side. Damjanović participated in the offensive of the Serbian Army on the Salonika front during September, when Kajmakčalan was taken. Artillery battles were especially impressive. Mladen Žujović wrote about that in his diary: „*Our artillery prepared its attack tremendously, I haven't seen such preparation before and neither have many others. The wooded hill was fired at and rummaged till 17.30h, when the Bulgarians began running away. They couldn't take it any more. After that our infantry started to move in*“.¹⁵

Dobro Polje was attacked during September of 1916, and Captain Damjanović took part in the preparations for the artillery attacks. Trench warfare was exhausting: „*It is really characteristic that only the Serbian Army, although weakened and worn out, is fighting. It is almost three months that this army is on the first line of fire without a day of rest. The*

¹⁵ Mladen Žujović, *Ratni dnevnik*, 1, 203.

*soldiers have lost the look of healthy people; traces from Albania are catching up with them. Our companies have 60 rifles each. We are hoping for the better. Perhaps someone will get interested and give consideration to these poor remainders of the once mighty Serbian Army“.*¹⁶

Mladen Žujović made a note in his diary about an encounter with Miodrag Damjanović at the end of November 1916: „*There is abundant patrolling and exchange of fire with the opponent on our front. Two of our airplanes flew over us at about 14,30h. They came from Kozjak and returned over Veternik. The enemy’s field cannons and howitzers shot at both airplanes, without success. Artillery Captain Damjanović spent the day on position, where he was sent as an observer. At the same time he made a rough draft of Kravica, Dobro Polje and West Veternik“.*¹⁷

Nothing essentially changed in the following months. The Serbian Army led a trench war on the Salonika front, with variable luck. The front was stretched out on the entire line from the Ionian Sea to the Aegean Sea, but there were no operations of a bigger magnitude. During 1918, Damjanović attended a specialized course at the artillery shooting school in Kalenica. He was promoted to the rank of captain first class on September 1, 1918.¹⁸

Miodrag Damjanović participated in the breakthrough of the Salonika front and the final battles for the liberation of Serbia. With the Serbian Army he started the breakthrough at Dobro Polje toward Bulgaria, and then to Macedonia and further on into Serbia. His unit pursued the enemy in the direction Kavadar–Kočane–Štip–Carevo Selo. Damjanović was decorated for bravery with two gold medals and one silver medal „Miloš Obilić“.¹⁹

After the war, Miodrag Damjanović first took command of a battery in the 4th howitzer regiment from December 20, 1919, to September 25, 1921. He was promoted to the rank of major on Vidovdan of 1920. On October 1, 1921, he continued with his education. He was enrolled in the Higher School of the Military Academy, because of preparations for the general-staff profession. That was the first time his path crossed with Dragoljub Mihailović, who was also at the school in the rank of captain second class. All together, 48 officers from the Army of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians and two officers from Czechoslovakia were accepted. Amongst them were Vladimir Vauhnik, Jovan Leko, Vojislav Spuzić, Vasi-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁸ MA, PFD, 270/119.

¹⁹ *General Miodrag Damjanović’s archives*, London. Unregistered documents (onward: *General Damjanović’s archives*).

lije Petković (all majors) and Aleksandar Mišić, Captain. Their class had the number „23“.²⁰

The shortage of educated officers was the biggest problem of the Kingdom's Army, and the most important educational institution was the Military Academy with its Lower and Higher schools. In the period when Miodrag Damjanović was at school, it lasted two years, but by a regulation from 1924, it was extended by six months, for the cadets to attend expert corps courses. Some time later schooling was extended to three years.²¹

Miodrag Damjanović married Mila Spišić from Zemun on June 25, 1921, and on January 30, 1923 their daughter Radmila (married Arsić) was born. Their class finished schooling on October 16, 1923.²² Thirty seven officers completed their schooling and amongst them were Damjanović and Mihailović. Major Dragoslav Milosavljević was first in his class.

Miodrag Damjanović was then, by a decision of the General-staff from October 16, accepted as a trainee to the General-staff profession, again together with D. Mihailović and 10 other officers. This kind of schooling began on October 25, 1923.²³ He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel on October 1, 1924. Damjanović was transferred to the General-staff on February 24, 1926. On April 3, 1926, Damjanović was disposed to serve in the General-staff department of the Ministry of the Army and Navy.

Damjanović became the acting Chief-of-Staff of the Danube division district on April 1, 1927. From that duty he went on a six-month course in France on November 20, 1927. He attended a four-month course for colonels and generals in Versailles, and spent two months in the 141st alpine regiment in Marseilles. After returning from France, he was the acting Chief-of-Staff of the Zeta division district from June 27, 1928 to March 21, 1929. He was in service at the secretariat of the State Defence Counsel from March 25, 1929 to April 30, 1930. He was promoted to the rank of colonel on December 17, 1929.²⁴

Damjanović was thereupon the Chief-of-Staff of the Danube division district up to December 1st 1930. From the 15th of December 1930 to the 16th of June 1932, he was the military emissary of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Hungary and Austria, residing in Budapest. After that he was once

²⁰ Bojan Dimitrijević, *General Mihailović. Biografija (do maja 1941)*, Beograd 1996, 87.

²¹ Mile Bjelajac, *Vojska Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije 1922–1935*, Beograd 1994, 54.

²² MA, *PFD*, 270/119.

²³ M. Bjelajac, *Vojska*, 89.

²⁴ MA, *PFD*, 270/119.

again the Chief-of-Staff of the Sava Division district from June 18 to December 1, 1932. He was then transferred to the air force, where he was the assistant and deputy to the Chief-of-Staff of the Air force Command (from December 12, 1932 to August 30, 1933), hereafter he was the aid to the Chief-of-Staff (from August 30, 1933 to March 25, 1935), the commanding officer of the 1st Air force Regiment (from March 25, 1935 to May 28, 1936) and finally he worked in the Air force General-staff from June 1, 1936 to May 31, 1937.²⁵

Miodrag Damjanović was promoted to the rank of brigadier general on December 1, 1937, and thus became the youngest general in the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.²⁶ He remained in the air force as the acting Chief-of-Staff until December 31, 1938. During that period, he spent some time in England, France and Czechoslovakia.

While he was in the air force, Damjanović worked intensively on the modernization of this branch of the army, starting from „common weaknesses of immediate air defence“ of the Kingdom. He particularly pointed out the inferior (anti aircraft) counter-aviation defence and frailties in the development of fighter-planes. It was therefore necessary to acquire up-to-date weapons, first of all single-seated fighter-planes, twin-engine fighter persecutors, dive-bombing aircrafts and reconnaissance airplanes. The solving of the problem of weapons up-dating was marked by the endeavour to get favourable loans from Milan Stojadinović's government. The government, however, demanded that the list of necessities be revised, and Damjanović was directly engaged in this matter.²⁷

During 1938, General Damjanović was quite involved in the monitoring of the situation and the gathering of information about the Ustasha emigration in Italy, Austria and Germany. The General-staff deemed that adequate attention should be paid to the Ustasha's threats and „that all necessary and preventive measures of security and protection should be undertaken“.²⁸

Miodrag Damjanović headed the Operative section of the Main General-staff from January 2, 1939 to April 26, 1939, and from May 2, 1939 he was the Chief-of-Staff of the III Army district.²⁹

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Mile Bjelajac, *Admirali i generali Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1918–1941*, Beograd 2004, 139. – His personal appearance was described in the following way: stature – *tall*; moustache – *trimmed*; face – *longish*; mouth – *regular*; hair – *chestnut-colour*; eyes – *brown* and nose – *regular*. (MA, PFD, 270/119).

²⁷ MA, Act 17, 12–11/1–7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12–27–1.

²⁹ MA, PFD, 270/119.

The headquarters of the III Army district was situated in Skopje. The most significant issue in this period was the internal state of affairs, especially the alteration of relations within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the creation of the Ban's dominion of Croatia. The people expected that the „agreement with the Croats“ would lessen the danger of war.³⁰ Damjanović also faced the problem of Macedonian nationalism: „*Macedonian autonomists and separatists propagate hatred towards Serbs-new comers and a bad mood towards Serbs in general. Vigorous measures should be taken against all agitators, in order to protect the people from this dangerous propaganda*“.³¹

Observation of the situation on the borders with Bulgaria and Albania was in the domain of the III Army district, and Damjanović was reporting on the intensified pro-Russian propaganda, especially since the Soviet Union entered WW II. Special attention was devoted to fighting Bulgarian propaganda, which was often an order given to Damjanović by the Main General-staff: „*Separatist and autonomist elements in Southern Serbia, especially in Skopje, are striving to conduct agitations with the aim of separating South Serbia from our country*“.³²

In this period, the Kingdom's Army had to strictly abide by State politics in the domain of respecting the armies of the Axis and pro-Axis countries. So, on May 10, 1940, the Minister of the Army requested the following from the III Army: „*It has come to my knowledge that some of our officers have, in an inappropriate way, publicly belittled one of our neighbouring countries. The damage caused to our common interests by the actions of these individuals is in itself very clear. Due to this fact, I most severely forbid army personnel to make public announcements of their opinions and to pass judgment on a foreign army, and even less to speak ill of it at a public place in conversation with the citizens*“.³³

The situation in South Serbia was not favourable from the point of view of common state interests. The leading army circles estimated that separatist elements in the south prevailed over national ones, that nearly the entire administrative apparatus was in the hands of „Bulgaria supporters“ and that they persecuted the Serbian clerical employees, that they are unabashedly showing „enthusiasm and joy“ because of the victories of Nazi Germany.³⁴

³⁰ MA, Act 17, 10-7-3/1.

³¹ Ibid, 7-3/27-1.

³² Ibid., 31-53-3. Orders from March 16, 1940.

³³ MA, Act 17, 36-1-48.

³⁴ Mile Bjelajac, *General Dragiša Pandurović. Život i svedočenja*, Beograd 2007, 71-72.

As can be concluded, General Damjanović did not agree with the war plans made by the General-staff, so he didn't wish to adopt the current military doctrine. He was of the opinion that the main lines of defence, in case of an attack by Germany, should be pulled back behind the rivers Sava and Danube, because it was impossible to defend the entire north front. Adequate defence could be provided from behind the big rivers, considering the great superiority of German armoured troops, against which the Yugoslav Army had no protection. It is interesting that Dragoljub Mihailović had similar suggestions and was penalized because of them by the Minister of the Army Milan Nedić, and he spent 30 days in jail. Political reasons prevailed when the Kingdom's defence strategy was being created. An illusion of a unified state was to be maintained, so the territory north of the river Sava couldn't be abandoned. General Damjanović was therefore appointed Chief-of-Staff of the III Army district.

General Damjanović was also a lecturer at the Lower School of the Military Academy, where he taught tactics from October 2, 1926 to December 1, 1930. He spoke French and German. After WW I, he received numerous domestic and foreign decorations. The most important ones are: *Saint Sava V Order Decoration* (1926), *White Eagle V Order Decoration* (1929), *Yugoslav Crown IV Order Decoration* (1930), *Yugoslav Crown III Order Decoration* (1936). He is a bearer of the Albanian Memorial and the Memorial of 1912–1918 Wars. Foreign decorations that he had received were the French *War Cross with a Palm*, *Legion of Honour II Order*, Czechoslovakian *White Lion III Order Decoration* and the Italian *Crown II Order*.³⁵

³⁵ MA, PFD, 270/119.

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II. IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The German decision to attack Yugoslavia was made on March 27, 1941, immediately after it was known that a putsch took place in Belgrade. The leader of the Reich came to the conclusion that Yugoslavia had always been an „insecure factor“, particularly emphasizing that Serbs and Slovenians were never friends of Germany. He expressed his determination to crush Yugoslavia without waiting for a possible declaration of loyalty from its new government. He stressed that it was of special political importance that Yugoslavia be attacked with „relentless violence“ and that military defeat was to be achieved with „lightning speed“.¹

That very same day Adolph Hitler issued the famous Directive no. 25, which predicted a full-scale attack on Yugoslavia from two directions: Rijeka – Graz on one side, and from the territory of Bulgaria on the other side, so that Belgrade could be reached as fast as possible. The order to attack Yugoslavia was given on April 2, 1941, by the commander of the German XII Army Field-marshal Wilhelm Liest. He thought that the Yugoslavian army would make efforts to prevent the German breakthrough toward the Italian front in Albania, and that they would maintain connections with the English and Greek forces. The crucial defence was expected on the line Vardar – Morava.² It was precisely there that the war caught up with General Miodrag Damjanović.

IN THE APRIL WAR 1941

General Damjanović was in Skopje as the Chief-of-Staff of the III group of armies when the April War in 1941 began. This group of armies was under the command of army General Milan Nedić. It consisted of: III Army (commandant, Army General Ilija Brašić); Zeta Division (commandant, infantry General Milenko Varjačić); Kosovo Division (commandant, General Milutin Milenković); Vardar Division (commandant, General Du-

¹ According to: *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o Narodnooslobodilačkom ratu naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije*, (onward: *Zbornik NOR-a*), Beograd 1952, II-2, 471–472.

² *Zbornik NOR-a*, II-2, 527.

šan Krstić); Herzegovina Division (commandant, General Vojislav Petrović); Kom Detachment (commandant, General Ljubo Novaković) and the command of the rear of the III Army (commandant, General Dušan Isaković). The Ibar Division, under the command of division General Aleksandar Dimitrijević, was the reserve of this group of armies.³

The fundamental war plan of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was to insure the aberration of the Yugoslav Army to the south by defending Macedonia and conquering Albania. This army group formed the Eastern Front, together with the III Army district troops, under the command of Army General Jovan Naumović. This formation was composed of: the Bregalnica, Morava and Šumadija Divisions, and the Strumica detachment.

Most of the units from this group of armies were activated earlier on, particularly the Bregalnica, Kosovo and Vardar Divisions. Their task was to ensure that the mobilization went on as planned and that the concentration of troops was done properly. A bigger part of the Zeta Division was activated in Montenegro. Units of the III group of armies were well supplied only with clothes and infantry weapons, while there was a shortage of all other supplies, especially in commissariat services, so a large part of the troops was not ready for movement. The headquarters of this group of armies was supposed to arrive at the muster area in Priština by April 6.⁴

The Third Army had the task to undertake an offensive towards Albania, so that they could, together with the Greek forces, defeat the Italian troops and enable the retreat of the Yugoslav Army to the south. The headquarters, parts of the army and the rear Command had been situated in the region of Skoplje. Troops of the III Army district were meant to defend the front towards Bulgaria, from the mountain of Belasica to the village of Žeravino, north of Kriva Palanka. The headquarters was situated in Skoplje, but only the commanding officer and the Chief-of-Staff arrived at the mobilization spot on April 6, without any vehicles or means of communications.⁵

The attack of the German XII Army from Bulgaria was vehement. Thanks to the factor of surprise, air support and tanks, the resistance of Yugoslavian troops, which were protecting the border in east Macedonia, was broken very quickly. German troops took complete control of the border front from Kriva Palanka to Strumice by 10 o'clock.⁶ Troops of the III

³ *Aprilski rat 1941. Zbornik dokumenata*, Beograd 1987, II, 565.

⁴ Velimir Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1941*, Beograd 1983, II, 253.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 254.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 294.

Army district had not yet completed their mobilization, so, already on the first day of war, a breakthrough was carried out on the Bulgaria – Greece – Yugoslavia three-border point, while a somewhat more significant resistance was administered on both sides of the river Struma. Troops of the III Army could not execute their orders to undertake offensive action, so they just took up position on the Kosovo Division borderline. Troops of the Zeta Division did not succeed in getting to the border front by April 7, which considerably slowed down the planned offensive action. Since the direction towards Kumanovo was completely open, the Command of the III group of armies put their reserve (Ibar Division) at the disposal of the III Army district command, so that they could use it from the Skoplje region to attack the German forces that were advancing from Stracina towards Kumanovo.⁷

A general attack by the German Army took place on April 7, when Kumanovo and Skoplje were conquered. According to German sources, the Yugoslav Army rendered severe resistance, but could not prevent falling to pieces: „*Several thousand soldiers were captured and numerous batteries were destroyed. In the zone of attack the enemy is falling to pieces*“.⁸ On April 7, heavy battles took place on the right bank of the river Struma.

According to orders from the Supreme Command, the III group of armies commenced an offensive against the Italian IX Army. The Zeta Division formed the Skadar Detachment from the remaining forces and was to proceed towards Skadar on April 8. The Kosovo Division was required to cross the river Drim so that it could join forces with the Zeta division. The German XII Army continued its offensive in Macedonia. Armoured and motorized units overcame the resistance of the Yugoslav Army without great difficulties.

Thus, on April 8, the defeat was complete. The predominance in tanks and air force superiority were decisive: „*Three out of four divisions were shattered. Total destruction is at hand. The number of prisoners is constantly increasing. It is estimated that there are 20,000 prisoners, amongst which there are seven generals. The very large plunder of all sorts still can't be examined. Weapons and equipment of entire battalions are scattered all around*“.⁹ The Kom Detachment had some success and was able to penetrate across the Prokletije, and so did the Kosovo Division that advanced in the direction of Prizren, towards the river Drim.

After Skoplje was conquered, the main forces of the III Army district, whose task was to create time for the troops of the III Army to execute

⁷ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁸ According to: *Aprilski rat 1941*, 515.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 519.

a strong offensive in Italy in order to destroy the Italian forces and join the Greeks, were smashed.¹⁰ In order to improve the difficult situation in Macedonia, the Yugoslav Supreme Command ordered General Nedić to send an officer to Bitolj by airplane to establish communication with the Šumadija, Ibar and Vardar Divisions, and, after the expected breakthrough of the III Army in Albania, to retract some units and send them as help to the III army district forces. On the other hand, General Nedić asked the Air Force War Command to bomb the German motorized convoys in Kačanička Klisura.¹¹ None of these actions gave the expected results.

The German Army made progress in Greece as well: Salonika and Ksanti were conquered on April 9, and Greek troops east of the Vardar river offered to surrender. On the same day, the I Armoured German Army under the command of General von Kleistst conquered Niš. German troops advanced towards the Albanian border and, after crossing the river Vardar, conquered Tetovo and Prilep. That made it impossible for the Yugoslav Army to retreat south.

Although the troops of the III Army continued their offensive on the Albanian front, the Yugoslav forces in Macedonia were totally broken or captured. The situation in Kosovo and Metohija was similar, so General Nedić tried to close the directions which led from Kosovo to Metohija and Sandžak with improvised units around Suva Reka, Orahovica, Rudnik, Kosovska Mitrovica and Novi Pazar.¹²

The Command of the III group of armies was retreating towards Sandžak, and General Damjanović was with them. In the given situation, the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army issued orders on April 10 to the remainders of this military formation, to take action on the front from the Adriatic Sea to the line Kopaonik–Golija, to attack with its right flank, while the left flank was to close the direction Kosovo–Novi Pazar–Pljevlja.¹³ In order to somehow improve the situation, General Ilija Brašić (commanding officer of the III Army), in agreement with General Nedić, relieved General Milutin Milenković of his duty as commanding officer of the Kosovo Division. He was replaced by General Dragiša Kovačević.¹⁴

Total defeat was, however, all the more certain and the Yugoslav Supreme Command ordered the headquarters of the III group of armies on

¹⁰ V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 310.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹² *Ibid.*, 361.

¹³ *Aprilski rat 1941*, 536.

¹⁴ V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 386.

April 11 to stay in Novi Pazar and „undertake the necessary preparations to cross over to Prijepolje“.¹⁵ The headquarters of the III Army was to remain in Andrijevića. In order to improve the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, the Supreme Command gave orders to General Nedić on April 12, to use the Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć, Orahovac and Suva Reka troops to attack the German armoured troops in Kosovo and liberate Priština. These attacks were only partly executed and did not give any results because the German forces in Kosovo were considerably strengthened by the arrival of the 5th armoured division to Priština from the direction of Prokuplje and Podujevo.¹⁶

During April 13, the headquarters of the III Army district was captured in Kičevo, together with the commanding officer and the remaining troops, which were surrounded for three days. The headquarters of the III army group, led by General Nedić and General Damjanović went to Prijepolje, where they stayed until the capitulation. The headquarters of the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army ordered General Nedić on April 14 to ask the Germans for peace „along the entire front“.¹⁷

On that same day General Danilo Kalafatović, Chief-of-Staff of the Supreme Command, asked the German and Italian troops for a cease of hostility. He explained this decision in the following way: „*Because of failure on all fronts, the total crumbling down of our troops in Croatia, Dalmatia and Slovenia, because of a lot of things, after a universal study of our political and military situation, we came to the conclusion that all further military resistance is impossible and that it could lead to unnecessary bloodshed without any perspective of success*“.¹⁸

Mladen Žujović, a reserve Lieutenant who spent the April War in General Damjanović's staff, left the following testimony about the situation in Prijepolje: „*The small town became full from somewhere. Restaurants and shops are full of soldiers from various units. They are not drinking, they are not buying, they are loitering. Large groups of soldiers are speechlessly standing on every corner and observing. Many felt relieved others are thinking things over. Most of them look like they have surrendered to their destiny, but without conviction, because they are still seeking the possibility of a way out. In the evening, two small tanks drive into Prijepolje. Both tanks stopped in front of our headquarters. General staff Colonel Josip Jerdašić, my superior, quickly straightens out his uniform and runs out to meet the*

¹⁵ *Aprilski rat 1941*, 565.

¹⁶ V. Terzić, *Slom Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, 403.

¹⁷ *Aprilski rat*, 849.

¹⁸ MA, Act 17, 3–57/2–3.

*German second Lieutenant who slowly, without escort, comes out of the tank. As did all the others, Vasić and I silently wait. Through an open window into the room reaches the voice of a khoja who started singing from the minaret the evening prayer, as always at this time of day. – Gentlemen – says Jedrašić, after he saw off the German who observed us closely and duly saluted us – the second Lieutenant is tired and he is going to sleep. He admires our resistance. He expected that we would lay down our arms on the first day [...] Tomorrow morning, on Maundy Thursday of April 17, Dragiša and I, after saying farewell to the commander General Brašić, Chief-of-Staff General Damjanović and our young friend Captain Saša Mihailović, we secretly, with the help of some friends, left Prijepolje which was being entered by a new convoy of German vehicles.*¹⁹

The capitulation was signed on April 17, at 9.00 p. m. in Belgrade by Maximilian von Weichs on behalf of the German side, and on behalf of the Yugoslav side by Aleksandar Cincar-Marković and General Radivoje Jan-ković. The capitulation included: taking into captivity the Yugoslav armed forces; surrendering of all weapons and all war materials; giving up all documents from the presidency of the government, ministry of foreign affairs and the army; surrendering of all land and river-bank fortifications. Army personnel were forbidden to leave the country, and all of those who opposed the occupying troops will be proclaimed outlaws. The rules came into effect on April 18, precisely at noon.²⁰

In agreement with General Kalafatović, Milan Nedić went to Belgrade to negotiate with the German Command and to insure that the Yugoslav soldiers in captivity stay in the country. That, however, was not accepted and Nedić was placed under house arrest on April 19, which lasted for 95 days.²¹

IN GERMAN CAPTIVITY

General Damjanović's last war deployment was in Prijepolje. That is where he was when the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia capitulated, but he was taken into German captivity in Nierenberg from Novi Pazar. How the prisoners of war of Serbian nationality will be treated was clear after the order of the German Supreme Command of April 10, 1941: „*Serbian*

¹⁹ Mladen Žujović, *Eseji o ljudima i događajima 1903–1959*. In: Mladen Žujović, *Dnevnici i beleške*, knj. V, Vrnjačka Banja 2004, 77–78.

²⁰ *Zbornik NOR-a*, II-2, 559–561

²¹ MA, *Nedić's Archives*, 1–7-16.

*prisoners of war, officers before all, are to be treated badly. This was ordered by the Fuehrer, because they are the initiators of agreement cancelling“.*²²

In the regulations of the execution of the capitulation, the prisoners of war subject was put at the head of the list. Commanding officers of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had to report to the nearest German officers, while they were to leave their officers with the units for maintaining order and peace. Soldiers caught outside their units would get the death penalty.²³

Officers were taken to captivity by trains under the supervision of SS troops. They were put into locked horse freight cars, 60 people per car. The trains stopped only at larger stations on secondary gauges. The prisoners were then allowed to exit the freight car and were given artificial coffee and a piece of bread. Once they reached the camps, they ceased to be under the control of the SS troops and they could behave a little more freely.²⁴

Yugoslav prisoners of war in Germany were placed in several army camps-stalags under different work commands. They were also placed in officer camps to do various physical works. Officers were placed in officer's camps-oflags in Hoenfels, Warburg, Ofenburg and Osnabrick. In September of 1941 (October according to some data), by order of the German Command the officers were grouped together, and the camps in Hoenfels, Warburg and Ofenburg, were all joined into one in Nuernberg.²⁵ There were several thousand officers at this camp, and General Damjanović was amongst them – in the Oflag XIII-B camp.

Under the Geneva Convention, communication with the prisoners was conducted through the highest- ranking officer, but that depended on whether the prisoners knew the rules of the Geneva Convention. Even the officers' elite didn't know all the rules of the convention, and many generals refused to accept rank in the camp. Therefore, the Germans were sometimes able to impose their own organization. All requests and complaints went through the seniority, while the German orders were received directly at the muster area every day during role call, in the morning and in the afternoon.

²² According to: *Aprilski rat*, 550.

²³ MA, *German archives*, 5–15–41.

²⁴ Miodrag Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma. U Osnabričkom logoru 1941–1945*, London 1962, 17.

²⁵ Branko Naumović, *Ideja đenerala Dragoljuba Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima u Nemačkoj*, „Glasnik srpskog istorijsko-kulturnog društva Njegoš“, 17 (juni 1966), 107.

Almost all the generals were brought to Nuremberg in 1941. Živko Stanisavljević was the first to be the senior officer, and Milorad Petrović later on, both of them army generals.

What life was like at the camp in Nuremberg, situated in the midst of a forest, was described by an officer who was transferred to this camp from Warburg: *„The town was not bombed. We are going in groups from a small camp to a big one. Frisk, bathe. The usual procedure. In shack no. 9, block 1, were only majors. Food? Merely turnip. I found myself among a lot of friends and buddies. In this camp as well, everyone is complaining about being neglected in the pre-war Yugoslavia. All the arrows are aimed at the protectionists. News from the eastern battlegrounds is unpleasant. The „red buddies“ talk a lot about that. The west is silent. There is a lot of talk here about our generals. We didn't talk about them in Warburg. They suffered together with us and we respected them. Here, I would say, everything is exaggerated. My former superiors General Dušan Krstić and General Mihajlo Stajić are in the same shack. I complained to them about General Živko Stanisavljević who, with his flimsy management of the camp, is doing a favour to the left-extremists“.*²⁶

The atmosphere among the officers was quite unstable. That was mostly influenced by the infamous defeat. The disintegration of the country became the main topic of conversation, and everybody was trying to conclude who was to blame for the disaster: *„From the very beginning of captivity, under the strong impressions of what had happened, a psychosis of mental pain, public indignation and quite a bit of national-moral shame were present, because we easily lost our fatherland due to treason and bad policy. The defeat that took place in April of 1941 wasn't just a military defeat. It was the disintegration of our country, the moral breakdown of society and loss of faith in the state community. This difficult psychical atmosphere, this bitter discussion of who is to blame, was used by a few members of the communist party among the reserve officers who began slowly to lift their heads up, got organized amongst themselves, to skilfully use that displeasure, creating hatred among the younger officers towards the older ones, especially towards the generals. All of that led to a systematic collapse of military discipline and the authority of the elders in general. Their work was very cautious in the beginning, but due to the situation change in the country and in the field of foreign policy as well, their work became all the more open“.*²⁷

²⁶ Dobrosav Krstić, *Prvi dani u zarobljeništvu*, „Glasnik srpskog istorijsko-kulturnog društva Njegoš“, br. 30, (juni 1973), 103–104.

²⁷ B. Naumović, *Ideja đenerala D. Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima*, 107–108.

After the German attack on the Soviet Union, the formation of the Royal resistance movement in Ravna Gora, the appearance of partisans and the breakout of the uprising in Serbia, partitions were intensified. The forming of General Milan Nedić's government (August 29, 1941) brought things to a red-hot status. The fact that the government was formed became known in captivity at the beginning of September, and in October Nedić asked Harald Turner, chief of the administrative headquarters of the German Command in Serbia, to improve the position of the prisoners in the camps. He also suggested that for each liberated prisoner of war, two Serbian workers be sent to work in Germany. This suggestion was not accepted, but the return of officers over the age of 60 and the ill ones was accepted.²⁸

General Nedić wanted to win over the Yugoslav prisoners of war to his idea and to get their support. He also thought about bringing as much of them as he could back from Germany and to put them at the disposal of his government. Therefore, with the approval of the German authorities in Serbia (the German Command gave its consent on October 27), he sent Milan Aćimović, the Minister of foreign affairs, to Nuremberg at the beginning of November: „*I gave Aćimović verbal instructions to explain the position that Serbia was in and to justify the necessity of the forming of my government. How the Nuremberg Declaration came to be is unknown to me, but I heard about it later on*“.²⁹

General Nedić then made contact with his brother, Army General Milutin Nedić, who with the assistance of General Damjanović set in motion the collecting of signatures from officers that wanted to return to Serbia and put themselves at the disposal of the Serbian government in the fight against the partisans. General Danilo Kalafatović, former Chief-of-Staff of the Supreme Command of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, also joined this campaign.³⁰

Aćimović arrived in Nuremberg on November 5, and visited the Yugoslav prisoners the very next day. He met with General Danilo Kalafatović and General Milutin Nedić. General Dragiša Pandurović noted the following about Aćimović's arrival: „*He made a tour of all the shacks accompanied by the German commanding officer of the camp. He is bowing to everyone, he is affectionately shaking hands with everybody and saying that he came because of the captivity issue. He is promising to help us with all our problems and telling us to write to him personally when we are in dis-*

²⁸ MA, *Nedić's Archives*, 1–1-23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ B. Naumović, *Ideja đenerala D. Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima*, 108.

trous. He then attended the memorial service for the dead that were buried at the Nuremberg cemetery and after that he went to Berlin, and within 5–6 days he was at home“.³¹

After that, on November 9, General Stanisavljević, the senior officer of the camp, gave an official announcement in seven points about the visit, emphasizing that the Serbian government is taking care of the prisoners and working on their return to the country: „*This issue is big and profound. The solution depends on us, that is, on the situation in Serbia and on us prisoners in Germany. Mr Aćimović feels encouraged by our state of mind and spirit, so he hopes for a favourable solution of the captivity issue*“.³²

Only two days later (on November 11) General Kalafatović received a petition signed by 50 generals, requesting that he, as the highest ranking officer, undertakes measures to prevent „anarchy among the prisoners“ and that a statement of support is to be sent to the government in Belgrade. The text in the petition was put together by General Radivoje Janković, General Milutin Nikolić and General Dušan Božić, all of them members of the Supreme Command, but it was clear that General Milutin Nedić was behind it all.³³

This request brought additional anxiety among the officers. General Pandurović wrote the following about that: „*Although this event was one of an internal nature within the generals' shacks, it still received the widest attention in all the blocks, in spite of the wired fences. Everyone knew, there were endless comments. At that time, the ideological-political understanding of the imprisoned officers was shadowed quite enough by different views on Yugoslavia's need to take part in this war. From then on, these „different views“ will, from day to day all the more stronger and deeper, turn into opposed sides, sympathizers of the Allies and the ones against, to monarchists, republicans, communists and various other party sects. From that event strong action began to take place against the reputation of the generals, and that was brought over to him Osnabruek camp later on, where it produced hell in the lives of the prisoners*“.³⁴

General Kalafatović addressed all the officers in Nuremberg on November 15, with a special statement: „*In these times when our government in the fatherland is fighting to the death against communist and bandit*

³¹ According to: M. Bjelajac, *General Pandurović*, 188.

³² According to: Mile Bjelajac–Predrag Trifunović, *Između vojske i politike. Biografija generala Dušana Trifunovića 1880–1942*, Beograd 1997, 261.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ According to: M. Bjelajac, *General Pandurović*, 190.

*gangs in order to save our families and our nation from ruin, we here, as the main group of our active service officers and reserve officers, must not remain mute observers of these tragic events. Our stance on this matter is expressed in this enclosed statement that will be delivered to the President of our government and to our general public. That stand will be all the more solid, if it represents our common opinion. Therefore, I recommend that you all sign this statement without hesitation, so that I can be sure that it represents our common standing point“.*³⁵

The Nuremberg Declaration was signed on the same day (November 15), although there was great hesitation because a certain number of generals were afraid that it could harm the interests of the western allies. The younger officers were very severe in their attacks: *„The generals are completely senile. They are old nags whose only concern is to return to Serbia. They should all be moved out of the way. They are old horses and nothing else“.*³⁶ The signatories gave their full support to Milan Nedić's government. That will be the basis to declare many of them „war criminals“ after the war.³⁷ Army General Vojislav Nikolajević, Army General Jovan Naumović, General Milan Plesničar, General Uroš Tešanović and General Mihailo Nedeljković did not sign the statement.³⁸

In this statement, the officers condemned „with the greatest determination“ the „communist degenerates“, as well as the „delusional and misguided individuals“ that started a rebellion against the Germans: *„From writings in the press, as well as from speeches and proclamations of the President of the Serbian government army-general Milan Nedić, we learn that the anti-people communist elements, who are in foreign service, have organized bandit gangs in order to, with the help of the unscrupulous foreign propaganda, mislead some desperate individuals and to now try to suffocate the Serbian people in their own blood, and to completely devastate the Serbian country. Filled with the feeling of deep responsibility, we condemn all*

³⁵ According to: Milorad Marković, *Ratni dnevници 1941–1945*, Beograd 1979, 149.

³⁶ According to: M. Bjelajac, *General Pandurović*, 193.

³⁷ It is still undecided who participated in putting together the statement and where it was written – in Belgrade or Nuremberg. The official Yugoslav historiography believed that the concept of the statement was written in Belgrade, and that the participants were Miloš Masalović, Chief-of-Staff to the President of the government, journalist Ratko Živadinović and Cvetan Djordjević, assistant to the Minister of internal affairs. The concept was allegedly edited in Nuremberg by General Kalafatović and General Nedić. (Mladen Stefanović, *Neprijateljsko delovanje nedićevaca, ljotićeveca i četnika Draže Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima u Nemačkoj*, „Vojnoistorijski glasnik“, 1/1991, 324).

³⁸ M. Bjelajac – P. Trifunović, *Biografija generala Dušana Trifunovića*, 262.

foreign propaganda that continues the perfidious task of leading the people to disaster in the interest of egoistic goals, and is using its dignity, naivete and credulousness. We appeal to all the people in Serbia to unanimously stand by general Nedić's government and to decisively help it in the struggle against the communist degenerates. [...] If the competent German authorities approve, we are ready to, in the needed number, go to Serbia and with our participation contribute to a quick reinstatement of order, and then be returned again to the prisoner of war camps, because we don't want to achieve any personal gain or reward for serving our people".³⁹

The declaration led to new, even deeper division among the imprisoned Yugoslav officers. General Pandurović's testimony on the matter: *„It is understood that the Nuremberg Memorandum led to the utmost tension in an already abnormal mental state of the mass of prisoners. In a human ant-hill you can see blazing faces, highly lifted hands as a sign of wonder, or people crossing themselves in order to show how astonished they are. In discussions in many of the shacks even Jesus wasn't spared, and neither was his mother. Such a situation finally forces Kalafatović to issue a written statement to all the prisoners that the original lists of the signatories were not sent to Belgrade, and that they were burned".⁴⁰*

The main goal of Milan Aćimović's trip to Nuremberg was to enable the return of the officers to Serbia, so that they could help the fight against communism. That especially applied to the younger officers. Aćimović talked to Živko Topalović about that in the spring of 1944: *„I advised them to join Nedić's army, not Ljotić's army. However, nothing prevented these officers who enrolled in Nedić's army from serving Draža or simply crossing over to Draža. As soon as this became frequent, the Germans barred further release from the camps".⁴¹*

Aćimović's action was stopped when he was forced to leave the Serbian government, because of Dimitrije Ljotić's distrust towards him, in the autumn of 1942. From then on he efficiently worked for the Ravna Gora movement. His efforts didn't bring about a higher inflow of officers from captivity to the YAIF (Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland) – only a bit over 20, mainly younger officers, and they supported General Mihailović: *„Those gentlemen, several thousand of them, are peacefully watching the Ustas-has butcher the people, while the communists are conquering the country. They think that someone else is going to bring them freedom and save their*

³⁹ M. Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma*, 147–148.

⁴⁰ According to: M. Bjelajac, *General Pandurović*, 194.

⁴¹ Živko Topalović, *Srbija pod Dražom*, London 1968, 119.

*positions, so that they can receive their salary on a silver plate for the whole time that they are sitting in a camp. Their duty was to come to their country in any way possible, legally or illegally, or even through General Nedić or me. It was fatal that plenty of the officers and soldiers thought that the same thing that happened after WW I would happen now. A considerable part of the Serbian Army was then also in captivity, and when the war was won; they calmly came back to the country. To a lot of them that seemed convenient: let the others fight and free our country, while we sit and wait to return by train and resume our old positions“.*⁴²

Aćimović himself made a faithful description of what it was like in Nuremberg in 1941: „*They listened to my appeal and kept silent. None came forward. I then addressed a general personally, one who was a long time commandant of Belgrade before the war and with whom I had worked. I asked him to make an example of himself and help in an important mission. He answered: – No! You cannot give us commands; neither can General Nedić or Draža Mihailović. Only our King can give us orders. All the officers that were present agreed with him and I returned to Belgrade in disgrace“.*⁴³

Only two officers agreed to place themselves at the service of the Serbian government: Colonel (later promoted to the rank of general) Borivoje Jonić, who became the commandant of the Serbian State Guard, and Captain Danilo Stojanović. The signing of the statement that supported the Serbian government was all that the rest of the officers consented to.

The declaration was signed by 95% of the officers in captivity, but not one of them decided to return to Serbia. Nevertheless, this event brought additional disunion among the officers and provoked big and unpleasant discussions in the camp, which were used in time by the pro-communist, mainly younger officers, for creating further disunion.⁴⁴ Most of the officers were in a bad mental state because of the bitterness of the infamous defeat and the bad news that was coming from Serbia: massive suffering of civilians, the genocide of the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia (ISC), the appearance of communists and the breakout of a civil war. Since the Nuremberg Statement was the work of General Milutin Nedić and was recommended by General Kalafatović, who were the two oldest Yugoslav officers in captivity, it was accepted and signed on a massive scale.⁴⁵

⁴² *Ibid.*, 119–120.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁴ B. Naumović, *Ideja đenerala D. Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima*, 108.

⁴⁵ M. Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma*, 136.

Life in Nuremberg during the first winter in captivity wasn't easy at all, especially for the older generals who were placed in large rooms with two-storey beds. The shacks were of poor quality, the board walls had cracks in many places and single window-panes. Only a few drum-heaters were disposed along the whole room. The shack for washing up and for the laundry was very far away, and so was the one with the toilets. The camp authorities treated us in a manner that was all but correct. On January 20, 1942, on a temperature of minus 30 degrees centigrade, the Germans made 200 generals go in rows and carry their bed-sheets to be washed and to receive clean ones, although it was brought to their shack until then. The thin shack walls and windows were frozen on the inside during the entire winter, and that caused the death of General Dušan Trifunović on February 28.⁴⁶

General Miodrag Damjanović made an entry in the memorial book on the occasion of General Trifunović's death on March 1. The funeral was on March 7, and three more Yugoslav officers, who died in the meantime, were buried on the same day: General Jovan Veselinović, Colonel Milan Milosavljević and Lieutenant Colonel Paun Gelić.⁴⁷

General Damjanović was one of the leaders of the organized resistance in Nuremberg, and later on in Hammelburg, against the „destructive communist action“, as they then called it. He relied mostly on the younger active-service officers and reserve officers. After General Milutin Nedić left the camp in March of 1942, Damjanović took over his role in organizing the officers who will go to Serbia one day and join the fight against communism, by joining the units of the Serbian government or the YAIF troops. The second most important task was to isolate the partisan sympathisers. That will become the most severe accusation against Damjanović later on, from the communist authorities in Serbia.

Officers that were ideologically close to General Dragoljub Mihailović's movement soon started to unite. The uniting process went spontaneously and it represented their response to the communists and to those who supported General Nedić. Disunion from Serbia did not omit the prisoners of war. These officers, who supported General Mihailović, were of the opinion that the only goal of going to Serbia was to join the troops of the YAIF, because the YAIF was the legitimate representative of the Yugoslav government in emigration. Colonel Radmilo Trojanović was the leader of the General Mihailović followers in the camp in Nuremberg.

⁴⁶ M. Bjelajac – P. Trifunović, *Biografija generala Dušana Trifunovića*, 256.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 267.

Those officers who went to Serbia by approval of Milan Nedić were contemptuously called „renewalers“.⁴⁸

The first larger group of about 400 officers (about 350 from Nuremberg and about 50 from Osnabruek) arrived in Belgrade on March 13, 1942, and amongst them were Army General Milutin Nedić,⁴⁹ General Miroslav Tomić, general Dobrosav Milenković, general Žarko Majstorović, general Vladimir Milošević and general Milorad Majstorović.⁵⁰ A solemn reception was arranged for them at the Belgrade railway station.

General Nedić visited them at the hospital the next day and addressed them with the following words: *„I came to greet you as the President of the Serbian government, the government of the people’s salvation. You know that we are all victims of unreasonable politics, giddy-brained politics, because of which we lost our country and all that we hold dear [...] All of you know that I was shoulder to shoulder with you and that I went through good and bad with you, and that I came by the order of the Supreme Command to save, together with Minister Cincar-Marković, what could be saved. After that I was interned for 95 days. I was released from internment thanks to the requests of many national leaders and I put all of myself in service to the fatherland, in order to protect our dear ones from the greatest danger, from the destructiveness of communism. I ask of you, now that you are in your fatherland, to be what you always were: Serbs above all, to bring in a new spirit, new morale, and to defend Serbia and the Serbian people. I ask you to be grateful to the Germans at each and every place because they were always good to you and they are not your enemy. You are also always to be grateful to the leader of the German Reich because you came to freedom thanks to his generosity.“*⁵¹

There was a great amount of discontent among the ones that stayed in captivity. General Damjanović wrote to General Milutin Nedić about that on May 27, 1942: *„After your departure, the situation here changed considerably. I continued on the work that we worked on together, but I have great difficulties because of the discontent created by the first discharge of officers. I am trying to alleviate this displeasure, but it is necessary to rectify*

⁴⁸ B. Naumović, *Ideja đenerala D. Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima*, 109.

⁴⁹ In almost all the historiography works the wrong date of Milutin Nedić’s return from captivity is stated – February 1942.

⁵⁰ *Novo vreme*, March 15, 1942, 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

*the mistakes that were made as soon as possible. I will keep you informed on the situation and I ask you to send me the necessary instructions“.*⁵²

It seems that Damjanović's letter had some effect, because the second group of Serbian prisoners (18 officers and 3 soldiers) arrived in Belgrade on May 30, 1942.⁵³ They were also ceremoniously welcomed and General Nedić was exceptionally pleased: „*In all this misfortune, I had one nice day. When I see my old war buddies free again, though our country isn't free, and when I know that freedom was given to them only because I'm on the position that I am, I'm not sorry that I sacrificed everything and, I will sacrifice even more“.*⁵⁴

All of those who wanted to return to Serbia had to sign a statement that obliged them not to do anything, in any shape or form, that could hurt Germany or her allies; furthermore, that they will do everything in their power to help the development of Serbia's economy, and that they will obey all the orders of the occupying authorities.

The departure of the first larger groups of officers didn't only open up new dilemmas and disunion among the prisoners, but also showed that supporting Nedić's government could bring practical gain – salvation from barbed wire. One of those people wrote about the situation in Osnabruek: „*Although almost everyone was convinced in their souls that it is impossible that they will all be allowed to go home, a large number of people hoped that they would be chosen, especially if they found a way to let the government in Belgrade know that fact. Thus, this event provoked uproarious discussions and debates in the shacks, at class meetings and at congregations of associations formed up to then. People divided themselves into two large groups: one group was convinced that they shouldn't, under any conditions, go back to their country because it was obvious that they would have to serve the enemy. The other group thought that they were of no use to their country while they were behind wires, so it's therefore better if they return to*

⁵² Archive of Yugoslavia, fund *State commission for establishing crimes of the occupiers and their helpers*, F – number 2101. – The post-war Yugoslav authorities connected, without any foundation, these two events and put the blame on General Damjanović: „*What that 'information' and 'instructions' were like can clearly be seen from further events at the camp. Numerous sending of prisoners to penal camps, their maltreatment and suffering was the result. That same month, according to the lists that were made by Damjanović, the enemy set aside 480 prisoners, part of them were Jews and part of them were other officers, and transported them to Osnabruek“.* (AY, SC, 110–98–15).

⁵³ *Novo vreme*, May 31, 1942.

⁵⁴ According to: Stanislav Krakov, *General Milan Nedić*, knj. II, *Prepuna časa čemera*, Minhen 1968, 81.

*the country. The statement that had to be signed is of no importance because the enemy can be promised anything, but whether that promise will be kept is another matter“.*⁵⁵

A large group of Yugoslav officers of all ranks was moved from Nierenberg to a camp in Osnabruek (Oflag VI-C) in May of 1942. The relocation began on May 14. Later on an impression was formed that only the officers who refused to sign the Nuremberg statement were moved, which wasn't true, and that General Miodrag Damjanović played the main role in composing the lists, which also wasn't true. The truth is, they were relocated in order to make place in two blocks of shacks for the Dutch officers, whose earlier camp was filled with Russian prisoners.⁵⁶

According to the German plan, 800 people were to be moved: all the generals (about 180), all the Jews (about 350) and all the officers who had been punished for various disciplinary offences (about 220). The remaining 50 prisoners were to be chosen according to the suggestions made by General Stanisavljević. Finally, 138 generals, 250 Jews and 412 officers of various ranks, mainly chosen by General Stanisavljević and his associates, Colonel Branko Popović and Lieutenant Colonel Sergij Dimitrijević, arrived in Osnabruek.⁵⁷

Debates about the Nuremberg Statement started right away: „*A huge majority of the newly arrived were of the opinion that the statement shouldn't have been signed, because it led, through the government in Belgrade, to direct collaboration with the enemy. The ones that did sign it, and over 90% of the newcomers from Nuremberg did condemn it, but very few of them confessed that they did sign. A unanimous condemnation of the statement had begun, so one could get the impression that the newcomers from Nuremberg were moved to Osnabruek because they didn't sign it“.*⁵⁸

With the arrival of this group of officers, the fight between the nationalists and the communists continued fiercely. While the nationally orientated officers were dividing among themselves, the communists didn't have such dilemmas and were well-organized in Osnabruek since May of 1941.

⁵⁵ M. Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma*, 34. – As always, the communists in the camps had the most practical approach: although, according to their propaganda, it seemed like they were bitter adversaries of going to Serbia, they succeeded in placing a certain number of their men into the group that was leaving for Serbia, with the task of joining the partisan troops: „*These people were duly prepared to declare themselves as supporters of the Serbian government at each and every place“.* (*Ibid.*)

⁵⁶ M. Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma*, 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

They immediately integrated among themselves and went into action. One of them wrote the following: „*Each of the party members knew some sympathisers and activists from their surroundings back home who could be considered to be communists. We thought that work on the expansion of the party must be done much faster than it is usually done in times of peace. It was a time of war, the first news of an armed uprising in our country soon started to reach us. It became clear that the party organization in these circumstances must be built much more rapidly than in peaceful times*“.⁵⁹

The remaining 3000 prisoners from the Nuremberg camp were moved to Hammelburg during April of 1943. General Miodrag Damjanović was among them. Until the end of 1944, there were four blocks (each one had several shacks) in the camp. There was a seniority, but not a command, so General Brašić was the „senior officer“ but not the commandant, the command of the camp belonged to the Germans – General Guelke.⁶⁰ General Damjanović, according to data from a later period, led an active propaganda among the remaining prisoners to return to Serbia.

The officers who supported General Mihailović's movement continued their work in Hammelburg. In June, 1943, Lieutenant Colonel Trojanović received from Serbia, in a parcel together with provisions, instructions from the Supreme Command of the YAIF dated February 5, 1943, concerning the forming and the work of the Yugoslav army in captivity. General Mihailović ordered the forming of the Command of the Yugoslav Army in Captivity in all the camps: „*Organize troops and staff from available officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers at hand. Expand and strengthen a correct opinion compulsory for an officer, as displayed in the YAIF's standpoint. Prepare plans fore executing your commitments and carry out the dispensing of tasks and duties*“.⁶¹

The general idea of this plan was that such an organized army, when the right conditions occur, will in the moment of Germany's breakdown join the prisoners in Italy, in the largest camp Aversa. At that time, the north and west commands of the Yugoslav Army in Captivity would be formed and their task would be to occupy parts of Slovenia and Croatia that were not within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Istra, Koruška and territories in the east) „bringing them national freedom and placing them under temporary military

⁵⁹ Nikola Vujanović, *Front u žicama*, Beograd 1997, 19.

⁶⁰ *Trideset pet godina od istoriskog događaja u Malnicu*, „Glasnik srpskog istorijsko-kulturnog društva Njegoš“, no. 45 (December 1980), 36.

⁶¹ According to: B. Naumović, *Ideja đenerala Dragoljuba Mihailovića u zarobljeničkim logorima*, 110.

administration“. They would also have to establish contact with allied troops and military authorities if they should show up on this territory.⁶²

This army had an alternative task as well – establishing combat co-action with the fatherland forces: „*This case scenario sets in if, contrary to the anticipated, there would be great resistance from the enemy troops that have fallen behind and from the imposed authorities (Pavelić, Nedić, Ljotić and others) as well as from subversive troops (communists-partisans) which would make it difficult to free the country, establish Yugoslav rule and military administration [...] Goals of the YAIF are to organize the people on a national basis as military units, preserve the population as much as it is possible, accomplish liberation in accordance with the situation on the battlefield, establish Yugoslav authorities, destroy the Ustashas and all the other internal enemies, prevent the usurpation of authority, sweep the country from traitors, criminals and minorities, free the contiguous territories and thus create all the prerequisite conditions for a better and finer state union*“.⁶³

This instruction was effectuated in Hammelburg. Colonel Branko Naumović was chosen to be the commandant of the organization in the camp and the commandant of the entire Yugoslav Army in Captivity. Lieutenant Colonel Trajanović was chosen to be the Chief-of-Staff: „*The organizing went very well. Discipline was restored and the spirit was strengthened. Everyone felt some sort of power in the camp, but nobody, except the members, knew what was happening in the camp. The communists became more alert. All the functions in the shacks and blocks were in the hands of national officers. A thorough cleansing of the officer classes was undertaken*“.⁶⁴

Damjanović held under his control the choice of shack seniors in block 4, where he was the senior officer, and he made an effort to prevent a communist supporter of becoming a senior. Damjanović's basic idea which he upheld in Hammelburg was to support General Nedić's government and General Mihailović's movement, because all the national forces had to be united in the fight against communism. He therefore led a persistent propaganda to assure that a larger number of officers return to Serbia and serve the Serbian government.

He engaged himself quite a lot in cultural work, and he founded the association *Zajednica* (Union) and the artistic association *Zora* (Dawn). The cultural life consisted of lectures, various courses, concerts, and theatre per-

⁶² *Ibid.*, 111–112.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 112–113.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

performances. A news section was also formed, as well as the association *Beli krstovi* (White Crosses) that dealt, before all, with military subject matters. It had the function of a higher military school and it was most probably founded at the end of 1942. Only career officers were members, grouped according to classes, so that each class from the academy was one organization. That was the way Damjanović tried to repel the influence of reserve officers and officers who got their education in schools for non-commissioned officers, who were mostly NLM (National Liberation Movement) sympathisers. Furthermore, badges with the image of King Petar were made and his picture was always present at cultural events.

Damjanović regularly held lectures in which he looked back on the reasons of the April defeat, and on the actual situation on the world fronts as well. The basic contestable point in debates with the communist sympathisers referred to the blame for the military breakdown. While some of them blamed the Croats and other „subversive“ elements (national), others understood this issue as one of utmost importance for the future of Yugoslavia, so they were very persistent in proving that the „grand Serbian court camarilla“ was to blame, and that the Ustashas shouldn't be equalized with Croats.

The second most important contestable issue was whether the military hierarchy should still be respected in the camp, in other words, is the „morale factor“ or the numbers of stars on one's shoulder a decisive fact. Damjanović's opinion was that they were still „an army under the flag“ and that they shouldn't engage in politics, but that they must honour the oath they gave to their King and that they must respect seniority hierarchy in the camp. Furthermore, the officers were not allowed to conduct seditious and anti-national politics; they had to respect order, peace and discipline and not to quarrel, and to prepare themselves for the reparation of their demolished fatherland.

Opposition from the pro-communist officers was huge: *„We, who belonged to the NLM, immediately announced to our comrades and to all the officers in the camp that we have no seniors, that we have ceased to be so from the day of our capture and that only enemy camp authorities exist in the camp, and those who practise some authority in the camp do so in the name of the enemy, and in doing so are collaborating with the enemy and thus betraying their country. Not only do we not recognize any authority of the generals, but we also won't obey their orders when they call us on duty“*.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ AY, SC, inv. no. 16650. Reserve second-lieutenant Kuzman Jovanović's statement from September 24, 1946.

At all his lectures, General Damjanović always said that the western allies would win the war. But, since he didn't allow the spreading of left wing and communist propaganda within his associations that will be held against him after the war as one of his sins for which he was declared a war criminal. Damjanović was active in humanitarian work as well – he led many activities in order to gather contributions for the refugees, for the families in Serbia of those who were executed, and also for the civilians in demolished cities.

Precious testimony of General Damjanović's conduct in German captivity was left by an officer of the Serbian State Guard, who was taken to captivity because of helping the troops of the YAIF in Serbia. That officer, when he was already in emigration in the U. S.A., on February 25, 1950, wrote the following: „*General Damjanović is an excellent friend of mine. I know him since the days of captivity, where I was taken in January of 1943 as a member of the Serbian State Border Guard, suspected of being a collaborator of General Mihailović's resistance movement. At that time General Mihailović was absolutely the only one who pointed out the danger of communism and the need of uniting in the fight against them, and he did so by holding lectures on the topic to 8000 officers in camps in Nuremberg and Hammelburg. It was understandable that a sad majority in the camp, a majority led by the communists, of course, condemned his activities. They called him a fascist, a white-crosser, a German agent, but he didn't allow himself to get confused. He responded to all the attacks by working harder against communism, and he kept on doing so until he was called by General Nedić to return to Serbia on May 1, 1944*“.⁶⁶

FROM GENERAL NEDIĆ TO GENERAL MIHAILOVIĆ

Miodrag Damjanović remained at the camp in Hammelburg until May 1944, when he was freed thanks to Milan Nedić. As far as it can be established, Nedić and Damjanović wrote to each other on a regular basis. Some of Damjanović's contemporaries claim he left the camp in the second half of April (a few days after Easter). He was immediately appointed the Chief-of-Staff of Nedić's cabinet. General Dragoljub Mihailović, the commandant of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, agreed with that in order to receive information on time about the German plans on the eve of the outcome of the war in Serbia. General Damjanović succeeded Colonel Mi-

⁶⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

loš Masalović, who was executed in Belgrade on March 8, 1944, on the position of Chief-of-Staff of the Prime Minister of the Serbian government. A later enquiry showed that the murder of Masalović was committed by Captain Dragutin Milojević and lieutenant Miroslav Nikolić under the orders of the Belgrade headquarters of the YAIF.⁶⁷

Milan Nedić first offered the Chief-of-Staff position to Boško Kostić, secretary to Dimitrije Ljotić. When Kostić declined the offer, Nedić decided to bring General Damjanović back from captivity and appoint him his Chief-of-Staff: „*He was my Chief-of-Staff. We wrote to each other. I will immediately ask for his release from captivity*“.⁶⁸

And so began the work of General Damjanović, whose basic goal was to unite the national forces in the final stage of WW II in Serbia. By forming new units of the Serbian government and arming them, they could help the YAIF troops more than before. The relations between the troops of the SSG (Serbian State Guard), troops of the SVC (Serbian Volunteer Corps) and the YAIF were very inimical until the spring of 1942, when the communist rising of the first year of the war was definitely beaten and the partisan units in Serbia practically disappeared.

At that time, all the contrarities among the „national“ Serbs surfaced, ones of an ideological nature as well as ones relating to the war goals of the Serbian people. Since the very day when he accepted the invitation to stand at the head of the Serbian government, it could be foreseen that General Milan Nedić will not have a positive opinion of the resistance movement organized in Ravna Gora by Dragoljub Mihailović, a Colonel at the time. The ones who followed Nedić's concept emphasized that by forming the Serbian government a possibility was obtained „*to begin the salvation of the Serbian people from ultimate destruction, to start building our country from ruins. It should be clear that the worst destiny will not pass us by if those who work for foreign goals and interests continue their fatal job and their blind obedience to orders from abroad*“.⁶⁹

After the perilous experience from 1941, General Nedić became a bitter adversary not only of the communists, but of General Mihailović's movement as well. The Serbian Prime Minister fiercely condemned all the calls for an uprising and resistance to the occupation. He equalized Mihailović's actions with those of the communists – they were „*the grave-diggers of the Serbian people, paid agents of Moscow and London, renegades wit-*

⁶⁷ *Ubice pukovnika Miloša Masalovića*, Novo vreme, May 27, 1944.

⁶⁸ Boško Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, Lil 1949, 50.

⁶⁹ MA, *Nedić's Archives*, 49–1–4.

*hout a fatherland and without national feelings, meat and blood merchants. Dark powers from London ask of you to rise up in arms and go to the forest, to join Draža Mihailović, the so-called Minister of the Yugoslav Army, a well-known London agent and Moscow's ally. These degenerates, these traitors, these foreign mercenaries, are criticizing the ones who are frantically and desperately trying to save the Serbian people by way of mortal combat at all costs“.*⁷⁰

Nothing changed during the gloomy war years. Conflicts between the SVC and the YAIF were severe, while their differences were insurmountable. Battles between the „volunteers“ and the YAIF were the bloodiest ones in the Serbian civil war during 1942 and 1943. The conflicts in Kruševac, Seča Reka and Valjevo are remembered well. During 1944, as far as the Ravna Gora movement members were concerned, Nedić was still „a German servant under occupation“ and the valid slogan was „till the destruction of fascism and communism“. It seemed like Nedić's side had a better understanding of the events to come, so they made several attempts to conciliate with Mihailović, but there was no reply. A persuasion that the fight against communism could be won on their own prevailed in the YAIF, which will turn out to be a great delusion.

During the first partisan offensive on Serbia during the spring of 1944, General Nedić suggested to Hermann Neubacher, the special representative of the ministry of foreign affairs of the Third Reich who came to Serbia in October of 1943, to form a united Serbian national front. The first condition put forth by the German side was that the YAIF stops all actions against the Wehrmacht and the Serbian authorities. Nedić even thought that it would be best for Mihailović to leave the country.⁷¹

At the beginning of May, 1944, Dimitrije Ljotić launched an initiative to establish co-operation with General Mihailović. Ljotić and Boško Kostić met with General Miroslav Trifunović, the commanding officer of the Serbian Command in the YAIF, on May 17 in the village of Brdjane (close to Gornji Milanovac). The talks went on until May 19. A fundamental agreement was reached on the fight against communism, troops of the YAIF wouldn't attack units of the Serbian government and wouldn't interfere in their activities. On all essential matters, Nedić and Mihailović would come to a consensual decision; the YAIF „fundamentally“ accepted aid from the Serbian government (weapons, food, money), and Mihailović was to have his official representative in Nedić's

⁷⁰ General M. Nedić's speech on Radio Belgrade on March 9, 1942.

⁷¹ MA, Microfilm (NAW), T-501-R-311, photographe 256.

government. It was also necessary to put a stop to the mutual propaganda war.⁷²

Some parts of this agreement were effectuated: mutual conflicts and propaganda attacks came to a stop, General Damjanović was appointed the Chief-of-Staff of the Prime Minister's cabinet, which represented a concession on Nedić's behalf. Mihailović didn't receive any weapons until the very end of the war because the German command at the highest level didn't allow it.

The partisan offensive on Serbia began in the last days of July, 1944. The NLAJ (National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia) concentrated its forces on three directions: 1) in the area Berane–Andrijevica–Kolašin. The operational group of divisions was situated there with the task to penetrate into the valley of the South Morava river across than mountain of Kopaonik; 2) in the area Foča–Pljevlja–Šavnik, where the I Proletarian Corps and the XII Shock Corps were situated with the task to cross the river Lim into Serbia, and to get to the valley of the river West Morava by crossing the mountains Tara and Zlatibor; 3) in the area Zvornik–Višegrad, where the 11th Krajiška Division and 28th Slavenska Division were situated with the task to move towards Šabac.

The basic strategy was defined by Josip Broz Tito on July 28: one part of the operational group of divisions was supposed to join the partisan forces in south-east Serbia in order to go north towards the river Danube and make contact with the Red Army. The rest of the forces were to go to the centre of Serbia and join the Soviet troops in the liberation of Belgrade. There was only one military-political goal behind this whole operation: the destruction of the YAIF and its organization. The big descent on Serbia began on July 28, with a march in three columns

At the same time, Milan Nedić's government made its last attempt to unite the Serbian national forces and General Miodrag Damjanović played a significant role in this effort. The first suggestion was to form a mutual government with two of Mihailović's men in it, but he declined the offer: „*Although I think it would be of great benefit to our cause, I don't want to compromise myself with the allies*“.⁷³

Upon that, a conference was held from July 30 to August 1, with all the regional chief-of-staffs and district commandants present. Milan Nedić addressed them with the following words: „*The fatherland is in danger. We are on the right path to unite all the Serbs. Harmony and brotherhood of all*

⁷² B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 151–152.

⁷³ Stanislav Krakov, *General Milan Nedić*, II. *Prepuna čaša čemera*, 162.

*Serbs must be achieved. My proposition that two of Mihailović's men should join my government as ministers was refused. Draža Mihailović rejected this offer, but that also is a correct standpoint considering the times we live in. Everything is happening extremely fast. The extermination of Serbs must be hindered. All of our armed forces must join the national Chetniks“.*⁷⁴

During the summer of 1944, General Damjanović was always by Nedić's side. On August 7 he accompanied the Prime Minister and several of his ministers as they visited farm works on the fields near Avala road.⁷⁵ On August 10, he attended the opening of a photography exhibition „Life Goes On“ held at Kalemegdan, showing the destruction of Belgrade during the allied bombings of 1944.⁷⁶

In the first half of August, certain commandants of the YAIF came to Belgrade in order to make contact with the Serbian government and General Damjanović was the mediator. Nikola Kalabić and Dragoslav Račić especially insisted on a meeting, where Nedić and Mihailović could come to some sort of an agreement. The meeting was most probably held on August 18, 1944 and General Damjanović acted as the mediator. Mihailović talked about that at the enquiry in 1946: „*That came as a surprise. The go-between was General Damjanović, who became Nedić's Chief-of-Staff after the murder of Masalović. Nedić requested the meeting. I think Damjanović informed me that Nedić wanted a meeting with me, I therefore, in order to make things easy for Damjanović, made a quick decision to agree to the meeting“.*⁷⁷

There are no written traces of the meeting, there are only statements of a later date made by some of the participants. It is certain that Damjanović was present at the meeting. The meeting was held at night in the village of Ražane. Besides Mihailović, Colonel Luka Baletić, Lieutenant Colonel Mirko Lalatović, Račić and Kalabić were present.

Mihailović asked Nedić to define the general situation: „*I pointed out the danger from the communists who were advancing from all directions, so it was therefore necessary to form a unique Serbian front from my units and the Chetnik troops, and so united quickly and efficiently save Serbia from a communist incursion. We agreed to procure weapons and ammunition from the Germans. We further agreed to put all the armed forces of*

⁷⁴ MA, Nedić's Archives, 121–4–21.

⁷⁵ *Novo vreme*, August 8, 1944.

⁷⁶ *Novo vreme*, August 11, 1944.

⁷⁷ According to: *Rat i mir đenerala. Izabrani ratni spisi generala Dragoljuba Mihailovića*, Beograd 1998, II, 419.

*the government under the command of Draža Mihailović because of better coordination in the fight against the communists“.*⁷⁸

Mihailović considered this meeting „stupid, unnecessary and compromising“.⁷⁹ On the other side, Nedić very soon put his request for weapons through to the Germans. A meeting was held at the German south-east command on August 17–18, where there was talk of arming the „Chetniks“. The suggestion was accepted „in principle“, but the final decision could be made only by the „headquarters of the leader of the Third Reich“.⁸⁰

A meeting at Hitler’s headquarters was held on August 22, 1944. The proposal to arm the „Chetniks“ was supported by Maximilian von Weichs, commandant of the Southeast, and Hermann Neubacher. Hitler, however, rejected all the suggestions on arming Mihailović’s Army, because the Serbs are a nationally constructive people and „they will never renounce the idea of a big Serbia. Germany must repulse all plans of a large Serbia. A Serbian army mustn’t be formed“.⁸¹

This was yet another useless attempt to obtain weapons from the Germans, even in limited quantities. Damjanović and Nedić believed it was still possible to create a national front. The Prime Minister publicly announced on August 31 that it was the duty of all the Serbs to join forces in the fight against communism: „*We must defend mother Serbia until the last one of us is alive. The Serbian people understood this well and they therefore came from all over to join a united anti-communist front. This front was realized today*“.⁸²

Nevertheless, something was done on unifying the national forces. A meeting was held in the government building in Belgrade on September 2 and the following people were present: General Kosta Mušicki, commandant of the SVC, General Borivoje Jonić, commandant of the SSG, Ivan Pavlović, commissary of the YAIF for Belgrade, and General Miodrag Damjanović who organized the meeting. They talked about uniting the Serbian national forces „because the political situation in the Balkans was changing from day to day“.

Since a fundamental consonance was reached, the very same day Colonel Radoslav Tatalović (SVC), Major Ljubiša Mikić and Major Dragiša Jeftić (SSG) went to the village of Pranjane to meet with General Mihailo-

⁷⁸ MA, *Government in exile*, 269–1/38–39.

⁷⁹ *Rat i mir đenerala*, II, 421.

⁸⁰ *Zbornik NOR-a*, XIV-4, 1074.

⁸¹ *Zbornik NOR-a*, XII-4, 527–532.

⁸² MA, *Nedić’s Archives*, 91–8–4.

vić. Mihailović received them with two of his officers present, lieutenant-Colonel Mirko Lalatović and Lieutenant Colonel Luka Baletić. The talks lasted for two days. They decided to unite all the national forces and join them with the YAIF. The SSG and the SVC would keep their earlier formations and their commanding officers. The agreement was to become valid on September 6.⁸³

The first result of this agreement came the very same day. In agreement with General Miroslav Trifunović, the commandant of Serbia, troops of the SSG and units of the Serbian Border Guard assembled in Jagodina, where the Serbian korps (SSC) consisting of three divisions was formed. General Stevan Radovanović was appointed the commandant of the SSC and General Jonić was his assistant. The SSC had a bit under 7000 men. The command of the YAIF was to have a different attitude towards the SSC, so General Trifunović issued orders not to “tamper with these units, take away their men and weapons or mistreat them. These parts of the armed forces have to be regarded as our troops”.⁸⁴

Apart from the fact that this decision came too late, it couldn't help in overcoming all the differences. Many officers of the YAIF were not able to wipe out the three year old hatred towards the government troops, especially towards the „volunteers“, and they didn't want to co-operate with the Germans at any price, not even when defeat was certain. A good illustration of this was the behaviour of Colonel Milutin Radojević, the commandant of the Toplica corps of the YAIF. Around the middle of September, the German command in Niš suggested to all the „national forces“ to take part in a joint battle against the NLAY and the Red Army. That suggestion was discussed at a meeting of the officers of the YAIF and the SSG in Gadžin Han on September 14. Radivojević stated: *„Even if we all lose our heads, and our men get killed as well, we can not and will not fight with the Germans against the Soviets, nor the communists, because the Germans are our enemy and our occupiers“*.⁸⁵

The unification of Serbian national forces was not achieved in full even at the end of the war, when communist danger was more than obvious. General Nedić and General Damjanović made an effort to reach such an agreement, although there were men in the Prime Minister's surroundings who were greatly opposed to co-operating with General Mihailović. Miroslav Vasiljević was one of them. He pointed out that the YAIF did a lot of

⁸³ Mirko Bojić, *Jugoslovenski narodni pokret Zbor 1935–1945*, Beograd 1996, 197.

⁸⁴ MA, (*Chetniks' Archives*, onward: CA), 77–4-10.

⁸⁵ MA, CA, 140–9-1/9.

damage to the Serbian national interests, especially by committing „horrible crimes against their own people – if Draža were a Serb, he wouldn't have done that. He calls himself a Serb and beats himself in the chest about being Serbian, but he doesn't work like a Serb, he is working on the annihilation of Serbs“.⁸⁶

The idea of creating a Serbian national army was thus definitely destroyed. The NLA triumphed in the civil war with the help of the Red Army and the communists became the rulers of Serbia.

General Damjanović stayed in Nedić's government until the very end. On October 2, the Prime Minister of the Serbian government under occupation summoned General Damjanović, General Jonić, General Mušicki and Colonel Ljudevit Pogačar to his cabinet and announced his last decision: „*The situation on our national issue is ruined. The Soviet Army is entering Serbia together with the communists who will take power. We must move ourselves out of the way. Members of my government and I are leaving for Austria. The volunteer's corps decided to go to Slovenia. You Jonić, the SSG, the SBG and the entire Serbian people I leave to Draža Mihailović, because you belonged to him from the very beginning. Let Draža take care of the destiny of the Serbian people*“.⁸⁷

General Damjanović decided to stay with Mihailović till the end. He met with Nikola Kalabić who was travelling through Kragujevac on October 4. He took Kalabić to see Nedić, who left Serbia the same day. General Damjanović took over the command of the Serbian Shock Corps on October 6, 1944. The SSC joined the units of the YAIF in their withdrawal towards Sandžak.

On the other side, Dimitrije Ljotić made a decision to group together all the anti-communist forces in the west of Yugoslavia: „*According to the present situation, we are given over to the Soviets and Tito. The Soviets will help Tito and wherever they find us – they'll burn us away. Despite of how much we dislike the Soviets, they are formally our allies and we will not fight against them [...] My plan is to retreat to Slovenia together with all the national combatants, where, I believe, we will meet with the allies. We are there also in our country and I don't think we are crossing any borders of our country and our people*“.⁸⁸

Ratko Parežanin, the former director of the Balkan Institute, went to Montenegro on October 4 to inform Pavle Djurišić about this decision and

⁸⁶ MA, *Nedić's Archives*, 57-1/8-1.

⁸⁷ According to: Đoko Slijepčević, *Jugoslavija uoči i za vreme Drugog svetskog rata*, Minhen 1978, 317.

⁸⁸ According to: B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 178-179.

to suggest that he also withdraws with his forces to Slovenia. Units of the Serbian Volunteer Corps started leaving Belgrade on October 8, while Ljotić left the city on October 12. The 5th regiment, under the command of Major Milorad Mojić, didn't retreat with the majority of the „volunteers“ because they were still fighting the partisans in the south of Serbia. They therefore independently started moving out by train from Leskovac to Slovenia. They arrived in Zagreb on December 6, where they were fraudulently captured by the Ustashas and killed on December 7. Major Mojić was among the 39 high ranking officers who were killed.⁸⁹

General Danjanović came to General Mihailović in the last months of the YAIF's existence. In the period of the outcome of the war, Mihailović first lost his position of Army Minister in the Yugoslav émigré government when Ivan Šubašić became the new Prime Minister (June 1, 1944), then he was relieved from the duty of Chief-of-Staff of the Supreme Command on August 29 by a decree from King Petar II Karadjordjević. After that came the famous speech which the Yugoslav Monarch gave on Radio London on September 12. After the Red Army entered Serbia, which definitely resolved the outcome of the civil war, Mihailović decided to temporarily withdraw with the Supreme Command to Bosnia until the Soviet danger „blows over“. The basic idea, which will prove to be an illusion, was that the outcome of the war will somehow be changed in favour of the national forces because of the expected conflict between the Soviet Union and the West.

When the partisans took definite control of Serbia, the majority of the remaining YAIF forces retreated to Bosnia. The decision to do so was brought in Ivanjica on October 21, at a meeting of the commanding officers of the YAIF. There was an idea of going to Montenegro, where a disembarkation of Anglo- American troops was expected, but at the end it was decided that they should go with the Supreme Command and Draža Mihailović.

The army, which was condemned to fail, started moving towards Sandžak on October 21. Mihailović still believed in the final victory, he asked of his officers and soldiers not to despair, to separate themselves from the Germans and strongly join together. But at the end of autumn 1944, his position became all the more difficult. The oncoming winter and the provisions problem were a threatening danger. The essential problem was: where to retreat and what is the purpose of further combat? Mihailović believed he should concentrate his troops in one or two secure areas where the YAIF would survive until the allies changed their politics.

⁸⁹ Borivije Karapandžić, *Građanski rat u Srbiji 1941–1945*, Beograd 1993, 388–389.

Damjanović spent the next two and a half months in the Serbian Command with General Miroslav Trifunović. Their goal was to reach northeast Bosnia, where there wouldn't be any problems with supplies. Mihailović's primary intention in that period was to gather his forces in one region, two at the most, so that he could have a large army at his disposal for his future plans. He therefore, in the middle of October, issued orders to Major Slavko Vranješević to start moving his troops from northwest Bosnia and the Vrbas valley to the north of central Bosnia, towards the river Bosnia. He later asked the Montenegro Chetniks, under the Command of Pavle Djurišić, to join him in northeast Bosnia.⁹⁰

Mihailović wrote a letter on October 8 to General Wilson, the supreme allied commandant of the Mediterranean, and suggested to put himself and all his troops under Wilson's command and take part in the offensive plans of the Anglo- American forces: *„I submit this petition to You, general Sir, on the behalf of all my soldiers, all the commanding officers and me personally and we hope you will understand the justifiableness of our offer and accept it“*.⁹¹ Nothing, naturally, became of that.

Mihailović refused all the suggestions to emigrate and decided to stay with his army and his people until the end, whatever the end might be like. His letter to Živko Topalović from November 18, 1944 showed that clearly: *„In your letter from September 2 you are conceiving, in the last case, our evacuation over there. However, the people will confirm, and so will I, a fight to the last one of us. Unfortunately, among a certain number of officers there is a desire go abroad. I most decisively repulse this idea. We must remain with the people. I thank you very much for your concern for my safety, but, to be straight with you, I am a fatalist and I believe every man's destiny is defined [...] We will continue our battle as God has thought us. We are deeply convinced that justice must win in the end. But, our suffering has no end and it is all the more difficult because it is undeserved“*.⁹²

Mihailović issued an order on December 1 to divide the YAIF into three armies: the Serbian army, the Croatian army and the Slovenian army: *„Units which are functioning separately under the name Chetnik Units, or other militias, are requested to subject themselves to military discipline and join the YAIF and obey the orders of the Supreme Command“*.⁹³ The meaning of this decision was to unite all the anti-communist and national forces.

⁹⁰ MA, CA, 14-2-47.

⁹¹ MA, CA, 20-5-31.

⁹² According to: Živko Topalović, *Pokreti narodnog otpora u Jugoslaviji 1941-1945*, Pariz 1958, 205.

The appointed commandants were: General Trifunović („djeneral Marko“), General Matija Parac („djeneral Gubec“) and Colonel Ivan Prezelj, promoted to general („djeneral Andrej“).⁹⁴

Forces from Serbia which were led by General Trifunović were supposed to come to Romania. Continuous retreat represented a real Golgotha. The flight of soldiers and the lethargy of the officers were bitter everyday occurrences. The dropping out first started in the units of the former Serbian government – SSC. On November 22, Trifunović directed his attention to the despair, to the weakening of fighting spirit and morale: „*A large number of officers expected to realize their personal ambitions if 'our cause' had won. Now, in moments of difficulties, instead of strengthening their will for accomplishing the idea which led us, despondency is starting to set in*“.⁹⁵

On November 26, General Jonić reported on the „disappointment and desperateness“ present among these people. They were listening to the news more and more about amnesty „which Marshal Tito announced daily. They are drawn to their homes and families with magnetic power. Roughness, threats, reprimands and executions by firing squads have no use here. Court-martials are not a remedy“.⁹⁶

In such a situation, General Damjanović went to the Supreme Command of the YAIF. He arrived in General Mihailović's headquarters in a small village near Sokolac on Saint Nikola day on December 19. Damjanović was immediately appointed his assistant: „*On the day of December 19, 1944, genera Miodrag J. Damjanović reported for duty. He was released from captivity under my orders and he was appointed to a duty which I had then determined. After his arrival with the commandant of Serbia, I ordain him my assistant*“.⁹⁷

Mihailović and Damjanović attended a divine service at the village church the same day. Milenko Solarić noted: „*Draža held a short speech. He mainly talked about his battle against 'nine enemies'. Now only one remains: the communists. He hopes he will also successfully end the fight against the communists, because at that time the English had already started to destroy the communists in Greece. He believed such a revulsion will also take place on the territory of Yugoslavia. He then said that all the allied missions had abandoned him, he has no contact with anybody, but the day will*

⁹³ MA, CA, 5–4–4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ MA, CA, 45–4–37.

⁹⁶ MA, CA, 102–5–14.

⁹⁷ MA, CA, 5–4–18. Orders issued by General Mihailović on December 19, 1944.

*come when the allies will look for Draža, but then – he added – he will maybe be no more. He further talked about the purpose of his retreat, explaining how it will be considered that the Chetniks liberated this territory and not the communists. He assured everyone that the winter could easily be survived in the valley of Prača, where there is enough food for all of us“.*⁹⁸

General Damjanović stayed by Mihailović's side at the headquarters of the Supreme Command of the YAIF until the middle of March 1945. They often signed orders and telegrams together, as was the case on December 23, when an attack was planned on Tuzla.⁹⁹ Forces from Serbia, the YAIF and units of the SSC participated in this action. The attacks lasted until November 28, and they only brought new casualties, so men from the former government troops left the YAIF for good. Forces under the command of Dragoslav Račić didn't participate in the attack and that brought about a revolt from the former SSG members. They therefore left the YAIF and went back to the Germans. By January 10, 1945, 3000 of them were already in Slavonski Brod waiting to be transported, and 2000 more came in the second half of January. The Germans transported most of them to Austria and sent them to work as labour battalions assigned to the TOT organization. A certain number of officers and about 1500 soldiers were taken to the coast of Slovenia where part of them were attached to the SVC units, while the other part joined the forces under the command of Momčilo Djujić.¹⁰⁰

What was to be done next? Miodrag Damjanović, together with the rest of the men in the Supreme Command, thought about it and at the beginning of 1945, they drew up a memorandum recommending the unification of all „national forces“ in Yugoslavia: „*Make contact with all the militias, Moslem and Catholic, with the goal to achieve a brotherly collaboration, to unite and win them over for our cause. Protect the people from the Ustasha slaughter and the communist terror. Now we have the time to organize a guerrilla warfare on the entire territory of Bosnia“.*¹⁰¹

General Damjanović spent his Christmas holidays accompanying General Mihailović and General Trifunović to lunch at Nikola Kalabić's headquarters. They talked about the momentary situation in the movement. The atmosphere was quite cheerless: „*A lowness of spirit among the officers and soldiers could be seen, because they are spending yet another Christ-*

⁹⁸ M. Solarić, *Naličje Bosanske golgote ili kako sam postao pripadnik SDK*. Zapisi iz dobrovoljačke borbe, II, Minhen 1955, 33.

⁹⁹ *Zbornik NOR-a*, Beograd 1985, XIV-4, 620.

¹⁰⁰ Jozo Tomašević, *Četnici u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, Zagreb 1979, 385.

¹⁰¹ MA, CA, 15-1-7.

*mas holiday under occupation, far away from their homes, their friends and their families. This is how it had to be“.*¹⁰²

TO SLOVENIA OR SERBIA

At the end of 1944, all the Slovenian anti-communist formations in Slovenia were united under the leadership of the SPP (Slovenian People's Party), and they had their own armed units – the Slovenian Legion. The National Committee began work at the middle of December and it consisted of representatives from the SPP (7members), the Liberal Party (6) and one socialist member. Jože Basaj from the SPP was chosen to be the President of the Committee and Dr. Celestin Jelenec from the SPY (Socialist Party of Yugoslavia) the vice-president. Along with two secretaries they were the chairmanship which led the committee.¹⁰³

The Chairmanship put together a *National Statement* about the political goals and it was published on December 20, 1944. The political programme was based on unifying the whole Slovenian national territory within the Federal Kingdom of Yugoslavia, under the sovereign crown of the Karadjordjević dynasty. The committee was constituted as the „temporary supreme national authority“.¹⁰⁴

Members of the committee met with General Prezelj, Mihailović's representative in Slovenia, on December 28. They informed him about the National Committee and its rights, and they emphasized that the committee had the supreme command of the „Slovenian armed forces“. They suggested that Mihailović should be the Chief-of-Staff of the Supreme Command „which belongs to the King, and in that way he would get a formal legitimacy on the territory of Slovenia“. ¹⁰⁵ This standpoint of the National Committee was valid all up to the end of WW II.

The National Committee ordered the formation of the Slovenian National Army on January 4, 1945, and General Prezelj was appointed the commandant. Lieutenant Colonel Mirko Bitenc, commandant of the Slovenian Legion, was his assistant. General Prezelj was predicted to become the commandant of the entire YAIF in Slovenia, and Dimitrije Ljotić agreed,

¹⁰² *Zbornik NOR-a*, XIV-4, 904.

¹⁰³ *Slovenska novejša zgodovina 1848–1992*, Ljubljana 2005, I, 762.

¹⁰⁴ Boris Mlakar, *Slovenački kontrarevolucionarni i kolaboracionistički tabor pri kraju rata*, „Vojnoistorijski glasnik“, 3/1990, 168–169.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

but not Mihailović, who appointed General Miodrag Damjanović. The National Committee therefore, in March 1945, appointed Franc Krener the commanding officer of the Slovenian National Army, who was promoted to the rank of general at the same time.¹⁰⁶

General Mihailović naively believed up to the very end that the West wouldn't leave Yugoslavia to absolute communist domination, so he considered the survival of the YAIF in Serbia the most important issue. He was therefore energetically against the creation of refugee collecting centres in Istra and the Slovenian seashore, which became no man's land after the capitulation of Italy.

Dobrosav Jevdjević, and about 2000 of his Chetniks from Lika, were the first ones to arrive to this territory. After retreating from Serbia, the „volunteers“ also found accommodation there, along with Dimitrije Ljotić. Ljotić didn't accept General Trifunović's call to go to Sandžak and further on to Bosnia together with the Serbian State Guard and the Serbian Command. He also refused to go to Montenegro with Pavle Djurišić and the I Volunteer Corps. About 5000 „volunteers“ came by train across Srem to Slovenia.¹⁰⁷

The Dinara Chetnik Division, under the command of Momčilo Djujčić, came to this territory at the end of 1944, after retreating from the Serbian district of Dalmatia. They began movement on December 1, from Knin to Lika, and they penetrated the partisan encirclement near Padjen. Three armies met in Škrljevo on December 29.¹⁰⁸ After fleeing from the YAIF in December 1944, 1600 men from the Serbian State Guard went to Primorska and joined the „volunteers“.

Ilirska Bistrica and Postojna became attractive destinations for many nationally oriented people and combatants who were looking for shelter. Groups of people from various parts of Yugoslavia, as well as ex-prisoners of war from German camps arrived on a daily basis. Patriarch Gavrilo Dožić and Episcopo Nikolaj Velimirović arrived from Vienna. They were released from the German camp Damao at the beginning of December 1944, thanks to the effort of Hermann Neubacher, the special German representative for southeast Europe.¹⁰⁹ He spoke to Dimitrije Ljotić and Boško Kostić about that in Vienna on December 11. Ljotić asked Neubacher to enable the Serbian Patriarch to come to Vienna, and it was done.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

¹⁰⁷ Ž. Topalović, *Pokreti narodnog otpora*, 172–173.

¹⁰⁸ Boško Kostić, *Za istoriju naših dana*, Lil 1949, 189.

¹⁰⁹ Herman Nojbaher, *Specijalni zadatak Balkan*, Beograd 2004, 177.

¹¹⁰ Radmila Radić, *Život u vremenima: Gavrilo Dožić (1881–1950)*, Beograd 2006, 285.

Dimitrije Ljotić was the political master of this refugee camp. It seemed like he made an effort to contact Patriarch Gavriilo and Episcopo Nikolaj in order to use them to make contact with the British. Ljotić's close associate wrote: „*In order to realize his plan of a free territory, Ljotić wanted to get the approval of the British. He felt that Patriarch Gavriilo and Episcopo Nikolaj Velimirović were the best choice to make this contact it was agreed that they should go to Switzerland where they would contact the British. That day, Ljotić was to go to Gorica and have a meeting with them to finalize the agreement*“.¹¹¹

Ljotić promoted the officers, he was in charge of provisions and all the financing was in his hands. His office was in Vienna and all the contacts with the German military and civil authorities went through that office. His political opponents accused him of being a „small king“ of Julijska Krajina and that he wanted to create a „small Yugoslavia“ with him as the leader.¹¹²

According to Ljotić's idea, all these forces should be united by the idea of national Yugoslavians and to create a free territory close to the western allies, and far enough from the advancing Red army. This zone, some kind of a new Salonika Front, would be the foundation of King Petar's return to Yugoslavia and a real competition to the communists. It was believed, although less and less, that the Anglo-American troops will enter into the western parts of Yugoslavia.

Patriarch Gavriilo and Episcopo Nikolaj took an active part in the realization of this plan. They counted on the help of the so-called Russian Liberation Army under the command of Andrej Andrejevič Vlasov. The Slovenian National Committee was supposed to promulgate the restitution of the „People's (National) State of Slovenia“ after the Germans leave and before the troops of the NLAY arrive, and invite King Petar to take over command. The western allies would be asked not to allow the partisans to enter Slovenia.

Mihailović knew about this plan because he was in close contact with Bishop Rožman. However, the plan was not performable because the Tito-Šubašić agreement was already confirmed at the allied conference in Jalta and King Petar was under firm British control. It was unrealistic to hope that at least this part of Yugoslavia will stay free of communists and be ready for the conflict between the western allies and the Yugoslav communists. It seemed natural to think that this conflict would take place right after Germany's defeat. It was obvious that most of the people in Slovenia and Serbia do not support the communists and that this fact would be taken into

¹¹¹ Hrvoje Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće. Sjećanja*, Split 2002, 193–194.

¹¹² Ž. Topalović, *Pokreti narodnog otpora*, 174.

consideration by the allies. But, the destiny of Yugoslav anti-communists and nationalists, as well as the destiny of Eastern Europe, has long been decided upon. Moreover, the Yugoslav national forces were already disunited enough among themselves.

Mihailović fundamentally disagreed with this plan and refused to retreat with his troops to Slovenia. He wrote to Momčilo Djujić on December 25, 1944, explaining why he doesn't want to leave his terrain and go to Istra: „*Civil refugees who need saving should be sent to Slovenia. Soldiers must continue to fight on the whole territory of Yugoslavia. Our soldiers must not, under any circumstances, become refugees or serve the occupiers. We must fight to the very end. You therefore must separate the refugees from the soldiers and find a safe shelter for them. We mustn't be concerned with other fronts. The Croatian population should be treated in such a way which will win them over to our side, in the spirit of the Saint Sava congress resolution*“.¹¹³

Once the grouping of the national forces was completed, Mihailović sent a telegram dated February 24, 1945 to Momčilo Djujić, emphasizing the great importance of „maintaining the national direction and loyalty to the allies“. He advised Djujić to help the Slovenian forces to a maximum degree „but only if they ask for help, do not interfere in matters of politics because the Slovenians are very sensitive in that field“. The acknowledgment Mihailović received from the Slovenian National Committee was very important to him and he asked Djujić to put himself under the command of General Ivan Prezelj, „because at the given moment, which can come at any time, you must take control of all the Slovenian and Italian territories, all the way up to Taljament if possible. That would help the expansion of Slovenian territory according to their national aspirations. The partisans must therefore be defeated in that part of Italy, as well as in Slovenia“.¹¹⁴

The situation got only more complicated at the end of February, 1945. The Montenegro Chetniks came to the valley of the Bosnia river and the Trebava district with a mass of refugees. A meeting of all the military commandants and members of the National Committee was held at Pavle Djurišić's headquarters (*Headquarters for Montenegro, Boka and Stari Ras*) on February 21. It was concluded that the partisan forces were greater in number and provisions, so any further battles would lead to the destruction of the troops. Long marches, poor nutrition, physical exhaustion, large casualties, plenty of wounded and sick men, weakened considerably the Monte-

¹¹³ MA, CA, 276-1-6.

¹¹⁴ *Zbornik NOR-a*, XIV-4, 942-943.

negro Chetniks, so it was therefore decided to start moving towards the west part of Yugoslavia and wait until „a change of politics in our favour“ takes place. Mihailović was asked to take all his Chetnik troops, together with the Supreme Command, to Slovenia: „*At this moment, when even the time of year is in our favour, we must undertake strong offensive action which will make the foreign political community take interest and force them to find a solution to our internal issue*“.¹¹⁵

Mihailović's response was very severe. He believed that Pavle Djurišić's decisions were influenced by the fact that he had a large number of refugees with him. Mihailović asked him to find safe shelter for these civilians so the soldiers could continue fighting. Djurišić was accused of stretching his authority, while Mihailović decisively refused to „instruct the Supreme Command to order the concentration of our troops in the west part of our country“.¹¹⁶

This problem was the reason the CNC (Central National Committee) held a meeting, for the last time, on March 12, 1945 in the village of Kožuhama. Dragiša Vasić was the only one to support Djurišić's intention to continue retreating towards Slovenia, where all the national forces would be concentrated and this territory would be protected as a national oasis in Yugoslavia. Since this suggestion was declined, Vasić left the Supreme Command of the YAIF for good. General Damjanović submitted a report at this meeting about the political situation in Yugoslavia and the Balkans. Mustafa Muletić, vice-president of the CNC, at his trial on July 29, 1945 said the following: „*I requested that we act according to the Crimea Conference conclusions, but General Damjanović submitted a very optimistic report on the situation in the country. That was one of my reasons for leaving Draža Mihailović*“.¹¹⁷

General Mihailović requested the conclusion of the commenced operation of taking over the left bank of the Bosnia river, but Djurišić and *The National Committee of Former Military Officers and Intellectuals of Montenegro, Boka and Stari Ras* decided to go to Slovenia without the approval of the Supreme Command.

¹¹⁵ MA, CA, 138–4–13.

¹¹⁶ MA, CA, 6–3–9. A letter sent to P. Djurišić on March 3, 1945.

¹¹⁷ *Suđenje članovima političkog i vojnog rukovodstva organizacije Draže Mihailovića*, Beograd 1945, 90. – It was stated in the indictment at this trial that General Damjanović talked about a conflict between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union which was to come very soon and it would change the situation in favour of our national movement. (*Ibid.*, 428).

Ljotić tried to convince Mihailović to retreat with his forces to Slovenia so that a unique national anti-communist front could be created. A large delegation left Ilirska Bistrica on February 28 to go see Mihailović and negotiate with him on this matter.¹¹⁸ The delegation arrived on March 15, and Ljotić suggested that all the national forces should be put under the command of General Prezelj for political and tactical reasons. Mihailović however, stuck to his earlier decision to return to Serbia with the remainders of his army.

Nevertheless, something was agreed upon: Mihailović appointed General Damjanović the commandant of the special section of the Supreme Command for Slovenia (Gorski headquarters 1v) on March 16, with the task to put all the national forces under his command: „*General Damjanović is to form his staff from men that he will take with him from here and men from troops on the terrain*“.¹¹⁹ All the national forces in Istra and Slovenia were to be under his command: the Dinara Chetnik division (under the command of Momčilo Djujić), the I Lika Corps (under the command of Dobrosav Jevdjević), the SVC, the so-called Croatian Army (under the command of General Matija Parc) and the Slovenian National Army (under the command of Ivan Prezelj).

Mihailović sent letters through Boško Kostić to Ljotić, Djujić and Jevdjević. The common thought in all the messages was in the letter to Jevdjević: „*It is of the greatest importance to our struggle to achieve unity of all the national forces. We should all work on this together. Help each other in a brotherly manner. That is all I can say to you*“.¹²⁰

Mihailović intended to send all the people arriving from captivity, who were successively being released all over Europe, to the Slovenian seashore. That was a suitable location because it was close to Italy and Germany, and because there was a large quantity of weapons and ammunition there. Several thousand officers and tens of thousands of soldiers returned from captivity. Mihailović relied upon his decree from February 5, when he set the formations and the officer personnel of the army in captivity, divided the operational zones and gave out particular tasks. They were Mihailović's last hope at this period. He asked of them to stand in the defence of their fatherland in these crucial moments: „*I call on all the officers, non-commissioned officers, corporals and soldiers in German prisoner of war camps to use all possible means to get out of the camps and join the national forces of*

¹¹⁸ B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 206.

¹¹⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Authorization no. 300.

¹²⁰ According to: B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 220.

their choice, especially the forces that are now in Slovenia. Efforts of all the national elements are needed in this war and in the ongoing battles in our fatherland. Your help will be precious to us. Don't be bystanders, the salvation of our people is at stake“.¹²¹

The next day (March 17), General Damjanović was appointed to head a delegation, with Lieutenant Colonel Ljubomir Jovanović and lieutenant Colonel Siniša Ocokoljić as members. Their task was to gather the remainders of the Serbian national forces and to make contact with the allied commands „because of mutual actions and operations“.¹²² General Mihailović still believed the western allies would help him in his struggle, so General Damjanović was supposed to unite under his command all the national forces in Slovenia.

The delegation was to make all the preparations so General Miroslav Trifunović could take over command of these forces as planned by Mihailović. However, Mihailović didn't have troops loyal to him on this territory, only three reliable officers were all he had. Damjanović's command was even weaker and more formal than the one Mihailović once had over the Chetniks in the Italian occupying zone. Djujić and Jevdjević held a strict command of their troops and they acknowledged only Dimitrije Ljotić because they depended on him for provisions.¹²³

Mihailović sent a message through General Damjanović to Episcopo Nikolaj on March 18, thanking him for his blessing: „*I can joyfully inform you that I have a firm standpoint and I see the need for unity of the entire Serbian people in the struggle for total freedom. I can inform you that unity has already been achieved on the field [...] All the upright sons of our people are with us here today, conducting a difficult but honourable struggle, doing only what our people wish and want us to do [...] In my opinion, it would be very useful if you were to go to Switzerland and then further on to the USA, where you could make contact with all the sides without any difficulties. I think it still isn't the right time for you to visit England because your work there would be fettered, since there are no changes in their politics so far, although it is expected to happen soon. My combatants and I thank you deeply for your blessings and your greetings and we ask you to pray to God for success in our struggle*“.¹²⁴

¹²¹ According to: B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 224.

¹²² *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Mihailović's orders issued on March 17, 1945.

¹²³ Ž. Topalović, *Pokreti narodnog otpora*, 178.

¹²⁴ According to: *Knjiga o Draži*. Edited by Radoje L. Knežević, Windsor 1956, II, 253–254.

General Damjanović and members of the delegation who had talked to Mihailović left for Slovenia. On the way they ran into the Montenegro Chetniks and Damjanović had a short visit with Pavle Djurišić. They arrived in Postojna on March 26. Damjanović immediately talked to Ljotić, General Mušicki and Lieutenant Colonel Tatalović. In the evening, before they went to Damjanović's headquarters in Ilirska Bistrica, a special supper was organized for Damjanović, Ljotić, Djujić, Jevdjević and Matija Parac.¹²⁵ It was announced in Postojna the next day that from now on all the national forces in Slovenia will be called the „Royal Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland“. A special section of the Supreme Command for this army was formed and General Damjanović was appointed its commanding officer.¹²⁶ General Parac and Mihailović's commandants Jovanović and Ocokoljić held speeches at the gathering.

General Damjanović and Ljotić visited the National Committees in Slovenia and Primorje, and then went on to Ljubljana to a meeting with the Slovenian National Committee. They decided to send two delegations to Italy in order to make contact with the Anglo-American forces. The first delegation was headed by Major Siniša Ocokoljić, and General Damjanović escorted them to Trieste. Contact wasn't established and both groups were interned to Switzerland. Damjanović met with Hermann Neubacher in Trieste at the end of March.¹²⁷

The German diplomat estimated that Ljotić convinced his „volunteers“ that it wouldn't be „fair and manly“ to attack the Germans at the end of the war because the Germans previously supplied them with weapons: „*I am under the impression that Djujić has the same standpoint as Ljotić. I expected Jevdjević to carry out orders issued by Draža Mihailović, who was in Bosnia at the time. According to my assessments, Jevdjević could be the most dangerous threat to the Germans only in the case if Draža Mihailović was left in the lurch by the western allies. In this event he could influence Ljotić's and Djujić's combatants. One thing was clear, all three groups will surrender to the Americans or the English, once they arrive*“.¹²⁸

Damjanović then sent word to Mihailović and informed him on the situation. Mihailović replied by telegram on March 31: „*I am happy to hear that you have reached the determined place. We have received flour and beans but we haven't received any ammunition. Urge from there for ammuni-*

¹²⁵ B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 233.

¹²⁶ B. Karapandžić, *Građanski rat u Srbiji*, 404–405.

¹²⁷ B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 240.

¹²⁸ H. Nojbaher, *Specijalni zadatak*, 182.

tion if you can. Rely on Djujić's station for now. How are Ljuba Patak and Ocokoljić? Lots of regards from all of us".¹²⁹

Damjanović immediately tried to acquire weapons and ammunition to send to Mihailović's combatants and he worked intensively on making contact with the Slovenian National Committee. General Mihailović didn't approve of sending missions to the Anglo-American forces. In a telegram dated April 1, he asked Damjanović to regularly inform him about all the activities undertaken on the territory of Slovenia and Istra: „Do everything, as you have started, to organize our people. It will be of great damage to you if Pavle [Djurišić] comes there. He has no combative worth. His men are extremely destructive. Work on getting us food and ammunition. We didn't receive any ammunition yet, the food we received has been eaten. Inform me on the connections you have made with the National Counsel in Ljubljana. You should hurry with that. I don't believe you can get an allied mission to come to you. An allied mission will never come while the Germans are on that territory. We are very troubled with the mission you gave to Ocokoljić. I'm afraid his mission will turn into a total failure. Retain him. Inform me what you expect to accomplish with him. We have a better knowledge of the allies' point of view. We therefore don't have to undertake any unavailing actions".¹³⁰

In the meantime, Patriarch Gavrilo and Episcopo Nikolaj were transported from Vienna to Gorica on March 31, 1945. They first went to Felden on April 1, where they stayed as Hermann Neubacher's guests for a week. They met with General Damjanović, Ljotić, Djujić, Jevdjević, Djoko Slijepčević and Stevan Ivanić on the same day. After that they went to Djujić's headquarters and made a tour of the SVC troops.¹³¹

Damjanović and Momčilo Djujić visited the troops in Ilirska Bistrica at the beginning of April. Djujić informed his men with a telegram: „These days he is making inspections of the Volunteer Corps and our IV Corps (under the command of Duke Jevdjević). I have a meeting with him in Trieste again tomorrow, whence we have to send our delegates to the V American Army front to establish contact. I was ordered to do so by Čiča [Draža Mihailović]".¹³²

Damjanović was making inspections, and march-pasts where possible. Djujić accepted completely Damjanović's command: „The comman-

¹²⁹ Zbornik NOR-a, XIV-4, 964.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 967.

¹³¹ P. Radić, *Gavrilo Dožić*, 291.

¹³² Zbornik NOR-a, XIV-4, 863.

dants will report to him. We will first visit the corps headquarters, so the commandants should line up the corps groups and the brigades within the corps if possible. The general will explain the situation in the country and our future tasks. We hope to find everything is well and as it should be“.¹³³

Damjanović regularly informed the Supreme Command and General Mihailović of all the activities, and that Ljotić asked Neubacher to enable Patriarch Gavriilo and Episcopo Nikolaj to go to Switzerland, and later on to England or the U. S. A. Mihailović informed Damjanović on April 3 that he is going to send part of his men, and Jovan Andrić with a radio-station, to Slovenia: „I completely agree with the Patriarch’s and Nikolaj’s departure abroad. Will Pazarac [Siniša OcoKoljić] be able to do anything? What directives and instructions did you give him?“¹³⁴

Patriarch Gavriilo and Episcopo Nikolaj deemed that a Yugoslav government should be organized in Slovenia even with a secret consonance from King Petar. Ljotić and Damjanović sojourned in Felden and Trieste again on April 5. The same day Mihailović asked Damjanović to „urgently inform“ him on the intentions of the German army: „and also, what you are undertaking. With what goal did Pazarac leave? What do you expect from that? I expect urgent reports on all issues of the situation. Stay in close contact with us and keep us informed“.¹³⁵

Although Mihailović refused to join the anti-communist front in Slovenia, Dimitrije Ljotić still insisted on the urgent arrival of all the troops to this territory: „I’m afraid you’ll be destroyed“. He was sceptical towards Mihailović’s intention to set in motion an uprising in Serbia: „The uprising will be suffocated in blood and deprived of a national leader due to shortage of ammunition, and the primary enthusiasm will turn into despair and you will be blamed for what they wished for themselves“.¹³⁶

Mihailović remained consistent: „We long for Serbia. That is our goal. I expect you all to start moving here with all your forces. That will make your position there easier. Before you start moving, help us in materials as much as you can. Actions on our territory are developing in our favour. We must create a strong guerrilla on the entire territory of Yugoslavia“.¹³⁷ It became clear very soon just how unrealistic these plans were. Mihailović never reached Serbia.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 968.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 969.

¹³⁶ According to: B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 236.

¹³⁷ MA, CA, 276–1–6.

In the small amount of time which he spent on this territory, General Damjanović organized a course for the officers which was much needed by the Chetniks of the Dinara Division and Jevdjević's group. Commandants of battalions and brigades were mostly men without any adequate military education. Contrary to the commanding officers of the SVC who all had official ranks, the Chetnik commandants didn't have any. A contemporary wrote they recruited officers from „men who could jump the highest and could throw a stone the farthest and were faster and more dextrous than the enemy“.¹³⁸

Damjanović made contact with Lav Rupnik, the general inspector of the Slovenian Home-Guard. Rupnik was working intensively on the plans to end the war on Slovenian territory. The last defence was to be in the northwest of Gorenjska, and he planned to link up with the Serbian forces from Primorje. That was agreed upon on April 8, 1945, at a meeting attended by Rupnik, Damjanović, General Parac, Lieutenant Colonel Tatalović and Boško Kostić. Rupnik wanted to take over the supreme command of all the forces, but the Slovenian National Committee did not agree.¹³⁹

General Damjanović finally formed his headquarters On April 15, 1945: „*Accepting the duty of the commandant I feel it's necessary to point out once again – to all the officers and soldiers – the importance of joining all our forces in a unique national front: we are in the most decisive and the most fatal period of the great battle in Europe, the end is so close so all the parts of the Yugoslav Army In the Fatherland must be ready and aware that this will be the end of the holy struggle for our national ideals: for freedom, for our King, for our fatherland and our home*“.¹⁴⁰

Damjanović especially emphasized that the national troops in Istra and Slovenia are in a much better position than the forces of General Mihailović and the Montenegro Chetniks, and he expected them to perform their duties: „*Your troops here are attired and shod, rested and fed, well armed and supplied with everything you need for battle, and what's most important, they are concentrated on the free territory in the part of the Yugoslav Kingdom closest to our western allies. An important, honourable task awaits us: to prevent the penetration of Tito's hordes into these beautiful parts, where we represent, not only symbolically, the strength of our future Yugoslav Army, to wait here for the arrival of the Royal Army and allies from*

¹³⁸ David Damjanović, *Od Knina u Dalmaciji do Palma Nove u Italiji*, Spomenica Dinarske četničke divizije 1941–1945, Toronto 1983, 484.

¹³⁹ *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, I, 773.

¹⁴⁰ MA, CA, 6–5–7.

*Italy, and with their support hurry to join the rest of our national forces and then together put an end to the uninvited ones in Belgrade, under whose tyranny Serbia is groaning“.*¹⁴¹

However, nothing from this ambitious plan was realized. The war destiny of the Yugoslav national forces has long been decided upon and the final outcome came very soon. The realization of the plan was obstructed by the death of Dimitrije Ljotić in Gorica on April 23. General Miodrag Damjanović attended the funeral on April 25, and he brought a wreath made of flowers on Mihailović's behalf.¹⁴²

An offensive of the IV Army of the NLAY took place on April 27, and its main goal was to conquer Trieste and the Slovenian seaside. The German army (the 97th army corps) retreated, so General Damjanović ordered the retreat of all the national forces to the right bank of the river Soča on April 29. The Serbian Volunteer Corps and the Bosnian Corps of the Dinara Division, under the command of General Mušicki, were supposed to insure the protection of all the troops retreating from Vipava valley across Gorica to Čividale. The task of the Lika Corps was to safeguard the Vipava valley, from the village of Vipava to the village of Cernica, from attacks by partisan forces. Jevdjević was supposed to defend the line of retreat in the direction Vrabac–San Daniel–Rifenberg–Montespino. The Dalmatian Corps was protecting the line Cernica–Rifenberg across Montespino to Gorica. Refugees and the commissariat service were moving along the line Sveti Vid–Vipava–Ajdoščina–Montespino–Gorica towards the right bank of the river Soča. Movement was to begin exactly at midnight, between the 29th and the 30th of April.¹⁴³

The Croatian Army received special orders to conquer the bridge on the river Soča. Immediately after crossing the river, General Damjanović renamed the Serbian Volunteer Corps into the Šumadija Division, probably due to fear of the allies' reaction to the old name.¹⁴⁴

The commandants in the refugee camps came to a decision to leave Yugoslavia without the approval of General Mihailović. The withdrawal was executed in great secrecy and speed, even the Slovenian National Committee wasn't informed. Živko Topalović thought the decision was wrong. On one occasion he asked Jakov Ljotić about that: „Why brother, for God's sake, did you not only leave the country with all that manpower, but you al-

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 258.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 259–260.

¹⁴⁴ B. Karapandžić, *Građanski rat u Srbiji*, 219.

so took an immense quantity of weapons and ammunition with you, and left those who wanted to fight without anything to fight with? „Jevdjević bewildered us. He insisted: let's go, let's go! And so we left! What happened happened“.¹⁴⁵

THE MASSACRE IN SLOVENIA

The Yugoslav war drama experienced its bloody epilogue in the spring of 1945. All the non-communist military formations were being surrounded and destroyed. Contact with the West wasn't established and the partisan forces were in a hurry to take vengeance with all four of their armies. Troops which were not under the command of General Damjanović had a tragic destiny – the Slovenian Home Guardsmen, parts of the „Volunteers“, the Montenegro Chetniks and all of those who didn't succeed in getting across to Italy, somewhere between 12.000 and 15.000 people. The „volunteers“ were divided into two groups, and the first Operational Group, consisting of three „volunteer“ regiments and about 500 of Jevdjević's Chetniks, under the command of Colonel Radoslav Tatalović, launched an action on April 11, the biggest one since they retreated from Serbia. Their task was to make a breakthrough towards Kordun and Bosanska Krajina and meet with the Montenegro Chetniks in order to alleviate their movement towards the Slovenian seaside. It is not very clear whether this was Damjanović's decision or one General Mušicki made independently.¹⁴⁶

The strongest part of their military formation was then set in motion through the territory where the partisans were advancing from the other side, charging towards the northwest borders of Yugoslavia. Continuous battles took place against the superior IV Yugoslav Army and, at the end of April, all contact was lost with the troops of Pavle Djurišić, who the Ustasas had already executed. After hearing of the massive losses the Montenegro Chetniks had suffered, they started moving back to the Slovenian seaside, fighting the partisans again along the way. It was then decided to retreat towards Austria. The Caravan Mountains were crossed in the first ten days of May, and on May 12 three regiments surrendered to the British in the village of Unterbergen on the river Drau.¹⁴⁷ Thereupon, surrender to the English forces was carried out in the Vetrinje camp near Celovec: „Along the

¹⁴⁵ Ž. Topalović, *Pokreti narodnog otpora*, 181–182.

¹⁴⁶ Slavko Maslar, *Zapisi iz građanskog rata 1941–1951*, Beograd 1998, 52.

¹⁴⁷ B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 247.

*road, on the edge of a shallow grass channel, we lined out our rifles, machine-guns, handguns, ammunition boxes. All in black rows. Here, on the humid fields of Koruška, was the end to arms and war“.*¹⁴⁸

At the same time, the Slovenian national forces, the *Slovenian National Army* under the command of General Franc Krener, were disarmed by the British and brought to the Vetrinje camp. After the German forces retreated from Slovenia, the Temporary Slovenian Parliament, which had 39 members, met on May 3. The Slovenian government was formed, Slovenia was proclaimed a component of the federative Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and the „Slovenian National Army“ was to join the „Yugoslav Royal Army“. King Petar was invited to return to „the territory free of enemies“.¹⁴⁹

General Damjanović was informed of these decisions on May 4.¹⁵⁰ Nothing became of that plan. The allies didn't plan to come with their forces to Slovenia, and General Damjanović was no longer in a position to make any decisions at all.

King Petar was a British captive, the Serbian anti-communists were already in Italy, while the partisans were here. Bishop Rožman, therefore, asked Damjanović to inform the allied command in Italy of the situation, so they could prevent „further bloodshed and the extinction of the Slovenian people“ by sending their troops here.¹⁵¹

Under these conditions, the Slovenian national combatants also crossed the river Drava on May 9, and found shelter on Austrian territory where the British troops were already situated. They were immediately disarmed and placed into camps. The Slovenian commandants were promised on May 11 that the British military authorities will protect the „Slovenian National Army“ and the Slovenian National Committee thanked the British military command in writing on May 17, for taking into protection the Slovenian Army and the refugees.¹⁵²

The allied Supreme Command had already determined its general standpoint towards the Yugoslav anti-communists on March 20, 1945. The aspiration of the anti-communists to fight together with the allied forces against Nazism was rejected, as were all the initiatives of General Mihailović from 1944. They were to be disarmed and held as refugees. Their last effort to be accepted as part of the allied coalition was made by the heteroge-

¹⁴⁸ S. Maslar, *Zapisi iz građanskog rata*, 73.

¹⁴⁹ B. Mlakar, *Slovenački tabor*, 172.

¹⁵⁰ B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 216.

¹⁵¹ According to: B. Kostić, *Za istoriju*, 261.

¹⁵² Živko Topalović, *Jugoslavija – žrtvovani saveznik*, London 1970, 165.

neous Yugoslav anti-communist front on April 28, 1945, when Miha Krek, General Marko Mihailović and Živko Topalović visited the Allied Supreme Command for the Mediterranean. Ralph Stevenson, the British ambassador in Belgrade, informed the Foreign Office the very same day, that these people „have discredited themselves by openly co-operating with the Germans“ and is only trying to „rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the British and American commandants“. His recommendation was to disarm these combatants and to place them in refugee camps.¹⁵³

The British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed with that the next day. Intensive discussions were going on in the allied forces headquarters in Kaserta, on what was to be done with the Yugoslav anti-communist formations. Then, for the first time, indications appeared that these troops should be „handed over to Tito“ in order to avoid responsibility. The State Department's interpretation arrived on May 2: these forces were to be disarmed and taken to refugee camps. The British VIII Army issued a directive, in the same spirit, on May 3.¹⁵⁴

The behaviour of the British side changed drastically very soon. British ambassador Harold MacMillan had the most important role in the decision to hand over a large number of Yugoslavs to the Yugoslav authorities. He visited the British military command in Treviso and Celovec on May 12–13. Talks included the problem of „Yugoslav anti-partisan forces“ which were in Austria. General Brain Robertson, head of the administrative section of the Supreme Command in Kaserta, issued a directive to the British VIII Army: all the Yugoslavs „who served the German army“ should be disarmed and surrendered to the Yugoslav Army.¹⁵⁵

A large number of war prisoners were executed by the British and Yugoslav forces very soon after that, in spite of the fact that on May 15 the State Department requested that the previously agreed upon allied politics should be honoured. The war prisoners were therefore handed over in secrecy. On May 17, the British 5th Corps received permission to return all „the Yugoslav nationalists“ from their territory to Yugoslavia. They were to be disarmed, „but not told where they would be going“. According to the book of dispatches of the 26th Yugoslav Army Division, the British informed them (May 17) that „about 32.000 Ustashas and Chetniks“ would be delivered to them.

¹⁵³ According to: Staniša R. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi 1941–1948. Dokumenta iz britanske arhive*, Birmingen 1985, 349.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 355.

The headquarters of the 11th Dalmatian brigade sent the IV battalion to Podrošci the next day, with the task to secure the area around the railway station, while one platoon was sent to Jesenice to cover the arrival of the prisoners.¹⁵⁶ The British and the Yugoslav side reached a final agreement on May 19, 1945.¹⁵⁷

The takeover was performed in the period between May 23 and May 31. The British military command notified the Yugoslav officers in the camp on May 23, that all the men should be ready to be transferred and join the Special Section of the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army in Italy. Thus, an impression was created to make the men think they were being sent to join the forces under the command of General Damjanović.

The prisoners were put into trucks and taken to the railway station „Marija Elend“, whence they continued their journey to the border by train. They were very surprised when partisan guards suddenly appeared because nobody noticed them while they were boarding the train. Among these men there were 3000 Serbian „volunteers“ (the 1st, 2nd and 4th Regiment of the SVC), 12.000 Slovenian Home Guardsmen with their families, 2500 Croats and about 250 Chetniks.¹⁵⁸ In the next few days another 6000 Yugoslav prisoners were handed over: „Once the train came out of the tunnel and was slowing down in order to stop, we were terrified, nearly shocked, when we saw we were entering a wagon full of armed partisans. Straight among their gun barrels. They were standing on the wagon-platforms or on the ground with machine-guns in their hands. We could clearly see their five-pointed red stars with a hammer and sickle on their hats“.¹⁵⁹

The death train first stopped in Jesenice and it was immediately surrounded by combatants with five-pointed stars, partisans from the 11th Dalmatian Brigade. The 1st brigade of the 16th Vojvodina Division also arrived in Jesenice. They were all astounded by the total change of their destiny. A contemporary wrote: „The partisans were howling – Oh well it’s you, Nedić’s men! They scolded and cursed. How are you, comrades?“¹⁶⁰

Uncertainty was fully present. One of those who survived wrote the following: „Cars and automobiles, houses and passers-by, were quickly passing by our truck. There we were, in Celovec. We didn’t stop. Unknown

¹⁵⁶ Bojan Dimitrijević, *Građanski rat u miru. Uloga armije i službe bezbednosti u obračunu sa političkim protivnicima Titovog režima 1944–1954*, Beograd 2003, 53.

¹⁵⁷ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 357.

¹⁵⁸ Branislav Kovačević, *Od Vezirovog do Zidanog Mosta. Tragična sudbina crnogorskih četnika u završnoj fazi rata 1944–1945*, Beograd 1993, 143–144.

¹⁵⁹ S. Maslar, *Zapisi iz građanskog rata*, 85.

¹⁶⁰ According to: B. Dimitrijević, *Građanski rat u miru*, 52.

*places remained behind us. Suddenly, we saw a bridge on the river Drava: - Drava, Drava! – Excited outcries could be heard. We went downhill to the wooden bridge. We crossed it. What did that mean? Surrender to Tito? Unbelievable! [...] Our eyes were aimed at the platform. You could hardly see any Englishmen. The train was starting to move. We were standing in front of the railroad station building. Suddenly there was silence, dead-silence, and consternation. Our glances froze, the door of the waiting-room hastily opened and about 40 partisans ran out and jumped onto the platforms of our wagon. A colourful, ruffled crowd entered our wagon. One of them introduced himself: intelligence officer of some Dalmatian unit“.*¹⁶¹

At that time „Marshal Tito“, the leader of communist Yugoslavia, was in Ljubljana. Major Simo Dubajić reported these events to him on May 25. Years later, Dubajić said the following: „I went to his villa to inform him of what had happened there. After that, at midnight, Maček [Ivan Matija, head of the Committee for the Protection of the People for Slovenia], Maks Baće, some other Montenegrins and one of Ranković’s assistants came to my hotel in Šentvid. I think it was Jovo Kapičić. I don’t know exactly. They said all the prisoners should be taken to Kočevski Rog and shot“. When asked if that order had to come from Tito, Dubajić answered: „Of course. Nobody could make such a decision, except Tito“.¹⁶²

From Jesenice transports went to Kranj, where the prisoners were placed in camps. On May 26, they were taken to Šent Vid, a suburb of Ljubljana, to an open type camp. The women prisoners were visited, from time to time, by partisans (among them were Kalmiks, an ethnic group from the USSR) who went from one group to the other taking valuables which the prisoners managed to hide up till then. Prisoners under the age of 18 were separated from the groups being sent to the firing squad. Slobodan Penezić Krcun, head of the Serbian branch of the Committee for the Protection of the People, played one of the most significant roles in the shooting of these people.¹⁶³

The prisoners were told they would be tried in „national courts“ in the place of their birth. They were transported to the forests around Kočevje, to the so-called Kočevski Rog and Zidani Most. They were all shot, along with 3000 Montenegro Chetniks from Pavle Djurišić’s army, who survived

¹⁶¹ M. P. Marković, *Predaja pukova. Zapisi iz dobrovoljačke borbe*, I, Minhen 1954, 84, 87.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 55–56.

the debacle near Lijevče Polje (April 5–6, 1945) and the Ustasha massacres in Gradiška and Jasenovac. Seventy three priests, monks and seminarists of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro were also shot.¹⁶⁴

The Montenegro-littoral Metropolitan Joanikije (Lipovac) was taken to Serbia and, after being maltreated and tortured, shot in Arandjelovac in June 1945, along with Luka Vukmanović. This decision was made by Colonel Vladimir Rolović of the Committee for the Protection of the People and Pe-ko Dapčević, the commandant of the I Army of the NLAY.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ B. Kovačević, *Od Vezirovog do Zidanog Mosta*, 136. – The last group was shot on June 9, 1945. A group of high ranking partisan officers visited Kočevje on that day. They went to one of the holes full of bodies and watched it being exploded. A dancing party was organized after that for the soldiers of the company who performed the task. The officers then went to Bled on a „well-deserved“ vacation. (B. Dimitrijević, *Građanski rat u miru*, 57).

¹⁶⁵ Aleksander Bajt, *Bermanov dosije*, Beograd 2006, 824.

III. IN EMIGRATION

Parts of the defeated Yugoslav forces, under the command of General Damjanović, had more luck. The river Soča was crossed on May 1, 1945. This army came into contact with the 2nd New Zealand Division, which was part of the VIII British Army, under the command of General H. Marray.

The military forces which left their country expected help from the allied forces, but they were disappointed very quickly: „*After four years of odious occupiers' uniforms, there was no end to the enthusiasm and happiness of our people when they saw allied uniforms that only a few of us had while we were in the forest. We made contact with an army that we had ties with, our brothers in arms during this war the same as they were during WW I. However, we were disappointed at the very beginning when it came to our knowledge that they didn't consider us their allies, but the troops of Marshal Tito*“.¹

The first talks with the British headquarters took place in Udine. General Damjanović, Parac, Mušicki and Duke Djujić led The Yugoslav delegation. It was decided that all the forces were to be sent to an improvised camp, with very little space, in the small town of Palma Novi in the north of Italy.

Our first impressions were a mixture of hope and despair while chaos was all around us. A „volunteer officer“ wrote about it: „Mićara woke up and he was very surprised to hear the announcement that we had to parade through the small town. The dukes and generals had just arrived by truck a few minutes ago and were calling out to the overjoyed combatants and non-combatants that the negotiations with the allies were favourably brought to an end, and we were now a part of their army! – *Eighth Army, eighth* – could be heard from the overcrowded truck. The people instantly had their own comments“ – *You walk through one door as a Serb, give up all your things, you get new things, and when you walk out through the other door, you're an Englishman!* What a great thought, what an honour! The first regiment of the SVC, now the Šumadija Division, marched in front of their commandant and saluted him – for the last time under the famous volunteer arms“.²

¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

² Veroljub Dinić, „*A naročito Prvi puk Šumadijske divizije*“. *Zapisi iz dobrovoljačke borbe*, V, Minhen 1959, 110–111.

The British authorities immediately ordered the disarmament of these troops, because the „anti-communist volunteers“ were not acknowledged as allied troops. Damjanović's troops laid down their arms for good. He issued his last orders on May 5: *„The first part of our toilsome struggle for the King and national ideals ended today when we laid down our fatigued, but laurelled weapons to the English, while our national anthem was being played. The Anglo-American flags and our flag, soaked in the heroic blood of the best sons of our fatherland, were vigilant witnesses of this historic event, as were all the officers, who from this moment onwards, until they receive new weapons, symbolically represent the power of their units. I consider it my holy duty on this historic day, on behalf of the commandant of the never defeated Yugoslav Army In the Fatherland, General Draža Mihailović, to give full recognition to all the officers and soldiers of all the units in the Special Section of the Supreme Command of the YAIF, especially to the 1st regiment of the Šumadija Division for their heroic defence of the bridge-head near Gorica, and to ask all the officers and combatants, after they have rested, reorganized and strengthened by the care of our allies, to show all those virtues they had up to now so they could be the most powerful support to their King and their national country in a new, glorious and mighty Kingdom. I deeply believe we will not wait long for that moment, so I ask all of my fearless combatants, now on the eve of our national holiday Djurdjevdan, to say their warmest prayers to the Almighty for the health, happiness and longevity of our young Supreme Commandant and for the prosperity of our wonderful Fatherland“.*³

Among the Chetniks of the Dinara Division, two cases of suicide were noted. Dobrosav Jevdjević, therefore, held a speech explaining the disarmament as a plan of the allies to arm the Chetniks with modern weapons and, when the need arises, send them to Yugoslavia, which was exactly what happened with the Serbian troops in WW I.⁴ Only Mušicki and Damjanović were permitted to keep their weapons.

In Palma Nova, General Damjanović had his last direct radio-contact with General Mihailović and informed him of the past events. An associate of Mihailović noted the following: „We were ordered to stop. At the head of the column, on a small clearing in the forest, the radio-station of the Supreme Command was activated. I approached Pevec and asked him what happened: – „*We received a dispatch from General Damjanović. He informed*

³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁴ Đorđe Dragičević, *Od Palma Nove do Munster-logora*, Spomenica Dinarske četničke divizije, Toronto 1993, 497.

*us the western allies were interested in where we were, what we were doing and how strong we were“.*⁵ General Damjanović reported the following: „To the questions of where he was, what he was doing and what he intend to do, Mihailović answered: „*I’m leading guerrilla warfare battles in west and east Bosnia and Serbia“.*⁶

The National Committee operated in Rome as the foreign political representative of the Central National Committee since the summer of 1944. It was headed by Živko Topalović, the former president of the Yugoslav Democratic National Community established at the Saint Sava congress (January 1944). When they heard that Damjanović’s army was in Italy, Topalović and Miha Krek visited the head of the Intelligence Service of the Supreme Allied Command in Rome on May 6. Their request was to let these people decide for themselves whether they would acknowledge the new regime in Yugoslavia or become political emigrants. A fundamental agreement was reached that the allied military authorities would accept and protect the refugees, both military and civilian, and that it would be immoral to return them to Yugoslavia.⁷

All the national forces were transported to Cesena and Forli in the period between May 6 and May 16: „*Having seen us without any weapons, with šajkača [serb military cap], fur-caps and uneven uniforms, the Italians called us names and insulted us, they thought we were German prisoners“.*⁸ Former members of the Serbian Volunteer Corps, the Serbian Gendarmerie and the Slovenian White Guard were placed in the Forli camp. Members of the Dinara Chetnik Division, the Drina Chetnik Brigade and the Special Section of the Supreme Command were taken to Cesena, near Rimini.⁹

Some of the more distinguished protagonists of the Yugoslav war drama were: Momčilo Djujić, Dobrosav Jevdjević, General Matija Parac, Kosta Mušicki, Ivan Prezelj, Svetislav Djukić and Colonel Previslav Petrović, Chief-of-Staff of the SVC (later renamed Šumadia Corps).

A letter written by General Mihailović, dated May 8, arrived for the men under Damjanović’s command. Mihailović’s message was that he would continue to fight till the day of „the final victory“ over the communist dictatorship: „*In this struggle, our thoughts are with you, soldiers abroad,*

⁵ Aleksandar Milošević, *Golgota*. In: *Ravnogorska istorija*, Beograd 1992, 333.

⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

⁷ Ž. Topalović, *Jugoslavila – žrtvovani saveznik*, 164.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Van Otadžbine*, „Ravnogorski borac“, March 1957, 3–4.

*with the wish you stand united in the firm and steady front against the inside enemy our people are fighting. In such a manner, unanimous and undivided in resistance, you will show the Allies and the whole world that you are united with the people in your country”.*¹⁰

Among the former combatants, there were a lot of civilians, members of their families. They were under British control and were treated as prisoners of war, but they had no clear legal status. The first accommodation was under canvas, on football fields, under vigorous British watch. Food was a big problem: *„This camp of ours was bounded with high walls and you couldn't, without great need, go out. We slept on cardboards, in small improvised or issued tents. There was hardly enough food, the meals were measured in calories, which made our people scowl because they weren't use to such measures. Every day the trumpeter announced breakfast and supper, the priests held evening, holiday and Sunday liturgies according to an established schedule“.*¹¹

Life, however, soon displayed all its strength. Hospitals were formed, an elementary school named „Draža Mihailović“ began to work in Cesena on June 8. It had fifty pupils and five teachers. The „King Petar“ high school (four classes) was formed a few days later (June 13). English and Italian language courses were organized. Even a sports federation was established. Similar things happened in the Flori camp as well. The strict procedure of the British authorities wasn't yielding and visits to the camp were temporarily forbidden, as was leaving the camp.¹²

General Damjanović received one of the first encouraging messages on June 28, from S. Djukić, who expected a higher amount of unity among the commanding officers in order to create conditions for the beginning of the fight against the new order in Yugoslavia, and help General Mihailović as soon as possible: *„I think I have the right to draw the attention of all the generals in Italy to the fact that General Draža directed You to consolidate*

¹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹¹ Đ. Dragičević, *Od Palma Nove do Munster-logora*, 498. – Hrvoje Magazinović describes the camp in Flori with the following words: *„The camp we were placed in, were in fact meadows with a few small agricultural buildings. Besides the 1st regiment of the Šumadija Division, the families, old people, women and children were here, as was the hospital. On one side there was a high wall, while the rest of the camp was surrounded with several rows of densely entangled barbed wire. At each corner there was a high watchtower, equipped with a machine-gun and a search-light which went round in circles lighting up the entire camp. Escape represented a true, life-threatening danger“.* (H. Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće*, 201).

¹² *Van Otadžbine*, 4.

command over all the parts of our army in Italy, and in other places as well, because of higher efficiency. I personally know General Mihailović is content with your work up to now, and I therefore hope you're up to the given task“.

The departure of these heterogeneous units from Yugoslavia, however, immediately opened up a dilemma whether it was right to do so, and it also brought about the old problem of political disunity and fear of a negative image of the „Chetniks“ in the public eye of the West. That seemed to be the reason why Živko Topalović abstained from visiting these people, although this was expected of him. Dobrosav Jevdjević therefore wrote a letter to him on July 4: *„The fact that you didn't visit us yet had a negative effect on the morale of these troops. An army which lives on sand and dust, hungry, thirsty, unclothed and barefoot, an army to which we explained that you would intervene on their behalf as General Mihailović's delegate, lost a lot of its self-confidence. We officers know that the delicate political considerations you have towards the allies prevented you from visiting us without their direct approval, but it's very difficult to explain that to the troops“.*¹³

In view of the criticism that we should have stayed in the Fatherland with General Mihailović, Jevdjević explained that the army lost two thirds of its potential since the beginning of the war: *„We came to Italy by way of struggle and under pressure of preponderance, and we don't at all envy the asphalt soldiers and smugglers who have been hiding in the metropolises for years and communicating with the allies on our behalf. We don't consider it a punishment, we consider it an honour to return to the fight again, and one of the reasons for our retreat to Italy was the belief that the allies would make it possible for us to return to the country“.*¹⁴

There were no possibilities for any particular activities in Cesena. Someone came from Rome occasionally and said what the people wanted to hear; the soldiers were resting and retelling old war stories. Boredom was avoided by participating in sports activities: *„We would have been killed by boredom and the summer heat if it weren't for the sports competitions and the evening walks along the stands in the family part of the camp. There was no mail from home. An occasional strayed soldier would find us and bring news from the Fatherland“.*¹⁵

The new Yugoslav authorities requested from the Foreign Office on June 16, to extradite some of the more prominent men from these military

¹³ General Damjanović's Archives.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Đ. Dragičević, *Od Palma Nove do Munster-logora*, 498.

formations, officers before all (about 40 of them), and all the civilians who could be potential adversaries of the new regime in Belgrade. The request was repeated ten days later, so they could be tried in „national courts“ for „treason“. The request of the Yugoslav authorities was supported very strongly by Ralph Stevenson, the former British ambassador to the Yugoslav Royal Court during WW II and a politician who played a significant role in discrediting General Mihailović and the YAIF. At the beginning of July, a request was made for a „swift and efficient“ delivery of 187 members of the SVC. This action was stopped by the State Department, as were all the previous ones.¹⁶

Someone, however, had to be extradited. Thus, General Kosta Mušicki was taken from Flori to Trieste on August 23, where he was arrested and kept in jail until November 17. He was then transported to the camp in Rimini, and on January 8, 1946, he was extradited to the Yugoslav authorities at the line of demarcation near Trieste.¹⁷ He was tried together with General Mihailović during June and July of 1946, and they were both executed by a firing squad in the night between July 16 and 17, 1946.

At the main process against Mušicki on June 22, he was accused of the following: As the commandant of the SVC he was responsible for the mass executions of hostages in Kragujevac in October of 1941, he led an armed conflict against the NLM (National Liberation Movement), he co-operated with the Germans in fighting against the NLM, he committed crimes against the local population and captured partisans, he worked on the founding of a commando school which had the task to train terrorists and „saboteurs of the new Country“, he led battles against the troops of the IV Yugoslav Army while retreating to Slovenia.

General Damjanović made contact in July with Živan Knežević, former chief of Slobodan Jovanović's military cabinet and the military emissary of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in Washington (from 1943). Knežević send word to General Damjanović: „It is now necessary, more than ever, for all of you to be in harmony, and forget about all the little disagreements in this terrible misfortune which befell our people and us, who are outside the Fatherland. Tell that to everyone who thinks it is now time for dispute“.¹⁸

General Damjanović then, on July 8, wrote to Jovan Djonović who was in Cairo at the time. He informed him of the past events and asked for help in getting better accommodation, food, clothes, footwear and a continu-

¹⁶ According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 404–405.

¹⁷ MA, *Nedić's Archives*, 169–1–5.

¹⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

ous courier service: „*Minister Sir, since your work on our common cause has been noticed and greatly appreciated by the Supreme Command, I kindly ask you to understand the situation my troops and I are in, and to make possible a steady mutual collaboration, through which you could help us to preserve the man power here for the big tasks that await us*“.¹⁹

Živko Topalović sent word to General Damjanović on July 11, promising the necessary help, so Damjanović asked him to come visit the men in the camp at once: „*I'm afraid you'll be too late, because time went by and the men still haven't seen any help from you. We are forced to take care of matters on our own, so we are doing everything that we can to better our situation here because we can see you have no understanding for us. We are very sorry, but we don't fear responsibility*“.²⁰

This letter must have had some effect because Topalović, Adam Pribićević and Vladimir Predavec answered Damjanović in two days, explaining how they are doing „everything they possibly can“ to improve the situation in Forli and Cesena: „*We're doing everything possible through the Anglo-American Command, through the Italian civilian and military authorities, through our Polish friends and all our connections abroad, especially in America*“.²¹ Allegedly, they were not permitted to visit the camps and it was only possible to communicate by mail or courier: „*You can't possibly believe that your reprimands for not visiting you are pleasant for us. We are prevented by reasons which are much too big*“.²²

In a situation where people in camps lack literally everything and know nothing of their future, Damjanović was asked to send lists for „personal parcels“ which would be sent to them by some individual Serbian families from America, from Serbian National Defence funds, not „State“ funds: „*If these lists are not sent to America you will be responsible for not receiving this kind of help*“. The question of Damjanović's command was debated: a unique command of all the Yugoslav forces in Italy was needed, and members of the CNC (Central National Committee) were of „the opinion“ that General Damjanović could be the commandant. Even in these conditions, the old Fatherland partitions surfaced: „*The CNC must make sure that all the parts of the national revolution, including the military, carry out the decisions of the Saint Sava congress. We do not see that the organization and spiritual actions of some of the troops under your command correspond*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Topalović from July 17, 1945.

²¹ *Ibid.* The letter to general Damjanović from July 17, 1945.

²² *Ibid.*

*to the democratic, Yugoslav, allied and anti-fascist standpoint of the Congress. We wish to negotiate with the competent authorities if there is to be a political conjunction within the Yugoslav Democratic National Community, which we represent abroad“.*²³

The old politicians remained true to their convictions. It was even said that it was impossible to co-operate with Dobrosav Jevdjević by orders of General Mihailović: „*Mihailović personally informed us and authorized us to give such a statement on his behalf“.*²⁴ That was completely untrue, Mihailović lost all communication with the outside world on May 6, 1945.

General Damjanović and the people around him believed that the representatives of the former Central National Committee were still in a waiting faze. Damjanović received a letter from a friend in Rome: „*What are we waiting for? The English, nevertheless, first have to give their opinion of the volunteers who were in the service of the Germans, and only then can they be taken care of. The second important thing is Topalović's opinion, which is a bit strange: the National Committee is Yugoslavia's forum, which is not in subordination under General Mihailović, who is only the military commandant. And what's more, we're under the impression that Draža is in an inferior position in comparison to the National Committee. That's why the attitude towards all your troops is such as it is“.*²⁵

General Damjanović answered, quite resentfully, the members of the Central National Committee on July 30. He reminded them that he was never afraid of responsibility, so he won't be now for „these parcels“. As far as the unification of command was concerned, he pointed out that he had already taken steps and organized the officer cadre. He rejected all their remarks about him not respecting the decisions of the Saint Sava Congress and emphasized that it isn't clear to him who the „competent authorities“ were, that he was supposed to consult: „*Finally, why does your wish to engage in conversation come now, as late as July 17, when we have been asking for personal contacts from here, both verbally and in writing, since the first day we came here. Your allusion that „some of the troops“ under my command don't correspond to 'the democratic, Yugoslav, allied and anti-fascist standpoint of the Congress' according to the orders and instructions I received from General Draža Mihailović before I left for Slovenia, I*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.* – The same day, Damjanović received a letter from Rome, written by Lieutenant Zvonimir Vučković, former commandant of the 1st Ravna Gora Corps of the YAIF.

*believe is out of place because the Central Committee was not informed of these orders and instructions“.*²⁶

General Damjanović stressed once more that the main task was, and still is, to unite all the national forces in the fight against Tito's regime in Yugoslavia, and the issue of „possible guilt“ was to be resolved later in a free country, by rulings of a positive legislature: *„I think I have succeeded in my mission, and I permanently continue to do so without offending in the least bit the decisions of the Sveti Sava Congress, my orders or my conscience. As far as duke Jevdjević is concerned, I ask you to bear in mind that he is one of my most elite commandants, whose work I have been observing for four months and I can only say that it deserves recognition“.*²⁷

At the beginning of August, the troops from south Italy, mainly composed of men on work details in the Anglo-American forces and men from other camps who didn't want to return to Yugoslavia, accepted General Damjanović's command and a meeting of all the officers was held in Cesena on August 4. The members of the Central National Committee in Rome were asked to inform the Mediterranean Allied Supreme Command that General Damjanović was the only commandant of the Yugoslav forces outside the Fatherland under the authorization of General Mihailović. The National Committee was also asked to admit new members from Damjanović's group, and to „take to their knowledge to cease creating disunity among some groups and commandants under Damjanović's command“.²⁸

General Damjanović informed all his troops about that the next day: *„In this way, a spontaneous, logical and natural soldierly unity of command of all the Royal Yugoslav forces in Italy was achieved, with only one wish and only one task – to bring real justice, freedom and a happier future to their people and country, when the circumstances allow it“.*²⁹

Damjanović requested his orders to be strictly obeyed, he abolished all the authorizations which some individuals had brought from back home, no military personnel could display, without his authorization, any public or secret influence on the life, work or regularity in any unit of the „Royal Yugoslav troops in Italy“. He also prohibited all contacts with the allied for-

²⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter from July 30, 1945.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*. The meeting of division commandants with general Damjanović on August 5, 1945.

²⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders from August 5, 1945.

ces: „No officer is to allow any influence on his units which would be contrary to these orders“.³⁰

General Damjanović issued one more order the same day, concerning the Yugoslav soldiers and officers who didn't live in camp communities: „All around Italy, there is a significant number of members of the Yugoslav Army who are not in camps or in allied labour units. They roam from place to place, introducing themselves to the local or allied authorities with false documents, asking for help or interventions nearly always in private matters. Another group turned to black market trading with the goal of a more pleasant life and to ensure their survival, without any regard to anything at all. It seems like a lot of us have forgot about the oath we have given to our King and Fatherland, from which we have not been absolved“.³¹

Damjanović requested that all these people report to the military camps in Forlì or Cesena not later than August 25, or to the civilian camps in Santa Cesare or Tricasa. He forbid unlawful trading and unauthorized use of allied army uniforms: „Strife, slander, backbiting and accusations against any member of the Yugoslav army or politicians here in Italy, must stop. Who disobeys these orders will experience consequences from the army-criminal laws and the Ravna Gora Movement statute“.³²

General Damjanović wrote to Jovan Djonović on August 5. He informed him of all the events which took place before they came to Italy in March 1945, and asked him to enable contact with General Mihailović, if possible: „I have undertaken every measure to make contact with the prisoners in Austria, I have contact with Africa and Malta, I would like to be in continuous contact with you so I could regularly inform Draža, since I don't have direct contact with him. While I was with Draža, until March 18 of this year, we had regular contacts with you and your reports were very valuable“.³³

Živko Topalović was also very active on August 5. On behalf of the entire Yugoslav emigration, he asked the governments of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union to insure free elections in Yugoslavia, to make sure these elections are held under the control of the allied troops, and that all the emigrants are allowed to return to the country: „We request and ask the allies to make possible our immediate return to the Fatherland, and with

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*their troops in our country to create order and a safe environment at least one month before the elections for a constituent assembly and form of rule in Yugoslavia, so we could participate in all the preparations for the elections“.*³⁴

In order to solve the status problem of the internees, the first conference with the representatives of the British authorities was held in Kazerta on September 3, presided over by Colonel Lorrey. Representatives from all the services attended the conference and discussed about relocating the camp. Camps in Eboli and Padula were offered to Damjanović, so he visited them the next day. He chose the camp in Eboli. General Damjanović's suggestion was adopted, and on September 10, a second conference was held which engaged in the particulars of the relocation.³⁵

Damjanović informed Živko Topalović of these decisions on September 13: „*I am compelled to re-organize. This demands substantial expenses, but I have none at my disposal. I therefore ask you to inform me if you could help financially at this moment“.*³⁶ The British standpoint was slowly changing towards Yugoslavia's requests for the extradition of men from this camp, and other men as well. The Foreign Office corrected its earlier opinion and suggested that Belgrade's request for the extradition of Ljubljana's Bishop Rožman be rejected.³⁷

In the meantime, on September 10, General Mihailović, in deep underground activities at the time, made a decision to appoint General Damjanović the commandant of all the „Royal“ forces abroad.³⁸ The relocation of about 14.000 people to the camp in Eboli was completed in the period from September 15 to September 26, 1945.

Dobrosav Jevdjević didn't go to Eboli, he left the camp while they were still in Cesena. At the end of August he started working on his own, offering his men to the British authorities for intelligence work in Trieste, which became a moot point between Yugoslavia and the West. He informed General Damjanović of this on August 21, while he was still loyal to him: „*I'm negotiating with the British authorities through an Englishman I had contacts with during the war. I informed this person that I would ask for your approval if they accept my offer“.*³⁹

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 411.

³⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

In the period when Jevdjević left Eboli, he activated the contacts he had made in Italy since 1943. During the summer of that year, he went to Ljubljana without Mihailović's approval, where he contacted Major Karl Novak, the commandant of the YAIF forces in Slovenia (the so-called Blue Guard) and some other people from the anti-communist front in Slovenia. After the capitulation of Italy he went to Kazerta, where he established a network of Yugoslav agents and co-operated with some Italian agents. He had great amounts of money at his disposal and a radio-station in Padova for independent contacts with the allies. He arrived in Rome in November of 1943, where he headed the „special mission“ of the YAIF together with Karl Novak, who had also come to Rome in the meantime. He posed as Mihailović's representative.⁴⁰

He tried to make contact with everybody, which was obviously of great help to him when he was leaving the camp in Cesena. He spent some time in British custody. He continued to live his life of an emigrant in Rome, where he died in October of 1962.

AT THE COMMUNIST COURT

General Miodrag Damjanović was proclaimed a „war criminal“ on November 27, 1945, by the State Commission for establishing crimes of the occupiers and their accessories headed by Dušan Nedeljković, a university professor. That will later on be the basis of the request of the Yugoslav authorities for the extradition of General Damjanović. The commission's announcement was published the next day in the daily newspaper *Borba*, a paper of the communist party of Yugoslavia, entitled *The Traitorous Work of a General of the Former Yugoslav Army in Prisoner of War Camps in Germany*.

The Yugoslav State Commission accused a group of Yugoslav Royal generals of „treason“ because they prepared the text of the Nuremberg Statement and forced all the other officers to sign it. Besides General Damjanović, the following generals were accused: Danilo Kalafatović, Milutin Nedić, Čedomir Škekić, Todor Milićević, Čedomir Jovanović, Jovan Leko and Aleksandar Dimitrijević: „*Besides false slogans, the most vigorous threats were used to extort our signatures, such as: who doesn't sign, he is a communist; those of you who don't sign will be placed with the Russians, and their families back home will be denied any kind of help. Most of those thre-*

⁴⁰ A. Bajt, *Bermanov dosije*, 274.

ats were effectuated. The point of this treasonous statement was: full support to the quisling government of Milan Nedić, condemnation and slander of the national uprising in the country and our war allies in general, and finally, standing by the enemy and acknowledging the disintegration of Yugoslavia“.⁴¹

A group of generals from the camps in Osnabruek, Strasburg and Hammelburg were also accused of working with the Germans, misuse of the church and the medical-corps, fighting against the „NLM organization“ in the camps, forming penal camps, denunciation of officers, recruiting for the troops of Nedić’s government and working according to the instructions of General Mihailović: „The State Commission concluded that they have committed the crime of treason to the disadvantage of their people and in the interests of the enemy“.⁴² General Damjanović was in this group of accused generals.

The State Commission also accused a group of generals led by Dušan Trifunović, the former defence Minister who died on February 28, 1942. His „sin“ and the „sin“ of the group of „leading generals of the former Yugoslav army“ was in writing to the German camp authorities and stating they were not to blame for the overthrow from March 27, 1941, and that it was the work of the street and younger officers: „This cowardly-denunciating act was done in spite of the fact that we could all still hear the severe threats, said by the very top of the Third German Reich to the ‘Serbian putschists’. Their gesture was the introduction and preparation for putting themselves in the service of the enemy in the fight against our people“.⁴³

According to the research of M. Bjelajac, it was not a written statement; it was said in conversation with the German commandant of the camp in Warburg. The camp authorities treated the Yugoslav generals very badly, accusing them of provoking the German attack on Yugoslavia. General Trifunović stated that the generals who are now in captivity have no blame for the outbreak of war and didn’t deserve to be treated in such a manner. He also denied that the cause of the overthrow of Dragiša Cvetković’s government was the joining of the Tripartite Pact, he stated internal reasons – the people were discontent about the signing of the pact.⁴⁴

Besides General Trifunović, the following generals were found guilty of treason: Dimitrije Živković, Danilo Kalafatović, Uroš Tešanović,

⁴¹ ASM, SC, 110–591. Announcement no. 78.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ M. Bjelajac – R. Trifunović, *Biografija generala Dušana Trifunovića*, 253.

Ljubomir Babić, Pavle Barjaktarević, Ilija Brašić, Čedomir Gužvić, Despot Damjanović, Aleksandar Dimitrijević, Jovan Leko, Čedomir Jovanović, Todor Milićević, Pavle Pavlović, Dragiša Pandurović, Vasilije Petković, Jovan Pribić, Sveta Savić, Milutin Stefanović, Lazar Tonić, Čedomir Škekić, and seven colonels, six lieutenant-colonels, seven majors, four doctors, three rests and ten reserve officers from respectable Belgrade families.⁴⁵

It is very interesting that General Živko Stanisavljević, the oldest officer in Nuremberg, who was the biggest supporter of Nedić's government and organized the signing of the statement, „put a five-pointed star on his cap at the end of the war“ and returned to Yugoslavia. Due to this fact his name wasn't on the Yugoslav State Commission's list of „war criminals“.⁴⁶ After returning to Yugoslavia he became the most important „source“ of slander against his war buddies.

A similar thing happened with General Miloje Popadić, who came to Osnabruek from Nierenberg in February of 1942, and as a confirmed supporter of General Milan Nedić's government destroyed the well-organized communist propaganda. He was even accused of accepting the seniority in the camp in agreement with the Germans. However, he „clearly and definitely declared himself for communism“ at the end of 1944. He engaged himself in propaganda for the NLAY and therefore was spared of any accusations by the communist authorities.⁴⁷

The State Commission wasn't satisfied only with this public announcement. It continued its work and somewhere around the middle of 1946, came to a decision confirming that General Damjanović was a „war criminal“. Damjanović was accused of creating the „arrow crosses“ organization, which recruited officers and soldiers for the Serbian State Guard and the Serbian Volunteer Corps. Furthermore, he was accused of „intelligence work for the Germans“, for being Nedić's Chief-of-Staff and using that position to „develop military and propaganda activities with the aim to be of benefit to the enemy“.⁴⁸

In the „qualification of the crime“ column the following was written: *„Collaboration with the enemy in the camp and in the field. He organized camp espionage for the enemy, formed terrorist groups and fascist organizations such as the 'White Crosses' and 'Community'. [...] He instigated the signing of the Nuremburg Declaration. He was an accomplice and the*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 272–273.

⁴⁶ M. Đorđević, *Između crnog i crvenog fašizma*, 38.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ ASM, SC, F – number 2101.

instigator of Milan Nedić's criminal traitorous work for the entire time of the German occupation".⁴⁹

General Damjanović was further accused for his work in Julijska Krajina in the spring of 1945: *„He is responsible for fighting along side the Germans against the Yugoslav Army and the Allies, together with Ljotić's SVC troops, and for committing crimes against the local population. [...] The quisling troops under Damjanović's command committed a large number of crimes against the population of Istra and Julijska Krajina, together with the Germans and on their own, terrorising the people and arresting them, plundering and burning their property. These troops continued their traitorous and criminal activities on this territory in the same manner as they did in Serbia under German occupation*".⁵⁰

The manner in which the Yugoslav authorities accepted „evidence“ against the officers of the Royal Yugoslav Army revealed an unabashed desire to defeat their opponents, morally and materially, not lawfully with proven facts and evidence. The State Commission didn't show any dexterity to allow any doubt to be expressed about the statements of officers who wanted to diminish their responsibility for certain events, while the statements of all the officers from captivity were taken as proof. Every bit of defence of the accused was always rejected as „inappropriate“, in spite of the fact that they were completely based on the legitimacy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the international law of war.⁵¹

The leading witnesses for the prosecution in the proceedings against General Damjanović were his former war buddies General Milorad Petrović and General Živko Stanisavljević. General Petrović said the following about the signing of the Nierenberg Statement: *„I know and I'm familiar with the fact that the people around them agitated in favour of signing it, using the worst kinds of threats, such as: those who don't sign will lose their families, they will lose every bit of support, they will be deprived of their prisoner of war status and they will be treated as internees. On these occasions, in order to make an example of the ill destiny of the internees, they used to point across the wire to the camp with tents, where the internees were placed together with civilians and prisoners from the Soviet Union and treated in a more than barbaric manner. It is familiar to me that brigadier-general Miodrag Damjanović took an active part in these events*".⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ M. Bjelajac, *General Pandurović*, 82.

⁵² ASM, SC, F – number 2101.

General Stanisavljević's statement was much more extensive: „*Brigadier-general Miodrag Damjanović was one of the leading generals in the group of prisoner-officers who were helping Nedić's government back home. I often saw him talking to general Brašić, so on one occasion I told Brašić that I resented him for often talking to Damjanović, but he said: – Damjanović has an important task, he will go to our country to put Nedić in touch with Draža Mihailović. It was well-known throughout the entire camp that Damjanović was Nedić's leading propagator after Milutin Nedić left the camp, and was therefore released from the camp and sent to Belgrade to be of service to Milan Nedić. [...] While I was the senior officer of the camp, Damjanović insisted explicitly, more than once, that we should keep records with all personal data on all the prisoners and their behaviour in the camp, but to keep that a secret and not show them to anyone. [...] Damjanović was so garishly active in propagating and popularizing Nedić's quisling government in a refined and propitious fashion that he would give two-hour speeches and lectures even in the rooms where only five or six prisoners were present. I am also familiar with the fact that Miodrag Damjanović noticeably and permanently kept company with a Colonel of the former Yugoslav army, later promoted to general by Milan Nedić, now a proven war criminal Ljubomir Babić*“.⁵³

General Babić also thought he could change his destiny by accusing General Damjanović, so on March 15, 1945, he accused Damjanović of participating in making lists of „unfit“ officers who were then sent into isolation. Other former prisoners gave statements as well. Their statements were considered as true, although they usually began with: „*I had no contact with General Damjanović, but I heard...*“; „*There was an opinion throughout the camp...*“; „*There were witnesses but I don't remember their names*“; „*I don't know much about what was happening in the camp, but I'm convinced that without his order or approval the lists of prosperous people who were sent to the Germans couldn't be made*“.⁵⁴

Damjanović was mostly accused of protecting the Monarchy and withholding the idea of a unique Serbian country, which was obviously the greatest disturbance for the new Yugoslav authorities. For example, he was also guilty of organizing a solemn celebration of Vidovdan in Hammelburg in 1943. At the end, the State Commission concluded that General Damjanović was „*a war criminal and a traitor and should be placed under investigative detention*“.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ AY, SC, F – inv. no. 16650.

⁵⁵ AY, SC, F – number 2101.

LIFE IN THE CAMP IN EBOLI

Eboli is a small town about 25 kilometres southeast of Salerno, not far from the Tyrrhenian Sea; the climate is dry and warm nearly the whole year round. The nearby hillocks and meadows are full of olives and vineyards. The camp was composed of tents and shacks. It was very big, surrounded by only one string of barbed wire and it didn't have any watchtowers. The hospital, school, repository, headquarters and other establishments were in the shacks, while the tents were used as living quarters. East and west of the camp were three more camps, where Yugoslav political emigrants were placed. Among them were 100 Croats, former Home Guardsmen and members of the „Croatian Army“, somewhere between 200 and 300 Slovenians from the „Slovenian Army“, and the rest were Serbs. The most numerous formations was the Dinara Chetnik Division with over 4000 men. The second largest group was the Serbian Volunteer Corps with about 2600 men, and the rest were „Chetniks“ from Serbia, only a few hundred of them, and even less from Montenegro, not more than three hundred.

There was a good level of organization, both military and civilian, in the camp in Eboli. The military organization included: The Special Section of the Supreme Command: the commandant was General Damjanović, the Chief-of-Staff was Lieutenant Colonel Živorad Andrić, and Dušan Varjaški was the adjutant. The section chiefs were: Colonel Dragutin Štencl (intelligence); Major Velimir Popović (adjutants); Lieutenant Colonel Branko Malešević (supply service); Lieutenant Colonel Čedomir Živanović (justice); Ranko Brašić (economics – finances) and priest Vlasta Tomić (religion).⁵⁶

Furthermore, the organization included: officer's reserve, the command of the camp and the commands of the national armies: Slovenian Army (commandant, colonel, later General Ivan Prezelj), Croatian Army (commandant, General Matija Parac). The following were also led as military formations: the Dinara Division, the Šumadija Division, the Drina regiment, the 2nd Lika regiment, the Zeta regiment, the Gendarmerie regiment, the independent battalion, the air force group, the camp police, the printing office of the Supreme Command, the cultural-educational council and the headman of the family camp. The civilian part included: the main camp hospital, the sanatorium, the orthodox spiritual academy „Manasija“, the high school, the elementary school, the Ring of Serbian Sisters (a humanitarian organization), the Christian Community of young people, the boarding hou-

⁵⁶ *Van Otadžbine*, 19.

se and pedagogical courses. The Supreme Command with General Damjanović and the Drina regiment were placed in the Aneks camp, which was about two kilometres from the main camp.⁵⁷

From the international point of view, it was impossible to define the status of these people. The British government, although obliged to do so, didn't want to acknowledge a 'prisoner of war' status for the combatants, because it would then have to fill its obligations towards them according to the Geneva Convention. It also wasn't ready to give them a refugee status, because it would have to respect its international obligations. The British government simply proclaimed them „Surrendered Enemy Personnel“ (SEP). These people, therefore, became British „property“, without any international protection. The only protection these people had was the one the British government was ready to grant or to deny through its troops in Italy.⁵⁸

The inhabitants of the Eboli camp thus became a problem in defining the relations between Great Britain and the new, communist Yugoslavia, and also an 'ace up the sleeve' for the British to use in solving the problem of the status of Trieste and the problem of British property in Yugoslavia (nationalized property). The inhabitants of the Eboli camp were an object to be used in „balancing the accounts“ between the two countries. The new Yugoslav authorities continuously protested – Eboli and its inhabitants were even endangering the subsistence of the new country.⁵⁹ The headquarters of the British Command was in Naples, while the allowed radius of movement for the internees was ten kilometres. At one of the first meetings with the British authorities in Naples, General Damjanović asked for a military status for his men, not a refugee one: „*I brought soldiers to Italy, and that is what I want us to remain*“.⁶⁰ The sense of this request was in the anticipation of a conflict between the West and the Soviet Union and, eventually, an overthrow of the government in Yugoslavia. One quarter of the total number of people in the camp were civilians – families of the combatants, the disabled and elderly people. This number decreased considerably during 1946, when the British Air Force employed a part of them, while others moved from the camp.

There were another 32.000 Yugoslav refugees in Italy, in 18 collecting and transit refugee camps. General Damjanović was still able to keep

⁵⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁵⁸ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 321.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁶⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

the Supreme Command of the RYAOF (Royal Yugoslav Army outside the Fatherland) functioning. He kept in contact with Živko Topalović, Miha Krek, Adam Pribičević and some other members of the Yugoslav National Committee in Rome. Topalović helped the most, and he even visited the camp in Eboli.⁶¹

Joint conferences with the members of the committee were held in Rome and the committee recognized General Damjanović as the commandant of the Yugoslav forces in Italy. General Damjanović was in contact with Patriarch Gavriilo while he was in Rome. The Patriarch and General Damjanović met for the first time on July 20, 1945, in Bologna, and later on they met a few times in Rome.⁶² Damjanović offered the Patriarch to come to Sorrento, „where we soldiers would take care of him with our most humble means, but he refused“.⁶³

The most important task General Damjanović had in the Eboli camp was to maintain a fighting spirit and to organize every day life. The Yugoslav authorities were trying to obtain permission to perform propaganda activities in the Eboli camp in order to get more people to repatriate to Yugoslavia, so organizing national work was one of the most important tasks. A large shipment of help containing 200 cases of goods soon arrived from the USA. The medical service was organized during October.

An interesting report about General Damjanović's intentions in that period was left by Hrvoje Magazinović: „*He dreamt of a Third World War in which we would be sent to a front against Tito's Yugoslavia [...] Churchill had great problems in preventing the Polish army from moving with high speed towards Yugoslavia, with Poland as their final destination. Damjanović kept in contact with the Poles through Dragutin Jakšić. Since he had no reason to stay with the Poles any longer, Jakšić returned to the camp in Eboli to participate in cultural activities*“.⁶⁴

The high school continued with its work. Stanko Radosavljević was the headmaster and Aleksandar Kašić was the secretary. In the beginning, it had 135 pupils and 22 teachers. A technical school was opened and it was named „Rade Neimar“, while the volunteers organized a theatrical group. A young people's Christian community was founded at the very beginning thanks to Ratibor Djurdjević, a former English student. It had separate premises, a library and sports equipment. A theological school was also esta-

⁶¹ *Van Otadžbine*, 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

⁶⁴ H. Magazinović, *Kroz jedno mučno stoljeće*, 212.

blished, it was named „Manasija“, and it was attended by the older students in order to complete their education. The „Spiritual Academy“ began to function as well, and during 1946 some of its students went to theological universities in several European countries. Representatives of the Anglican Church also held lectures.

Church life was also well organized. There were four Orthodox chapels in the camp: one was in the family camp, the second one was on the premises of the Dinara Division, and the third one was in the Šumadija Division and the fourth one was in the Drina regiment. There was a Catholic chapel as well. Processions were regularly performed during holidays. However, problems arose in this sphere of activity very soon, because the priests often didn't acknowledge General Damjanović's command. Damjanović therefore often complained about that to Episcopo Dionisije: „*Priest Aleksa Todorović went too far when he anathematised three members of the youth organization – Jovanović, Drašković and Stranjaković – just because they were Ljotić sympathisers and thus brought 'discord' and 'hatred' among the brothers*“.⁶⁵

General Damjanović expected very much from his officers and commandants, but in the beginning, he wasn't content with their conduct: „*I see that all the officers don't take seriously their present tasks and future work, they are busy making unrealistic plans which are completely inapplicable, often using political stings which they shouldn't at this time and place, leaving their men to themselves and so allowing them to draw conclusions which are not in accordance with our needs. I want all the officers to immediately return to their men and duties with absolute devotion, and I order you to stop all your activities which are not part of the regular duties of an officer*“.⁶⁶

General Damjanović's basic idea while leaving Yugoslavia was to preserve the combatants and prepare them for the fight against the communist system in Yugoslavia. He never said that he emigrated and constantly refused to accept suggestions to depopulate his men. He therefore endured in his idea to sustain as a whole the men who came to Italy, in order to maintain the national idea.

In the early phase of their stay in Italy, Damjanović had a firm standpoint that his organization belongs to the resistance movement created by Dragoljub Mihailović in 1941, and therefore, a part of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, whose descent from the historical scene he co-

⁶⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from October 3, 1945.

uldn't accept: „*We too belong to that army because we are indisputably a part of it, the part which had to leave our Fatherland due to various circumstances, but all the officers and soldiers stayed loyal to their military flag and their oath. From the legal point of view, it is irrelevant what the occupier did to the Yugoslav Kingdom with the power they had in the four years of occupation*“.⁶⁷

General Damjanović warned his officers and soldiers that all the laws of the Royal Yugoslav Army which were in effect until April 18, 1941, were still valid, and since he saw his organization as part of the former Royal Army, he ordered the forming of a court-martial in the camp in Eboli: „*Pointing out that the Anglo-American military legislature is valid for all of us here because we are under their wing and dependent of them is unjustified, because we never renounced what we were up to now and we're not part of their army. Our temporary stay in the camp is to be considered simply as a deployment of armed forces into their barracks*“.⁶⁸

General Damjanović therefore ordered the forming of a Military Court of First Instance, a Military Prosecutor's Office, which would work at the court, a Supreme Military Court and a Military Disciplinary Court. He demanded, „*Order and discipline*“ no matter what the circumstances were, or where they were at the moment: „*This rule applies to all the troops of the Special Section of the Supreme Command of the Yugoslav Army. The first step in keeping up order and discipline is the lawfulness of enquiries and proceedings*“.⁶⁹

In the middle of October, General Damjanović tried to arrange a meeting with Marshal Alexander, the allied supreme commandant of the Mediterranean. The meeting never took place, but Damjanović was received at the British Headquarters and his command of the Yugoslav troops was recognized. The only condition was that the army should be completely separated from politics. General Marko Mihailović was the only person to oppose this decision.⁷⁰

The first few months of life in the camp in Eboli were filled with many negative occurrences specific to this way of life under completely al-

⁶⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders from October 20, 1945.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* – Damjanović formed a legal department at his headquarters the same day (October 20).

⁷⁰ Mladen Žujović, *Jugoslavija u Drugom svetskom ratu 1944–1946*. In: *Dnevnici i beleške*, III, Vrnjačka Banja 2004, 252.

tered conditions. Every day scenes were: alcoholism, scolding, cursing, insults, fights, disrespect of the elders, non-fulfilment of duties, rejection of orders and even one officer was murdered. Lieutenant Dušan Antić was killed at the very end of October, 1945. Men from the Drina regiment, who were responsible for his death, even sang while paying their respects to the unfortunate lieutenant, which made General Damjanović very angry: *„I condemn this act. When I heard singing at the place where I was honouring the earthly remains of our brother lieutenant Dušan Antić, I was compelled to go out and stand in front of the Drina regiment as they were passing by, in order to force them to stop singing“*.⁷¹

In order to annihilate the very root of such behaviour, Damjanović requested all his men not to „play the roles of judges and debate on personal issues, until this war comes to an end“. Further more, nobody had the right to insult or to intimidate, *„because it creates dissension and bad blood among our combatants and destroys the harmony and unity of our mutual front. We are all equal, there are no meritorious or less meritorious, sinful or righteous men among us“*. Damjanović was completely aware of the fact that there were many individuals „who didn't like our concord, brotherhood, unity and combative strength“. He therefore asked his officers to pay special attention to such men: *„All the officers must make an extra effort and use all their moral and physical powers to remove the spirit of defeatism and lack of discipline. You must, at any price, prevent unauthorized departures from the camp and shameful trading with some pathetic Italians. If this continues, I'm convinced our allies will not give us what we could get if we were a real army in spirit and attitude“*.⁷²

It wasn't easy to get used to the life in these conditions, so escapes from the camp were very frequent. Arbitrary employment was also very common. That brought a great deal of disappointment to General Damjanović: *„We, the Royal Yugoslav soldiers, who got out of Tito's hell and went through horrible agony to get to the free territory, recuperated and reorganized the nucleus of our army and represent enormous hope for our King and our enslaved Fatherland, are now, it seems, starting to vacillate. In view of whom and why? Some of us heard of a bigger piece of bread, a better suit or perhaps a warmer bed! The heroes who went through all the torments and endured all the suffering have now become indecisive, now, when we face ominous events“*.⁷³

⁷¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders from October 30, 1945.

⁷² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from November 1, 1945.

⁷³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from November 9, 1945.

Damjanović requested of his men to show strong will power, to believe in justice and truth, to stay in their units, „*Because that is the only way not to weaken the fist we represent here. Did you know that Tito already spoke of us on the radio: – The vermin in Eboli will eat itself up! Isn't it clear to you what he wants?*“⁷⁴ When these occurrences became frequent, Damjanović ordered that these individuals be put in detention and their documents taken away from them, regardless who issued them, the camp authorities or British authorities“⁷⁵.

Živan Knežević kept in touch with General Damjanović on a regular basis, informing him of the latest assumptions on the further development of relations between the West and the East, the possibility of reviving national work and eventually performing subversion in Belgrade. In his letter dated November 10, 1945, he informed Damjanović that the US government doesn't believe the November 11 elections were free „and they will not acknowledge any government resulting from these elections“⁷⁶.

Internal problems of life in the camp became a bitter issue of everyday occurrence in General Damjanović's work. He expected his men to be worthy successors of General Mihailović's army and proper Royal soldiers, but their behaviour threatened to completely ruin their reputation and status in the eyes of the British command and the general public: „*I have thought a lot, I hesitated for a long time to bring something like this up before you, hoping that all the differences, diverse opinions and all the meaningless quarrels would in time come to an end. However, the situation in the last few days forced me to face reality and abandon my standpoint of hope and expectations*“⁷⁷.

Damjanović was especially disappointed by such behaviour because General Mihailović was still trying to set in motion an anti-communist guerrilla warfare in Serbia and he needed all the help he could get: „*Are we part of that Royal Army which is still unclothed and barefoot, hungry and thirsty, left without any weapons or ammunition to fight an uncompromising battle against the oppressors of our people, hoping to be helped lavishly by us, their brothers abroad? Did we, with our behaviour and attitude up to now, show that we are worthy of their expectations? Can we call ourselves the early guerrilla fighters for brotherhood, justice, equality and freedom?*“

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from November 15, 1945.

⁷⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from November 21, 1945.

Damjanović energetically demanded from his men in Eboli to have a correct and dignified conduct towards the Anglo-American forces, regardless of their politics towards the Serbian Royalists during and after the war: „*We tied our destiny in 1941 to our old and real Allies – Great Britain and America. The whole time we fought in our country we stayed with that conviction, regardless of the changes in politics up to now. That’s how our people were, and still are. Even when they suffered in the bombings, they understood it was being done because of greater allied interests. I don’t believe there is one individual among us who doubts the truth: our national liberation, recovery and the rebuilding of our country can not be achieved without the help of Great Britain and America. If that is so, should we show discontent, impudence and arrogance towards them or should we be full of hope and patiently wait for the day when the world events will enable the accomplishment of our national tasks with the help of the Allies*“.⁷⁸

Until the end of 1945, General Damjanović, with clearance from the British authorities, made tours of all the other camps in Italy where Yugoslavs were living. In this early phase, there were already problems in organizing all the Serbian anti-communist forces into a unique body, in order to work against the regime in Belgrade. There were various diversified opinions, from moderate ones to extreme ones – to form armed units and organize a rebellion in Yugoslavia. General Miodrag Damjanović had authority as Mihailović’s deputy and many people in emigration considered him to be the leader. However, it was very difficult to achieve this from Eboli and it was impossible to go to London or Paris.

General Damjanović was undoubtedly the reputable leader of all the men in Eboli, except for the „Ljotić sympathisers“. Manojlo Vukobratović, secretary of the Agrarian party, wrote the following: „*Relations between the members of the Ravna Gora movement, the Ljotić sympathisers and all the others are sometimes stretched, sometimes tight, in one word – bad. We, the so-called leadership, are in Rome. Harmony among us isn’t blossoming. What is wrong? Small plots and intrigues. Topalović talks of quislings and collaborators who came from our country: – for God’s sake, that’s Bebler’s line – I said to him many times*“.⁷⁹

General Damjanović used his authority to prevent open conflicts among the heterogeneous emigration which could have had disastrous consequences, considering the fact that many of them were in possession of

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s orders from November 22, 1945.

⁷⁹ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

concealed weapons. The most important task in the first phase, therefore, became the issue of discipline and keeping the men assembled in one place.

Damjanović had a radio-station at the camp and used it to keep in contact with his former fellow-fighters. There was also a plan to create a network for maintaining contact with regional centres in Austria and Greece in the beginning, and with Paris and London later on. The centre in Greece was to be run by Milan Maksimović and the centre in Austria by Colonel Branko Naumović. The goal was to keep alive the national idea and to be ready for the conflict between the western democracies and the Soviet Union, which was firmly believed by many individuals: „*In spite of all the attempts, all the conferences and meetings, it will not be possible to solve the conflicts between the western and eastern world, between communism and capitalism, in a peaceful manner*“.⁸⁰

The British commandant of the camp in Eboli was Colonel F. A. Hanson, who was appointed to this position on November 24, 1945, and stayed until the men left for Germany. The first inspection of the men took place on December 8. In January of 1946, General Damjanović created a *Book of rules and regulations for the work of the Association of the disabled ex-service men of the Royal Yugoslav Army outside the Fatherland*, which was to be active in Eboli. The goal of the association was to gather all the disabled men, „to help them morally and financially, to intervene through our competent authorities to enable the improvement of their living conditions and to make sure our authorities live up to all their obligations“.⁸¹

Problems with the behaviour of his men still preoccupied General Damjanović: many individuals were spending the whole day outside the camp, where regular intoxication and sale of goods were everyday occurrences. Damjanović therefore, asked his officers to take care how long they stay in town because the camp gendarmerie regularly patrol the town “with the goal to control the soldiers“.⁸²

At the very end of 1945, it became very clear that Damjanović had a strong opposition from some of the members of the Croatian Peasant Party in emigration because of General Parac. They requested that General Parac be relieved of his command of the Croatian troops in Eboli, so that a real

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Captain V. Vladislavljević's letter to General Damjanović on December 8, 1945.

⁸¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. – The inaugural assembly of the Association of the disabled ex-service men took place on September 6, 1946 (*Ibid.*).

⁸² *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders from December 10, 1945.

„Home-Guard“ officer could replace him. They were disturbed by the fact that Parac was loyal to General Mihailović, as was noticed by Mladen Žujović: *„I told dr. Laksa that Mr. Maček should express as his own the wish and the need to relieve Parac of his duties, together with a proper explanation, so that I could perform that in London, and then instruct Damjanović. It seems like the Croats are doubtful of any man who is connected to Draža or any Serbian organization“*.⁸³

In the beginning of January 1946, Damjanović appointed Colonel Kosta Simić, former head of the Yugoslav military mission in France, his assistant for France. That immediately brought about the envy of those who supported Mladen Žujović, who was the chairman of the Yugoslav National Committee: *„Instead of showing a firm hand, or at least stops interfering with my work, Žujović is handing out promises, statements, support to every one of his collocutors, he attacks anyone who isn't present and thus many small groups and currents were formed, which he supports and attacks at the same time“*.⁸⁴

There were no camps in France, only a few individual groups of soldiers and officers of the former Royal Yugoslav Army, who came to the country from German and Italian captivity during the war. They were mainly employed by the American military institutions. Besides, The French authorities weren't ready to allow any kind of Yugoslav command in their country: *„I am convinced that You know how deep a difference exists in the minds of you over there and the former prisoners of war. I don't know who suggested that you should issue such an order, but I declare that our situation here in France was explained to you in a very superficial and light-minded manner“*.⁸⁵

Žujović thought that Damjanović's actions were a reflection of his lack of understanding for reality: *„A letter from Damjanović. He wants to form a unique command of all the troops outside the Fatherland as soon as possible. He sent me Draža's instructions from September 10, 1945, which describes the way we should work until the circumstances change. He appointed Vladisavljević the liaison officer for contacts with the French. All this is far from reality and it makes Putnik very angry. Draža isn't aware of the current situation and Damjanović has no feeling of reality. They can't seem to understand that we are ordinary refugees. Damjanović thinks we still ha-*

⁸³ M. Žujović. *Dnevnici I beleške*, III, 277.

⁸⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Lieutenant Colonel K. Simić's letter to General Damjanović from January 6, 1946.

⁸⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

*ve official relations with the Allies that we can negotiate with them they do not see that we are facing total extinction“.*⁸⁶

Things started to move from a standstill at the beginning of the new year. A group of men were to go on duty in the English army as an auxiliary unit with salary, accommodation, food and they would wear English uniforms. Damjanović expected a lot from this event: „*The soldiers of this company will have a very important task. They'll have to endure the test: not only to win the trust of the allies, but also to create conditions for all their other brothers in Italy, and other countries, to do the same. The English requested from our officers to be perfectly tactful, to know their men, to conscientiously take care of them and to know exactly at every moment where their men were and what they were doing“.*⁸⁷

A company of 100 men was sent on secondary duty to the English artillery regiment in Salerno. Damjanović was still expecting help from former politicians so that he could keep his men assembled as soldiers, but that didn't happen. He therefore asked Jovan Djonović for help: „*Use all of your reputation, which I know is of great value, to activate the gentlemen who represent us politically, especially the ones here in Italy, to enable me to work successfully. This is necessary because my staff and I are tied down here by the English, which greatly limits my possibilities, and I have to ask for permission each time I want to go out of the camp“.*⁸⁸

Employment on a higher magnitude still wasn't happening, which had a negative influence on the spirit of the men, so General Damjanović asked Živan Knežević to seek help from Konstantin Fotić, the former Yugoslav ambassador in the USA: „*Spring is coming, so we must hurry because the troops will rapidly fall apart, which must be prevented at all cost, because if it is left to individuals and groups of men to do as they choose, there will be no success“.*⁸⁹

The inhabitants of the camp in Eboli were especially dissatisfied because they were still treated as „enemy personnel“, although they all expected to be treated as allies. At the same time, the BK headquarters was reorganized, and from January 18, 1946, Lieutenant Colonel Ž. Andrić was the Chief-of-Staff of this unusual army.⁹⁰

On the other side, the viewpoint of Great Britain on the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli was still full of hostility towards the Serbian royalist

⁸⁶ M. Žujović, *Dnevnici i beleške*, III, 286.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from January 9, 1946.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to J. Djonović from February 1, 1946.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from February 6, 1946.

⁹⁰ *Van Otadžbine*.

movement. That can best be seen from a telegram of the Foreign Office from December 31, 1945, where it severely condemns the Allied Mediterranean headquarters for not executing „urgent and energetic measures“ concerning the arrest of „Chetnik war criminals“ that Belgrade was officially requesting. The Foreign Office was also unhappy with the „freedom“ the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli had: *„The Chetniks are left to themselves and they organize their own sentinel under the command of General Damjanović, who promised to control his monarchists. Due to the lack of men, the Chetniks take care of the camp, so it's very difficult to find any of the wanted men“*.⁹¹

The Yugoslav government tried to move from a standstill the issue of the camp in Eboli on January 22, 1946: They asked for permission for a delegation from Rome to visit the camp, with the goal to influence individuals to take the side of the new government: *„There is a large number of Yugoslav citizens in this camp who wish to return home, so we would appoint two of our representatives to separate these Yugoslavs from the others and help their repatriation“*.⁹²

The Yugoslav communist authorities were against helping the refugees and dislocated people from the very beginning. When Great Britain proposed to the III Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations on January 23, 1946, to form an organization which would help these people, the Yugoslav delegation voted against it. Aleš Bebler, who will later become greatly occupied with this issue, regarded this problem as one of a political nature because it involved „war criminals, collaborators and quislings“. It was therefore unacceptable to grant a general amnesty and a legal status to the refugees and provide help for „enemy collaborators and war criminals“. ⁹³Yugoslavia wanted to repatriate all the refugees and dislocated persons as quickly as possible, on the basis of bilateral agreements and without any international mediation.

The British government didn't take into consideration the Yugoslav diplomatic note from January 22. The Foreign Office was of the opinion that this was an issue of political refugees and not „quislings“ as was suggested from Belgrade. The Yugoslav Embassy in London received the following response: *„It is a fact that the majority of the inhabitants of this camp are strongly politically committed against the present Yugoslav government.*

⁹¹ According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 322–323.

⁹² *Ibid*, 324.

⁹³ According to: Branko Petranović – Momčilo Zečević, *Jugoslavija 1918–1988*. Tematska zbirka dokumenata, Beograd 1988, 834.

*Therefore, the Allied authorities will not be able to guarantee the security and ensure the safety of the Yugoslav representatives who would visit the camp“.*⁹⁴

The State Department had a negative opinion on this matter and was even more explicitly against the Belgrade delegation visiting the camp in Eboli: „*The request of the Yugoslav government is just an excuse to gain access to the camp in order to conduct enquiries against Tito’s adversaries*“.⁹⁵

General Damjanović made an effort to preserve the dignity of his men in these complicated relations, and also to expand the national organization in Italy and other western countries. He visited the camps in Foggy, Bari, Karbonara and Taranto in January, 1946. However, his possibilities were limited: he didn’t have the right to send his documents by courier, he didn’t have full liberty in moving about and, in February 1946, he had to sign a statement by which he agreed not to sign any more documents.⁹⁶

Conflicts about the acknowledgement of General Damjanović’s command continued. Mladen Žujović wrote the following on March 25: „*Letters from London written by Mr. Slobodan were received by Damjanović, Petković and myself. Ranko Brašić refused to act according to orders from the London committee because he had different instructions from Damjanović, so we now have concrete evidence of the evil that is suffocating us – some recognize one authority while others acknowledge another. Damjanović thinks he is a second Draža, he issues orders and instructions as if he has complete power. I’m trying to alleviate the differences, but this is nonsense*“.⁹⁷

The sending of men to work in English units continued during March. The „27th of March“ was solemnly celebrated; Damjanović formed a new management of the Cultural-Educational Council, headed by General Dragutin Živanović, and a new management of the Propaganda Department, headed by Captain Branimir Lazarević.⁹⁸

Damjanović was still dissatisfied with the attitude of some Yugoslav officers, who looked for any kind of employment rather than joining his organization in Eboli. Damjanović therefore resignedly wrote a letter to Mladen Žujović on April 21: „*It’s sad to see the high ranking officers in Rome, even General Lazić, guarding English military installations and fascist villas*

⁹⁴ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 324.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 325.

⁹⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

⁹⁷ M. Žujović, *Dnevnici i beleške*, III, 314.

⁹⁸ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

with a 'baton' in their hand, while I have a deficit of officers at my disposal, to say nothing of the other 'occupations' of our men outside the camp".⁹⁹

Momčilo Djujić, the former commandant of the Drina Chetnik Division, left the camp on April 24, without General Damjanović's permission: *„Djujić met with Jevdjević, who escaped from English custody, and they are now working together 'somewhere in Italy'. Their 'work' is making things difficult for me here, but they will most certainly take their 'activities' over to America. I know their 'great devotion to Serbia' will become prominent over there. They took upon themselves, 'as men who have roots in the people', the duty to save the Ravna Gora movement".¹⁰⁰*

Damjanović kept a vigilant eye on everything that was happening in Yugoslavia in the period after General Mihailović's arrest, especially on the preparations for the trial of the former commandant of the YAIF. He was comprehensively informed on the matter by Živan Knežević: *„Draža's destiny finished me off completely. I loved him very much as a man and as my commanding officer. You know that we were close personal friends. I don't know if we will be able to do anything for him or if he will be killed by those evil-doers. We had every misfortune possible. Only one remains which I think of with fear: that all of us will be extradited to those bloodthirsty executioners in Belgrade. Today, that fear is gone, thanks God".¹⁰¹*

In spite of the growing displeasure of one part of the emigration towards King Petar, Damjanović believed the people could decide on the form of rule in Yugoslavia only when they are truly free, *„while all of us outside our Fatherland are now the Royal Yugoslav Army, and are treated so by the Allies".¹⁰²*

Damjanović was stinted of a lot of useful information so he asked Knežević, and other people as well, to inform him on what they thought was important: *„Unfortunately, I must say, we hardly get any information here, especially now when Čiča (Draža) is unable to do anything and many feel called upon to 'save the movement' and offer themselves to be his successor! There are such people even here in the camp! Although I am the commandant outside the Fatherland, I am bounded by the English authorities and I haven't left the camp since January and I'm far from being able to do*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* – Jevdjević and Djujić hid for a while in the hills of south Naples, where they were visited by David Martin in September of 1946. (A. Bajt, *Bermanov dosije*, 528).

¹⁰¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* Ž. Knežević's letter to general Damjanović from May 12, 1946.

¹⁰² *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from June 12, 1946.

what needs to be done. A large number of people come to me for help, but I have nothing to give them since I didn't receive as much as a penny from anybody! I'm not complaining, I just wish to let you know how difficult my work here is"¹⁰³.

General Damjanović wasn't satisfied with the help he received from the Serbian emigration. There was a shortage of everything: from personal hygiene supplies to cigarettes: „*I especially emphasize the urgent needs of the Supreme Command. By meeting these needs we would strengthen our position and at the same time we could support our representatives in achieving the goals of our agonized nation*“.¹⁰⁴ Živko Topalović left Rome in this period („without any tears or goodbyes“), which could have made the position of Damjanović's men even more difficult, but „there was no turning back, we all look to the future. If there was just a bit more understanding from some of our people, there would be no end to our possibilities“.¹⁰⁵

Contact was made with Aleksandar Trifunac, a lawyer from Belgrade who was in the famous mission with Velimir Piletić, the commandant of the Krajina Corps of the YAIF, when an attempt was made to reach an agreement with the Red Army in September of 1944, to jointly fight the enemy. Members of the delegation were arrested and Trifunac spent more than a year in prison in the Soviet Union. While he was being repatriated to Yugoslavia, he escaped from the train and found himself in Austria. He wrote to Damjanović for the first time on May 7, 1946, but the letter never reached Eboli. He wrote for the second time to Damjanović on June, and Damjanović received the letter on July 12 and replied immediately.¹⁰⁶

The inhabitants of the camp in Eboli had a lack of everything. This could best be seen from General Damjanović's letter to Mihailo Dučić, the President of the Serbian National Defence in Chicago. Although Damjanović expressed his gratitude for the help that was arriving, he didn't miss the opportunity to emphasize that the help was, before all, one of a moral nature and it showed the people they weren't abandoned and that they had „somebody of theirs“. The General asked for financial help („we have no money and we aren't getting any from anyone“), tobacco and cigarettes, soap, sugar, cocoa, milk and flower for the children, and a lot of footwear. He also

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from June 19, 1946.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* – In the second half of June, it came to General Damjanović's knowledge that Colonel Ljubomir Jovanović (the former commandant of the Timočki Corps of the YAIF) was in Paris, so he tried to contact him in order to give him instructions for work. Jovanović visited General Damjanović in Eboli on December 16, 1946.

¹⁰⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

requested that all the shipments be addressed to the camp and not to individuals, in order to avoid disunion among the men.¹⁰⁷

Life in the camp went on as usual: although it was forbidden, some officers would often go to the allied mess hall to „eat or take money“; the theatre group went on a seven-day tour to the Lamni camp, where the Poles were accommodated; the cultural-teaching and educational department of the Šumadija Division officially published an invitation for an exhibition of artistic handicrafts, without Damjanović's knowledge; a similar action was undertaken by the Christian Young People's Community („again in their own name“); Men from the 1st Lika regiment, under the command of Major Jeftić, received weapons from the English for use when on duty, but an incident occurred when „one Dalmatian man killed a man from Lika with a rifle“; a conflict over authority broke out in the hospital in Naples between a Slovenian group and a group of men from the Šumadija Division; nobody respected the orders of going to the river together „under command for bathing“, everyone went individually and they „fished, cooked, stole tomatoes from nearby; there were disputes about what was to be done with the money from the sale of the „Packard“ automobile which once belonged to the King, who gave it to Patriarch Gavriilo and the Patriarch gave it to General Damjanović. The SVC claimed the car was theirs, since it was their train that transported the car from Belgrade.

General Damjanović responded with the following words: „*This car is the property of the State, acquired by the Supreme Command, with money wrested from the Germans. The Šumadija Division and the Dinara Division both had their own motor pools which were sold. The Dinara Division cars were spoils of war taken from the Germans, so if individuals or the commands performed the sales of these cars for their own benefit, that can be tolerated. However, the Šumadija Division motor pool belonged to the SDK, and therefore was the property of the Serbian State, so if the cars were sold it shouldn't have been of benefit only to the Šumadija Division, but to the whole community*“.¹⁰⁸

The death of General Dragoljub Mihailović was a hard blow, not only to General Damjanović, but to all the people at the camp in Eboli. Damjanović issued a decree on July 17, emphasizing that General Mihailović's punishment was a chastisement for the entire Serbian people, but the fight will go on: „*We will continue our fight from where we stopped with Čiča*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to M. Dučić from July 14, 1946.

¹⁰⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Transcripts from the minute-book of the commandant's conference held at the camp headquarters in Eboli on July 15, 1946.

*(Draža), till the day of our people's freedom or until we all disappear. Let this irretrievable loss strengthen us even more in our decision and in our justified battle and let it bring us new vigour: to sacrifice ourselves completely for the freedom of our people“.*¹⁰⁹ The General also ordered all the soldiers to wear a black ribbon on their sleeves for 40 days as a sign of deep mourning.

The first memorial service for General Mihailović was held on July 18, 1946. The British authorities gave permission for the Yugoslav flag to fly at half-mast. Damjanović lined up all the troops, officers and soldiers had a black ribbon on their sleeves, women and girls wore black dresses and kerchiefs with their hair let down; nine Orthodox priests said the prayers and one Catholic priest held a memorial service. Demonstrations in the camp began at nine o'clock in the evening. Everybody was scanning „Down with Tito, down with communism!“, „Glory to fallen Čiča“, „Long live King Petar“. The demonstrators left the camp and started heading towards town, but general Damjanović was able to stop them: „*Heroes! This current day of pain and sorrow for our Čiča wouldn't be complete without what is happening now. Thank you my heroes. All of this shows me that you will fulfil your pledge to the very end and that you will continue to go in the path set by our legendary Čiča in 1941. I call on you to return to the camp as befits soldiers of order, and show our allies, under whose command and protection we are, that we are combatants who know what we want and why we are fighting“.*¹¹⁰

Although the Ljotić sympathizers accused him of trying to become the new leader, Damjanović didn't see himself as Mihailović's successor. He said the following to his soldiers on July 18, 1946: „*I cannot be your second Čiča. Nobody can replace him. Nobody among us is his equal. Only if we are all united we can achieve what Čiča wanted and started in Ravna Gora“.*¹¹¹

The first commemoration night dedicated to General Mihailović was held on July 25. The key speech was held by Miodrag Damjanović. He explained General Mihailović's historic role in the context of the fight against totalitarianism, for freedom and democracy: „*Draža was the first live protest in Europe against the German occupation, and he was the first one to protest at the end of the war against the brutal and one-sided decisions which didn't suit not only the interests and the mood of the people, but the*

¹⁰⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

*goals of the United Nations as well. The first man in occupied Europe who started an armed conflict against the Germans was also the first man to start an armed conflict against the communists. Due to that fact, he was the first target of everybody's propaganda machine, accusing him of being a reactions, a fascist, a collaborator, a traitor, a war criminal, the one who provoked a civil war, everything that they were and why he fought against them to the death“.*¹¹²

A great encouragement for General Damjanović was the support he received from a group of former commandants of the YAIF: Savo Vukadinović, Dragomir Topalović, Zvonimir Vučković, Dragiša Ninković, Maja Batričević and four more officers: „*We the undersigned, had a meeting today to comment on the death of our commandant and martyr, General Draža. Spiritually, he will never die as far as we are concerned, and we will never stop fighting for the ideals he longed for. We consider it our duty to express our wish on this occasion, that you, as his assistant and our commandant, complete the fight for the freedom of our agonized people“.*¹¹³

In order to come to some kind of decision on what to do with Damjanović's emigrants, the British authorities organized a ballot under their control to see if anybody wanted to return to Yugoslavia. The polling was held on July 27, 1946. Only a few people voted for returning to Yugoslavia.¹¹⁴

Everything was back to everyday life very soon: On July 29, an Italian killed a Yugoslav soldier, so General Damjanović reprimanded his officers for not controlling their men: „*I don't know what to say any more. All of my numerous orders and recommendations seem to have no value“.*¹¹⁵ The situation was alarming, 12 men died of unnatural causes (killed or drowned) up to now, and more deaths could be expected because the Italians will „protect their vineyards“. The stolen fruit and vegetables were sold at a grocery shop run by the invalids of the Šumadija Division. Plenty of people lived with their families on the seashore, which became a real colony.

There was a lot of dispute about the list of people that were going to be taken away from the camp because they derange the normal everyday life. Attacks on Damjanović followed, as always, from members of the Šumadija Division, who accused him of using this situation to free himself of his

¹¹² *General Miodrag M. Damjanović's speech at the commemoration night dedicated to General Draža Mihailović, 3.*

¹¹³ *General Damjanović's Archives.* The letter to General Damjanović from July 19, 1946.

¹¹⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Transcripts from the minute-book of the commandant's conference held at the camp headquarters in Eboli on July 30, 1946.

political opponents: „I find, with regret, that everything I have accomplished in a year and a half, together with my commandants, could be ruined now, when the results of our work should come to light. I most probably had a much better life than most of the people who are attacking me now. I'm not fighting for a position, because I don't need one, I'm fighting to save what I have accomplished together with my commandants up to now“.¹¹⁶

On the last day of July, 1946, the camp in Eboli was visited by General Crips, commandant of the Naples district, and at the beginning of September the British authorities announced that about 4000 men will find employment in the British troops.¹¹⁷

During the first year in Eboli, it was clear that this camp had become the anti-communist fortress of the Yugoslav emigration and that there was a military organization in it. At the same time, General Damjanović had to face the uncertainty of his destiny. The Yugoslav government asked the British authorities for his extradition three times during 1946. The first request was sent on June 1. The Foreign Office even gave its approval. Since the requests of the Yugoslav government were getting more frequent, General Damjanović sent an appeal to the US government. He explained the situation in the refugee camps and in Yugoslavia, and he asked the American government to try to establish a democratic system in Yugoslavia.¹¹⁸

Damjanović insisted with the British authorities that his men be treated as an Army, because of better treatment and various benefits. When Djujić and Jevdjević left the camp, there was a problem with their men because they didn't acknowledge Damjanović's command. They were supported by Jakov Ljotić (Dimitrije Ljotić's brother) who became the political leader of the „Zbor“ (Ljotić sympathizers) after his brother's death. He wrote a letter accusing General Damjanović of arbitrariness, „deep hatred“ towards the Šumadija Division, and he resented most of all that the people were still treated as „Chetniks“ and that the word „Chetnik“ was in the name of the camp.

The high ranking officers in Eboli had a conference concerning this letter on August 6. General Damjanović read the letter with severe criticism directed at the author: „The English consider this camp a Chetnik camp, the word Chetnik is printed on the inscription over the entrance to the camp and the hospital, all the soldiers are treated as Chetniks. I doubt that the soldiers of the Šumadija Division would rather go to the SS camp, but if that is

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Van Otadžbine*, 11.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

*the case, let me know. I always said that I wish the SS camp was as far away as possible from us all, but I never kept anybody here by force. I cannot take Mr. Ljotić's wish to go to the SS camp as the wish of all the members of the Šumadija Division“.*¹¹⁹

The situation in the camp in Eboli was far from idyllic. Colonel Božanović, commandant of the Šumadija Division, said his men were still being accused of collaborating with the Germans, and in order to protect themselves, they created a movement for moral and spiritual revival and that is the only thing separating them from the rest of the men: „*The Šumadija Division is inspired by the spirit of the late Dimitrije Ljotić, whose successor and representative is Jaša Ljotić, so he is the main factor for the Šumadija Division now“.*¹²⁰

To what extent Damjanović was ready to fight uncompromisingly for his idea can best be seen from the letter he wrote to Živan Knežević on August 17, 1946: „*In spite of the persecution of a campaign against me organized by some local 'gentlemen' in the 'Srpske Novine' [Serbian Newspaper], I know my goal and what to do. I can be prevented to do so only if they kill me, as they have already threatened to do, or if I am relieved of my duties by the Supreme Command, since the man who appointed me and sent me here is unfortunately no longer among the living“.*¹²¹

At the end of August, the British command ordered the making of lists of all the inhabitants of the camp, divided into the following groups: army, air force, navy, non-military individuals, children under the age of 16 and women above the age of 16. This induced the spreading of various rumours about the reason why these lists were made. Damjanović was still against going to countries outside of Europe and he made an effort to keep all the anti-communist emigrants grouped in one place, as close to Yugoslavia as possible.¹²²

The situation in the camp in Eboli was gradually improving, but Damjanović still had a lot of resistance from the „dukes“ and Ljotić sympathisers: „*If they would only stop with all their disturbances, stop straining my*

¹¹⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Transcripts from the minute-book of the commandant's conference held on August 6, 1946.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* – Damjanović sent Jakov Ljotić's letter to Adam Pribičević on August 7, with the following comment: „*Please read the enclosed copy of Jasa Ljotić's letter, most certainly written with Djujić's approval, in which he once again says the longer I stay at this place, the more blood will have to be washed away“* (*General Damjanović's Archives*).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *General Damjanović's Archives*. Conference of the camp commandants held at the camp in Eboli on August 24, 1946.

*every nerve with their unreasonable behaviour and stop ruining the overall living atmosphere, which is almost like a normal military life. Čiča is our greatest pride and at the same time our deepest pain. His death had a horrible effect on us, but it also brought us members of the Ravna Gora movement closer together, while the „dukes“ were thinking only of their ambitions and who would be Čiča’s successor. The Ljotić sympathisers were using this situation to disassociate themselves as much as possible from the members of the Ravna Gora movement“.*¹²³

Damjanović was so exasperated by the conduct of Djujić’s and Jevdjević’s men that he asked Knežević to try to neutralize their work and expose them to the Serbian public eye in America for what they „really are“. Besides, „they are so ‘dirty’ that they disgrace us in front of the Italians“.¹²⁴

At the very beginning of September, Damjanović received word from Major Aleksandar Milošević, the former commandant of the 2nd Šumadija Corps of the YAIF, who was in the Serbian guerrilla all up to June of 1946, when he illegally got across the border to Greece and is now spending his days in a refugee camp in Salonika. His intentions were to continue the fight against the communist government in Yugoslavia: „*What can be done in that respect? You certainly know. You also must know what it would mean to the people in our fatherland who are living through the blackest hour in the fight against Tito’s tyranny. Tell me what to do*“.¹²⁵

In his letters, Knežević was still spreading the belief that „the Russians“ will very soon be forced to leave Europe. He wrote to General Damjanović on August 21: „*We heard from the highest circles: there will be no yielding, America will not retreat from Europe, they’ll protect freedom and use military force against any aggression. Let nobody kid himself. The situation is so tense it could explode at any moment*“.¹²⁶ He was even more optimistic on September 5: „*The situation is difficult. There is no indulgence. Some people think that war will break out in December. I think it will be sooner. The main thing is to hold out a little longer*“.¹²⁷ At the end of September he wrote the following: „*There is no agreement with the Russians. They’ll go to war [...] I’m convinced we’ll be returning home soon*“.¹²⁸

¹²³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Živan Knežević from August 17, 1946.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* Major Milošević’s letter to General Damjanović from September 2, 1946.

¹²⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* Ž. Knežević’s letter to General Damjanović from September 28, 1946.

General Damjanović showed a bit more practicality. At a meeting with the command of the camp and members of the committee for refugees held on September 1, he requested that his men keep a military status: „*There is plenty of space in Europe now and my men could successfully replace the British and American occupying forces, which could go home*“.¹²⁹ If that wouldn't be possible, he suggested they stay on together in order to make their refugee life easier: „*I would like us all to stay together and still represent something, not to drown in a sea of strangers. Above all, we wish to stay close to our fatherland, no matter where, be it in Italy, Austria, Germany or France, just not too far, because we all believe we are going to return home*“.¹³⁰

The British command allowed the employment of 4000 men on military duties on the territory of the 3rd district. A much better treatment was promised compared to those who were already in work groups; a salary and eventually weapons. Damjanović's suggestion to form three zones so the men from various units wouldn't mix, was accepted: men from the Dinara Division would be in the first zone, men from the Šumadija Division in the second, and men from the Drina regiment, the 2nd Lika regiment, the Gendarmerie regiment and the Zeta regiment in the third zone.¹³¹

Damjanović cautioned his men emphasizing that this was a good opportunity to show the Allies they were „worthy soldiers of the Royal Army” and followers of General Mihailović: „*I want you to be dignified soldiers at each and every place and don't demean yourselves for any reason in front of the Allies or anyone else. Let modesty be the main virtue of you all. Be proud of your torments and misfortunes, bear them bravely as you did when you were fighting in the units of our indefatigable Čiča, which will show who we are and will preserve our reputation and improve the conditions we live in*“.¹³²

Preparations for the forming of groups, in order to make the most of the favourable atmosphere in the British command as quickly as possible, went very slowly and we were afraid nothing would become of this. Damjanović was very displeased. He blamed the commandants: the lists were extremely irregular and not handed in on time. Damjanović was called to come to the British command late in the evening on September 9 „*because Major Pavičević was unable to make a list of 25 men during one whole day and*

¹²⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders from September 10, 1946.

*hand it in on time. When he finally handed it in, several mistakes were found. I had to endure the British remarks that after so many requests to employ our men and their approval, we take this matter very lightly and do our work superficially“.*¹³³

It was hard to maintain military order. Although Momčilo Djujić wasn't in the camp, his influence was still very strong: he gave directions to his men on how to elect their seniors, while in the Šumadija Division „the men were used to one another and wanted to stay together and to choose their own superiors“. Arbitrariness was also present: Major Stojan Matović refused to go to work and requested to be deployed to the officer reserve. Damjanović therefore ordered him to leave the camp. The officers didn't want to work together with the soldiers: „*It's sad that the officers only look after themselves, instead of taking care of their men and the community: What would it look like if I had taken into consideration the earlier suggestion of the Šumadija Division to legalize all the ranks, regardless of the fact who they were given by during the war?*“¹³⁴

Damjanović insisted on keeping the formal institution of the Supreme Command. He defended his standpoint on September 15, 1946, with the following words: „*I remain of the opinion that the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, no matter what it's like, shouldn't be abolished. It has the right to exist. If it is annulled, it will be hard to establish it again. There is no inconvenience if there are command headquarters in Italy, Austria and Germany, but only if they are connected to the Supreme Command. If I'm not to somebody's liking and that is agreed upon by the staff, let somebody more deserving take my place, I just want the Supreme Command to keep its continuity*“.¹³⁵

General Damjanović had some kind of indigene gentleness and delicacy, he respected his soldiers, and on one occasion he wrote a letter to Ljubiša Višacki, the Yugoslav ambassador in Madrid who was still recognized by the Spanish government, that all the problems were created by the officers and their inability to understand their national duties: „*The people are wonderful, the officers are no good! I was therefore, in the past year and a half, doing my best for these people who have consciously sacrificed*

¹³³ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Conference of the camp commandants held in Eboli on September 10, 1946.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*. – Damjanović succeeded in acquiring a printing office, „so we will be able to work more easily“. (*General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from September 23, 1946).

*everything they could, so it wouldn't be right to leave them to themselves – they don't deserve that. I don't mind the personal difficulties. The main thing is to reach a result. My first daily injunction in Soča was: – to hold out – the same goes for all of us today as well, where ever we are“.*¹³⁶

Attacks on Damjanović were getting more frequent, especially after the death of General Mihailović, so he was forced to prove that General Mihailović really did appoint him his assistant in 1944. He wrote to Živan Knežević about that on September 15: *„I want my headquarters to keep on functioning, who will be the commanding officer is not my decision. Whether I want to or not, I have to work because nobody has relieved me of my duty, which I was appointed to by Čiča. I would go too far if I wrote about all our obscenities. The one thing you must know is: The Ljotić sympathizers remain Ljotić sympathizers. They are not improvable. When they talk of unity and peace, that's when you should be careful the most. I had a lot of this bitter experience! There's something else you should know: the Ljotić sympathizers react horribly to Tito's requests for the extradition of war criminals – naturally, I am also to blame for this, while all the others are euonymus, especially after Djujić's 'heroic departure' from the camp in order to avoid extradition, although nobody requested his extradition, except Jevdjević, so that they could continue together their 'constructive' work for the 'common good' of the Serbian people“.*¹³⁷

After a massive scale refusal of the men in Eboli to return to Yugoslavia, a somewhat surprising change followed in the attitude of the British officers towards the men in the camp. General Damjanović wrote to Adam Pribičević on September 17, 1946: *„The British authorities are showing a sign of intimacy which is not far from friendship. This is increasing on a daily basis and is expressed ever more clearly“.* Damjanović explained that this came as a result of the change in British relations towards the system in Yugoslavia, *„but I can't completely discard the influence of our excellent attitude, the attitude of our little people who showed conscientiousness and worked hard to eliminate the artificial political title of 'robbers and bandits', and replace it with one which reflects the real situation they are striving to achieve“.*¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Ljubiša Vašički from September 15, 1946.

¹³⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* – The employment of the men from Eboli had improved considerably. In the first group 3675 men were employed near Naples, while some of them got work in Bo-

During September of 1946, General Damjanović was occupied with reading the book *Tito's movement and the regime in Yugoslavia* written by Branislav Stranjaković. He wrote to B. Stranjaković about his impressions on September 24: „*In my opinion, this book represents the best piece of work concerning our issue, especially on the work of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. This book is a documentary entirety which was greatly needed. It will fill the perceptible deficiency in the press of the western democracies and the Allies, who do not understand our problems, or should I say, understand them even less than we do*“.¹³⁹

The working conditions in the British troops improved considerably at the end of September, while Djujić and Jevdjević wrote that the men were forced to do the dirtiest jobs unworthy of a soldier, „they even had to clean the lavatories“. Damjanović could only reply that the cleaning of lavatories was a regular barracks duty. It was noticeable that many individuals from Major Vuksanović's group suddenly developed into „great lordships“ and didn't want to cook the food themselves, so they hired German and Italian cooks. There were also examples of typical Serbian immodesty – Major Vuksanović demanded his salary on his very first day at work.¹⁴⁰

General Damjanović often emphasized that his only goal was to work on the revival of the national idea so he could stay faithful to the ideals of the Ravna Gora movement and General Mihailović: „*That is my only goal and my strongest law. The realization of this task isn't easy. It requests a lot of effort, self-denial and exertion. Only with combined forces and led by the idea that unites us, can something be done. So we should therefore place ourselves above personal and individual interests and work only for the common good*“.¹⁴¹

Misunderstandings with the Ljotić sympathizers were constantly going on – they saw Damjanović as an enemy. Damjanović therefore asked Jovan Djonović to somehow pacify these attacks because of the common good: „*I know you are in correspondence with them, so I kindly ask you to draw their attention to their attitude, because they are forgetting that the British authorities are treating them as Chetniks and they enjoy all the benefits of*

logna and Milano: „*I received a confidential report which stated that the general opinion of the British officers was that there were no better men for sentinel duty than the Yugoslavs from Eboli*“ (*Ibid.*).

¹³⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* *General Damjanović's Archives.* Conference of the camp commandants held in Eboli on September 28, 1946.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to a group of commandants of the YAIF from October 3, 1946.

*such a treatment, so once they have chosen not to be members of the Ravna Gora movement (they refused to wear badges) tell them not to work against the movement. I'm doing everything I can to keep us all together, I'm interested only in the Šumadija Division and not in the „Zbor“ [Ljotić sympathizers]“.*¹⁴²

The behaviour of the men outside the camp was an additional problem for General Damjanović and that was discussed at a conference of the commandants held in Eboli on October 15, 1946. Damjanović spoke of the decline of élan and discipline of these men: *„Cases of theft, robbery and even murder are getting more frequent lately. If this continues, we will face serious consequences. I'm under the impression that there is a competition going on in stealing and black racketeering under the pretext of helping our community here. What's even worse, the same things are beginning to happen in our troops up north, the troops for which the Allies had only words of praise up to now“.*¹⁴³

The high school and boarding facilities in Eboli were reorganized in this period in order to enable them to work in full harmony. Most of the complaints were made on the work of the boarding facilities because they were for military use only, where the officers were the seniors. The problem of making the high school diplomas official was still present.

Damjanović never asked for anything for himself: *„I need it for the people, especially for the children who are the least taken care of. People feel the lack of tobacco, which is not provided for us here at the camp“.*¹⁴⁴ He never even tried to deny all the accusations against him („I mind my own business“), but nevertheless, he didn't take them lightly, as was the case when Momčilo Djujić ordered his men not to obey the officers who acknowledge General Damjanović: *„Is this called working on keeping order and discipline in the troops?! We are talking about active service high ranking officers here, which the Drina Division hasn't got enough of, which were asked for personally by Djujic's representative and his commandants. They threatened me in the same way of course. I don't take notice of it! I will continue to work according to my conscience“.*¹⁴⁵

At the end of October, General Damjanović made a tour of the camp in Lamni and visited Colonel Cross, the British commandant. Damjanović wrote to Milan Maksimović on the last day of October, who tried to bring

¹⁴² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to J. Djonović from October 8, 1946.

¹⁴³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to priest Jovan Marčetić from October 22, 1946.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

together „the national Serbs“ in Greece. General Damjanović asked Maksimović to make contact with Major Milošević: „I kindly ask you to contact Major Milošević and help him as much as you possibly can, because I informed him to visit the camps instead of me and organize the people“.¹⁴⁶

Damjanović was never able to establish a normal communication with members of the „Zbor“ [Ljotić sympathizers] in Eboli: „The Dukes and the leadership of the „Zbor“ can't be brought to reason. I heard that the members of the „Zbor“ were able to arrange for the theology students to go to university, with the help of the Christian young people's community. I say – I heard, because nobody has informed me about that yet, while it is requested of me to find a solution for the student issue. Of course I am to blame because about 50 promised scholarships never arrived from America“.¹⁴⁷

The problem of discipline of the soldiers and officers in Eboli was constant. The seniors concluded at a conference held on November 13, 1946, that their authority „was declining every day“, and that the men who are not employed have an inadequate attitude. Thefts are getting more frequent. Everything was getting stolen, tents from the mortuary and even goods meant for the invalids. „Gambling turned into a passion among the youngest people and everybody was complaining about the shortage of money“. „Habitual drinking along with shouting, shooting and knife fights, even boozing with German drivers“ were also getting more frequent. Refusing to obey ordinary working orders was becoming an every day occurrence, as well as slander and telling lies: „The saddest of all was the begging for help from the Americans by falsely describing our present situation, and even trying to capitalize on the help certain individuals rendered to some unfortunate American pilots“.¹⁴⁸

At the beginning of December 1946, General Damjanović, after quite some time, heard from Colonel Žarko Popović from Cairo, the former head of the Intelligence Department of the Royal Yugoslav Army and a close friend of General Mihailović: „Sinful Draža is in the other world. You and most of the honourable officers are over there, while the ones who are most to blame for that are living with their families in America and London, living from Draža's fame and his funds“.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from October 31, 1946.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* Ž. Popović's letter to General Damjanović from December 10, 1946.

After more than a year of persistent work, General Damjanović wasn't able to completely establish a firm organizational structure of the Serbian people outside the Fatherland: *„Not once, but many times during this past year and a half, have I tried everything in my power to paralyse the work of the unauthorized ones, and to point in the right direction the work of the ones in charge, but unfortunately with very little success. Even where I did succeed, it was an issue of good will only, but those who should have understood and helped me did not do so, often because of personal motives and interests. What hurts me the most is the enormous effort of some of the most distinguished members of the Ravna Gora movement going down the drain“*.¹⁵⁰

Cutting the olives was still the favourite „hobby“ in the camp, although it was strictly forbidden by the British command. Stealing tents was in second place. Italian prostitutes visited the camp frequently („almost all the troops, especially the motor pool“) the black market functioned very well thanks to some officers: *„I regret to conclude that these negative scenes exist, and I order all the commandants to prevent such occurrences which bring shame on us all“*.¹⁵¹

An incident with great consequences took place at the very end of 1947. The Yugoslav government was executing active propaganda amongst the Yugoslav emigrants through its delegation in the Allied advisory council in Italy. Vicko Glunčić, the Yugoslav consul in Naples, received orders to visit several camps in January of 1947. He visited the artillery „camp 38“ near Naples on January 25, 1947, accompanied by Josip Engele, the attaché of the Yugoslav delegation. Demonstrations broke out immediately in the camp in Eboli. Members of the Yugoslav delegation were attacked with cold steel. Glunčić was killed and Engele was badly wounded. The Yugoslav public was informed that the Chetniks committed this crime: *„It is well-known that there are several refugee camps in the vicinity of Naples. Many war criminals live in these camps, the most famous among them are Dobrosav Jevdjević, Momčilo Djujić and General Damjanović“*.¹⁵²

The government in Belgrade immediately accused the British military authorities for the incident: *„In all the time after the liberation, this is one of the worst incidents from the British side and one of the biggest injustices done to us from our war allies. Our people, who fought so bravely*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Aleksandar Milošević from December 16, 1946.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* A meeting of all the camp commandants held in Eboli on December 18, 1946.

¹⁵² *Politika*, January 29, 1947.

*against the enemy who also bombed English cities, are amazed by the fact that the British gave their military uniforms to the biggest war criminals. This kind of politics is now protecting professional criminals who are treacherously murdering diplomatic representatives“.*¹⁵³

General Damjanović was interrogated in Naples and Kaserta because of this incident. It was concluded that the Yugoslav consul was previously warned not to come to the camp because the people have strong anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist feelings, especially not to try to make a speech and that he is responsible for his own safety. General Damjanović was exempted from any responsibility for the incident.¹⁵⁴

The Yugoslav authorities launched a protest to the Foreign Office because of the murder of their diplomat, emphasizing clearly that the government in London was responsible: *„Attacks such as these are frequent not only in Italy, but where ever the Yugoslav war criminals are welcome, which shows that they are treated in such a manner which encourages them to have an aggressive attitude towards the FPRY (Federative Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia) and no criminal proceedings were instituted by the British authorities against the originators of this crime. The Yugoslav government emphasizes that this crime, and plenty of similar ones, is the result of the politics of not extraditing war criminals wanted by the Yugoslav government“.*¹⁵⁵

At the same time, the British authorities believed that, after the execution of General Mihailović, it would be „too much“ to send his deputy to Tito with a „noose around his neck“ to stand trial before a „national court“. Will he have a fair trial in Belgrade was the problem: *„Unfortunately, a fair trial cannot be expected in Belgrade. What ever decision we make, I doubt it will have any lasting consequences on the British – Yugoslav relations. If we hand him over, there will be a momentary expression of satisfaction in Yugoslavia, but when the communists have had a taste of blood, the Yugoslavs will increase their demands for extraditions.“*¹⁵⁶

In the beginning of 1947, the British government decided to find any kind of solution for the Yugoslav refugees under their protection in Italy, Austria and Germany. That applied especially to the refugees in Eboli because the Anglo-American troops were to retreat from Italy very soon. Besides

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Van Otadžbine*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ *Politika*, January 31, 1947.

¹⁵⁶ Foreign Office report from February 15, 1947. According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 432–433.

that, the Yugoslav government once again requested the extradition of General Damjanović on January 10. Therefore, a committee was formed with the task to question all the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli. The committee would then recommend to the British government all the individuals they thought should be extradited to the Yugoslav authorities. Others would receive a civilian status, a dislocated persons (DP) status. The famous Brigadier Fitzroy MacLean was appointed to head the committee, a politician who played a crucial role in extolling Tito and accepting him and his partisans as allies during WW II. MacLean was promoted on this occasion to the rank of Major General.¹⁵⁷ The committee was composed of an equal number of British officers who were members of British missions appointed to the partisans and to the royalists during the war.

Episcopo Dionisije and Mihailo Dučić immediately sent a telegram to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, expressing their concern about the forming of this committee. The reply arrived through the British embassy in Washington and it was quite reassuring. The intentions of the British government were to protect all „the innocent political refugees“ from coercive repatriation, while MacLean plans to enlarge his committee with individuals who know the Chetniks well: „*The committee is not authorized to hand over any person whose extradition hasn't been already approved by the State Department and the Foreign Office. The main goal of this committee is to determine who will be placed under international care and who will be exposed to danger if they are not taken from Italy to a safer place*“.¹⁵⁸

The Yugoslav authorities expected that the time had come when they could get their hands on many of the people marked as „collaborators of the enemy“ and „war criminals“. The government in Belgrade intended to form a committee which would „help“ MacLean come to a „final solution of the entire issue of the Yugoslav dislocated persons and enemy collaborators“. They even requested from the British authorities that MacLean's committee should hand over investigation reports on each person to the Yugoslav committee „if there is reason to believe that he is identical to the person wanted by the Yugoslav government“. They also requested the immediate arrest of these individuals and their extradition to the authorities in Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 417.

¹⁵⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

When news of the forming of MacLean's committee reached the camp in Eboli, Damjanović tried to embolden his men by telling them that there was no place for uneasiness and fear, because that would only lead to the „weakening of moral and spirit“ and lack of discipline: *„Today, when the western democracies and all the freedom-loving people realize, understand and feel the justifiability of our struggle in the country and our standpoint here in exile and are openly showing it; today, when the forming of a committee for refugees within the United Nations Organization proves that there is a will and moral obligation to help us; today, when reputable members of the British Parliament are expressing their willingness to help and take care of our Chetnik group here in Eboli, there is no need for this alarming situation present here now“*.¹⁶⁰

Damjanović was telling his people that there was no need for them to panic and that they shouldn't leave Italy at any rate, nor should they go to the civilian camps. He also denied the rumours that he and his closest associates have already had their passports prepared by ambassador Višacki in order to go to the USA: *„During all these years there were many much more difficult moments and more dangerous situations for me, but I never even thought of leaving my soldiers. I won't leave them now and I never will. I shared their destiny and I will continue to do so until the very end, because I didn't come among them of my own free will, I was ordered to do so by our immortal Čiča“*.¹⁶¹

Damjanović reminded his men once again that they were the King's soldiers, that they have a supreme commandant, and that they must follow in the footsteps of General Mihailović: *„We will continue in this path. Unity and brotherly harmony must always be maintained, because that is the pledge of the preservation of our community. Only as a whole do we mean something for ourselves, for our allies and for our people in our country. To preserve the entirety is the law that each and every one of us should live by, from the highest ranking officers to the last soldier“*.¹⁶²

Damjanović requested perseverance, patience and persistence from his men and himself, because great events demand great people: *„Temptation comes only to separate the strong from the weak, to set aside the ones*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's instructions from January 19, 1947.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.* – Even a month later Damjanović thought the same: *„I most certainly won't have the need for a passport because I will share the destiny of the men I have brought here“*. (General Damjanović's Archives. A circular from February 28, 1947).

who are not fit for the time they live in and strengthen the real fighters for the hour of judgment. Misfortunes didn't break us, our spirit isn't exhausted, and our faith didn't weaken. We've created harmony, maintained unity, and preserved our entirety".¹⁶³

Since the situation was very serious, General Damjanović drew up a survey of his men for the committee and sent it to the British authorities on February 5. All the men were asked to give their personal data, to state what they were doing from April 6 up to the time they came to Italy, what units they belonged to and who their commanding officers were. It was clear that a new chapter in the lives of General Damjanović and the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli was about to begin. The General had taken measures to avoid any incidents and informed the British command not to put any „Tito sympathizes“ in the committee.¹⁶⁴

General Damjanović visited Colonel Grant in Kazerta on February 17. They talked about moving Damjanović's men to Germany.¹¹² The General was convinced he could maintain the unity of his organization even though they now had a DP (dislocated persons) status. He was full of optimism when he wrote to Episcopo Dionisije on February 22: *„I have to emphasize that it was much easier for me, as the commandant, to take care of my men earlier on, but I hope the spirit from Eboli will continue to exist wherever we go. Our life together so far, beginning from Soča, has made a huge majority of the men feel like they were part of a family which they proudly called the Royal Yugoslav Army*".¹⁶⁵

The crucial events of the time brought a great deal of uncertainty, so the general had to, amongst other things, face his opponents who were trying to separate him from his men. Damjanović emphasized that his destiny was to be with his men, whose destiny was connected to the „well-being and freedom of the Fatherland“ and King Petar („the little one“).¹⁶⁶ Damjanović wrote to Mladen Žujović on February 25, saying that his most important task was to take care of his men, *„but unfortunately, it seems like there is no unanimity concerning our future and many of the well-intentioned ones are working on their own in order to achieve personal gain, Rome (the Yugoslav National Emigration Committee) before all, not taking into consideration anything suggested in Eboli. I can say, with the utmost certa-*

¹⁶³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from February 12, 1947.

¹¹² *VanOtadžbine.*

¹⁶⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Vuković from February 24, 1947.

inty, that the men in Eboli are an example of how to understand one's duty towards the King and the Fatherland".¹⁶⁷

In the mean time, a new request from the Yugoslav authorities for the extradition of General Damjanović arrived on January 10, 1947. At the Foreign Office, they were thinking of questioning Damjanović about his conduct in German captivity, his contacts with General Mihailović and his work in General Milan Nedić's cabinet. The situation was more than serious, so Živan Knežević launched a diplomatic offensive in order to prevent the extradition of General Damjanović. Knežević wrote a letter to Dwight Eisenhower, Chief-of-Staff of the US Army, assuring him that „there aren't any courts“ in Yugoslavia, there are only courts of the Communist Party, which convict those who are devoted to western democracies: „*The extradition of anybody by the Allies to Tito's government is certain death. Up to now, the western democracies have never sentenced anybody to death without an enquiry and a fair trial. Only the Soviets and their satellites kill without a trail, with evidence fabricated by the secret police*“.¹⁶⁸

The American administration once again protected the people wanted by the Yugoslav authorities. The State Department replied to the Foreign Office on February 27, 1947: „*Damjanović's service in Nedić's cabinet under special orders of General Mihailović shouldn't in any way be the basis for his extradition to Tito*“.¹⁶⁹

In March of 1947, the Foreign Office decided to question General Damjanović before they form a resolution about his extradition to Belgrade. This was suggested on February 24 by Orme Sargent, a well-known figure from the crucial events of WW II. They planned to take the general to Rome. However, these plans were never realized. On March 9, Sir Norman Charles, the British ambassador in Rome, reported that General Damjanović enjoys „a fanatic devotion of his men“ and if he was to be taken to Rome by force, „I'm afraid there would be a great deal of trouble“. The same thing would happen „if he was to be somehow deceitfully lured and thus disappear without a trace“.¹⁷⁰

Fitzroy MacLean's committee began to work on March 24. Individuals were asked to give their personal data, as well as to answer many questions: have they had any contacts with Yugoslavia after 1945; do they intend

¹⁶⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 435.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* A report from March 9, 1947.

to return to the country, and if they don't, where would they like to go; the officers were asked to give information about their military operations in the country and to show them on the map; a special interest was shown for contacts with the Soviet troops in Serbia during 1944. Interestingly enough, men from the Šumadija Division (former „volunteers“) were asked to explain whether there were any differences in the outer designations on their uniforms between their unit and the other units, and their relations on the field.¹⁷¹

General Damjanović had no fear of the committee. He was convinced that its members will do their work correctly and that the status of his men will be improved. However, Fitzroy MacLean thought the same as he did during the war, that these men were „German collaborators“ and that they deserve no lenience: „*The fact that many of them willingly collaborated with the enemy against the partisans, who were officially acknowledged by the British government as allies, doesn't worry them the least bit*“.¹⁷²

MacLean particularly pointed out General Damjanović as the man who had spread a strong feeling of distrust amongst his men against the new authorities in Belgrade. MacLean resented the British government for „officially encouraging“ Damjanović in his plans, for helping to create the Yugoslav National-Liberation Army, and he was especially angry at Damjanović for succeeding in persuading his men not to return to Yugoslavia. He was also angry because a lot of men, who were wanted by Belgrade for war crimes, lived in Eboli under their real names. Further more, the British authorities gave these men employment, which made MacLean worry about the British-Yugoslav relations because of these problems: „*It is inevitable to deem that we have chosen two things: collaboration with the enemy during the war, and their enmity towards the Yugoslav government up to now*“.¹⁷³

MacLean's committee finished its work in April of 1947. About 1500 men were questioned and the committee concluded that „over 50% of the men were collaborators“, but they couldn't be extradited to Yugoslavia since the US government was against it. The US government was of the opinion that all of these men would have a tragic destiny if they were sent to Yugoslavia, because they were political opponents of the communist regime. The British diplomats didn't share this opinion, which can clearly be seen from the telegram sent by the British ambassador in Belgrade Charles

¹⁷¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from March 28, 1947.

¹⁷² S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 435, 441.

¹⁷³ According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 442.

Pieck on April 10, 1947: „*We think that no danger will come to these men if they return to Yugoslavia. Tito's regime is interested in these men as working power to be used for its projects, while their extradition would eliminate the outside danger to the Yugoslav regime*“.¹⁷⁴

MacLean's report was full of old war propaganda about „quislings“ whom Great Britain, due to historical circumstances, protected from „just“ punishment. He further wrote that the „legend“ of General Miodrag Damjanović as the leader of the resistance movement was „shattered“ and it was proven that he was „a quisling and a collaborator“. At the end, he suggested that the group should be dismembered and its compactness broken up when they get to Germany.¹⁷⁵

When it became clear that there wouldn't be any extraditions, the Yugoslav authorities reacted fiercely. Aleksandar Ranković, Minister of the interior and the second man in the hierarchy of communist Yugoslavia, accused the Allied authorities, in front of the National Parliament, of creating „great difficulties and disturbances“ in finding, arresting and extraditing „war criminals and traitors“. The Yugoslav authorities requested the extradition of 947 Yugoslavs from occupying zones in Germany, Austria and Italy, but only 43 people were extradited: „*Among the so-called dislocated persons and refugees in the occupying zones in Germany, Austria and Italy, there are plenty of war criminals and traitors whose extradition we have been requesting for a long time. However, these criminals still haven't been separated from the rest of the dislocated persons and refugees and they receive the same benefits and help, and at the same time, they are morally and physically terrorizing those who want to return to their Fatherland, in order to prevent their repatriation. Lately, since the retreat of the Anglo-American occupying authorities from Italy is soon expected, the retreat of war criminals and traitors is also being organized*“.¹⁷⁶

The British authorities thought about organizing a „friendly conversation“ between General Damjanović and Keneth Greenlees, the former member of the subcommittee in General Mihailović's headquarters that was trusted by the Royalists in Eboli, but they later abandoned the idea. Nothing significant happened in the case of General Damjanović until the middle of April, 1947. The problem was how to alleviate Belgrade's standpoint in order to move a large group of „Chetniks“ to Germany, but without having to extradite anybody to the Yugoslav authorities.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹⁷⁵ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 443–444.

¹⁷⁶ According to: *Jugoslavija 1918–1988*, 832–833.

The Yugoslav officials were pointing out that the time has come for solving the issue of „dislocated persons“, that the government in Belgrade is „concerned“ about the destiny of its citizens (there were more than 24.000 Yugoslavs in the west zone in Germany) and their poor living conditions. They also requested access to the camps where the dislocated persons were located and the prohibition of any propaganda of an „inimical nature“. As far as they were concerned, all the organizations in the camps were „fascist organizations“. The Yugoslav authorities discreetly announced the possibility that representatives of the FPRY (Federative Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia) government will join the camp administrations and that the individuals wanted by the Yugoslav government are to be placed under their military command.

The entire Yugoslav emigration was regularly referred to as „fascists“ and their distinguished individuals were referred to as „war criminals“. The Yugoslav authorities didn't take into consideration the Anglo-American arguments that their extradition was requested for purely ideological reasons.

The British military authorities were also often accused of leading an active propaganda against the return of the dislocated persons to Yugoslavia, and that they use „intimidation measures“ and take reprisals against anybody who wants to return to Yugoslavia. They also requested the suspension of all financial help to the dislocated persons and the refugees.

The Yugoslav officials were particularly dissatisfied with the conduct of the USA, concerning the extradition of „war criminals“. Lieutenant-Colonel Pejović, head of the Yugoslav delegation for war crimes, wrote a report to Belgrade on April 14, 1947: *„All our efforts to change their standpoint didn't do any good, nobody was extradited. On the contrary, the American legal section of their command in Europe took a distinctly reactionary and sabotaging attitude. Our requests for the extraditions of war criminals, which we have submitted more than a year ago, are only now being answered, asking us to explain which of our laws were broken by the wanted criminals and to give proof of their crimes“*.¹⁷⁷

The Yugoslav authorities protested once more, this time through Aleš Bebler, assistant to the Minister of foreign affairs, who accused the USA and England of enabling the forming of organizations, headed from the very beginning by „traitors and collaborators“, in their occupying zones in Italy. Instead of arresting them and extraditing them to Belgrade, these people were completely free to prevent the repatriation of dislocated persons

¹⁷⁷ ASM, SC, 110–766–570.

by „falsely describing the situation in Yugoslavia“: *„The US and British authorities had more than enough time, from the armistice with Italy till now, to find and extradite the mentioned war criminals, but they systematically avoided to do so. Under the protection of the occupying authorities they freely continued their fascist and terrorist activities, even well known war criminals such as Damjanović, Djujić, Jevdjević, Prezelj and many more. Possibilities were created for them to form terrorist camps, with complete Ustasha and Chetnik units who fought on the side of the occupiers“*.¹⁷⁸

The two-year period of life in the camp in Eboli was full of bitter hours of disappointment and various misfortunes, but also with the maintaining of fighting morale and building the national spirit. Thus, Eboli became the symbol of the Yugoslav anti-communist emigration. The people didn't become disheartened even in the most critical situations and the resistance towards the new order in their Fatherland became stronger as time went by. The Eboli spirit later helped in resisting assimilation and preserving the national spirit and culture.

Miodrag Damjanović deeply believed in the historical significance of „March 27, 1941“ and that date was regularly solemnized (twice all together) in the camp in Eboli. Damjanović believed that this date represented a turning-point in Serbia's history and a true expression of the frame of mind of the people: *„It signified a momentary enervation, but also a later strength; it signified a momentary loss of vitality, but a later eternal life; it signified our return to the West, from whose path we diverged for two short days only; it signified our joining of the side which emphasized that it was fighting for the principle of personal liberty, freedom of thinking, freedom of religious beliefs, freedom for each and every individual, and not the side which at that moment seemed more likely to triumph. It signified the readiness for the utmost sacrifice and the deep belief in certain resurrection“*.¹⁷⁹

That most of the people would stay loyal to General Damjanović after leaving Italy became clear when a group of officers, members of the former Serbian Shock Corps, formed a temporary council of the Ravna Gora movement, headed by Colonel Branimir Živković. Even though they had a DP status, they decided to maintain a military organization as much as it was possible: *„Čiča's assistant General Miodrag Damjanović is still our representative, who has led us wisely up to now and will continue to do so in the future. Therefore, it's our duty to stay loyal to him. By being loyal to Ge-*

¹⁷⁸ According to: *Jugoslavija 1918–1988*, 833–834.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

neral Damjanović, we remain loyal to our Čiča and consistent in our military profession“.¹⁸⁰

The inhabitants of the camp in Eboli were mainly left to shift for themselves. Although there were many invalids, children and elderly people in the camp, the help they received from the Serbian emigration was symbolic, especially the one from the USA. Members of the „Zbor“ were accusing General Damjanović of „abuse of office“ and as a result of that help ceased to arrive. The General was full of bitterness because of that, and on one occasion, he wrote a letter to Živan Knežević listing exactly all the help received from America.

Help arrived five times in total: the first time was on August 25, 1945: 1720 pairs of footwear („incredibly heavy American hiking boots“) and some bed-sheets. In fact, this was bought by Živko Topalović at the American warehouse in Livorno, with money received as help from America. The second time help arrived (October 25, 1945) also through Topalović: 200 cases of various goods; the third time was on April 11, 1946, from the *Ring of Serbian Sisters*, by mediation of Ruža Trbović; in March of 1947, three packages of food arrived for the children and their families, which were sent by Jovan Marčetić, a priest from East Chicago who was at one time an inhabitant of the camp himself; on several occasions parcels with footwear, clothes and linen arrived for the women and children: „*Except for the above mentioned, no other help was received from America, apart from personal packages sent to individuals. Fortunately, I personally haven't ever received a single dollar, or a single package*“.¹⁸¹

THE DEPARTURE INTO UNCERTAINTY

The preparations for transporting the camp inmates from Eboli were in the final stage. In the beginning, nobody knew where they were going. They only knew the direction – north. General Damjanović announced to his men on April 10 that „there was no chance of anybody being handed over to Tito“.¹⁸² In the meantime, at the Foreign Office they were still thinking about what's to be done with General Damjanović. On April 11, diplomat M. S. Williams delivered a plan emphasizing that „the Damjanović case“ can be viewed from another angle: Damjanović was the most trusted re-

¹⁸⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from December 20, 1947.

¹⁸² *General Damjanović's Archives.*

representative of General Mihailović, who gave him „a dangerous and highly responsible task“ to join General Milan Nadić’s cabinet in order to „keep Mihailović informed on what was happening and to undermine the quisling government when the time was right. At the end of the war, he gathered the Chetniks under his command and took them safely over to Italy and thus avoided Tito’s barbaric revenge“.¹⁸³

Williams suggested that there was no need to hurry with the questioning of Damjanović and deciding about his future, and that Ljuba Leontić, the Yugoslav ambassador in London, shouldn’t be given a direct answer because „the Yugoslav government must first come to its senses from the shock when they hear that the entire Chetnik group is on its way to a new location“. At the same time, MacLean sent his deputy to Germany with „strict instructions to ensure, together with the British army in Germany, the complete separation of officers from the soldiers in the group“. The War ministry took a lot of pressure from the Foreign Office to do the same.¹⁸⁴

Colonel Grant announced to General Damjanović on April 12 that his men will very soon be moved to Germany, to the Muenster camp, which was located somewhere between Hamburg and Hanover. Damjanović asked the British for a guarantee in writing that his men will not be handed over to the authorities in Yugoslavia, and he received it on April 13. Damjanović issued the following order on the same day: „After spending more than a year and a half in Eboli, my gallant soldiers, the time has come for us to be on our way. Starting tomorrow, our camp is being moved beyond the borders of Italy. One more stage of our toilsome lives, which we accepted willingly in 1941, has come to an end. Another stage is beginning, one from which we expect much more than the last one has given us. According to the announcement I received from the highest authorities, before we leave for our new destination I can tell you that nobody will be handed over to the new power-holders in our unfortunate Fatherland, which is guaranteed in writing by the British commandant of the camp“.¹⁸⁵

The first transport (about 800 men) left for Germany by train on April 14, 1947. It consisted of the 1st Lika regiment and the headquarters of the Dinara Division. The transport of family members began on April 16, the hospital train carrying the ill from the Mercatelo sanatorium started out two days later; the Bosnia regiment, the reserve officers, the air force group

¹⁸³ According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 439.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 440.

¹⁸⁵ *General Damjanović’s Archives*. Orders issued by General Damjanović on April 13, 1947.

and the Zeta regiment departed on April 19; the 2nd Lika regiment and the Dalmatian regiment left on April 20; The Slovenian and Croat units moved out on April 22; the transport of the men employed by the British in Naples headed out on April 24. The last transport with the supreme command on board, whose send off was attended by a few British officers, left Eboli on April 30.¹⁸⁶ A total of 6925 people arrived in Germany on May 6.

During the transport, Fitzroy MacLean sent two urgent telegrams to the Foreign Office on the 15th and 16th of April, saying that the people from Eboli who are being transported to Germany „have no intention of returning to Yugoslavia“, and that they are ready to be put at the disposal of the West in case of a conflict with the Soviet Union, and that „they can hardly wait to be sent to Greece“. MacLean accused Damjanović of creating such a situation: *„On the territory under British control, in the past two years he was able to create a compact and disciplined political-military formation with an open goal – to overthrow by force (when an opportunity presents itself) the government of a country that was our ally during the war and which we now have normal diplomatic relations with. As a result of this, many of his men, who were listless during the war and would have returned home two years ago, these men are now imbued with the most incorrigible doctrine of violence and have become irreconcilable adversaries of the present regime in Yugoslavia“*.¹⁸⁷

In his telegram sent on April 16, MacLean informed the Foreign office that there were no incidents in the opening faze of the move to Germany, because the British commandant in Kazerta didn't inform General Damjanović „that his organization will be broken up and his officers separated from the group once they have reached Germany“. If Damjanović had anticipated that, „various mishaps could have occurred during the transport“.¹⁸⁸

Miodrag Damjanović naturally expected a much better situation for his men when they arrive in Germany. He wrote to Živan Knežević on April 19 that he and his men were happy to go: *„to a place where we won't have a time-limit on our stay and where we will be able to prepare for all that expects us in the future“*.¹⁸⁹ He wrote a similar letter to Adam Pribičević three days later: *„As you know, the Eboli camp is being moved to Germany, the move will be completed by the end of the month and I will go there with one*

¹⁸⁶ *Van Otadžbine*, 22.

¹⁸⁷ According to: S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 441.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 442.

¹⁸⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

of the last transports. I expect a much better treatment of my men, employment for a large number of them, which is my long- time wish. I'm leaving Eboli together with my men and I was told that all of us are going to the same place"¹⁹⁰.

Mihailo Dučić and Konstantin Fotić suggested that part of the men could be moved to the Dominican Republic. Damjanović rejected the offer on April 22: „*I am very grateful to you for making an effort to help us, but it is with regret that I inform you that I cannot use this help, because the men don't want to go to a place far from home and they want to stay together as a community*“¹⁹¹.

At the time of his departure from Italy, General Damjanović was dissatisfied with the attitude of the Yugoslav Committee in Rome and the Charitable Society, which is noticeable in his letter to Mladen Žujović from April 22, 1947: „*You put it mildly when you said that my relations with Rome are 'lame'. They practically don't exist, except with a few individuals, because the Committee in Rome and the Charitable Society were never able to understand the situation in Eboli, let alone help it, which I never could get into my head. As a result of their 'work 'many of our unfortunate people are now wondering around Italy, instead of being with us in Eboli where they belong. Some of us didn't do their work properly , I believe it wasn't me*“¹⁹².

General Damjanović wasn't aware of the fact that the British intended to break up his organization once they've reached Germany, by placing the officers into two separate camps. Military personnel were sent to the Muenster camp, while the families were placed into four different camps: Grossenbrode (on the Baltic sea), Borghorst, Bocholt (on the Dutch border) and Lingen. After arriving in Muenster, the officers were immediately separated from the rest of the men and placed into a separate part of the camp.

Damjanović was slowly becoming aware of what was being planned for him and his men, so he told Živan Knezević he's afraid his men will be pressured into returning to Yugoslavia (*Titoslavia*): „*The MacLean committee is coming here to continue its work, while the improvement of our situation can be expected after the committee has completed its work*“¹⁹³.

General Damjanović arrived in the camp on May 4, 1947, and he was immediately separated from his men and taken to Soltau, together with

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to A. Pribičević from April 22, 1947.

¹⁹¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

his orderly, his batman and his cook, to be, as he was told, placed „under the protection of the British Army“: *„I am accommodated in a separate villa, but I am well-guarded by armed men. Nobody can visit me and I can't go anywhere. I'm allowed to have correspondence and I'm using that privilege as I did earlier on, but my letters have to go through censorship“*.¹⁹⁴ Damjanović stayed there until August 20, 1947, when he was moved to the Buxtehude camp.¹⁹⁵

How difficult this was for General Damjanović is best illustrated by his words spoken on June 7, 1947: *„Heroes! I am addressing only you today, under these unbelievable circumstances: you are separated by wire from your officers, while I am separated from you all! Fortunately, you're left with your non-commissioned officers, who now have a great obligation to perform all the officers' duties, aware of their historical responsibility, they fulfil their duties well. I hear they are bravely enduring this last humiliation, the worst one since Palmanova, brought upon us by the Allied high politics. You are in fact enduring it as befits King Etar's soldiers and the followers of the immortal Draža Mihailović“*.¹⁹⁶

During his stay in the Soltau camp, General Damjanović kept a diary. Here are some of his personal notes: *„Since I'm here in Soltau, I am often visited by Lieutenant Colonel Hanson and Captain Červenka, who are informing me on the situation in the Muenster camp. On May 21, they informed me about the situation in the family camps they had visited. The situation is fine everywhere, except for Bocholt, where the accommodation and the food are not good. They have taken measures to improve the situation. They've told me that the MacLean committee has already questioned 2600 men in Muenster. On June 9, I sent a report to Lieutenant Colonel Hanson suggesting that a body should be formed here in Germany which will take care of our people, and that schools should be formed for the children in the family camps“*.¹⁹⁷

Damjanović addressed his men on Vidovdan 1947. He encouraged them and reminded them to keep alive the Ravna Gora spirit from Eboli“, to preserve their community which was built with hard work: *„For Eboli being what it is, we have to thank not only the officers, not only the well-intentioned intellectuals and my associates, but all of you heroes as well, who understood me completely, who harboured and preserved our community to*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from June, 1947.

¹⁹⁵ *Van Otadžbine*, 22.

¹⁹⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

this very day. I give my full recognition to all of you".¹⁹⁸ General Damjanović's words represented a sign of encouragement for the men „*to endure this humiliating situation. Many people suffered because of you, but now when they have seen your signatures, they know you are here close to us and they are calm*".¹⁹⁹

By moving the Yugoslav anti-communists to Germany, the British government intended to also break up the national organization formed by General Damjanović in Eboli. The main thing was to separate the officers from the men and prevent the officers to contact each other, so their plan was to place the men in a wide area and use them as working power.

The Muenster camp was situated close to the Soviet occupying zone. It had a high barbed wired fence, searchlights, machine-gun nests and tanks standing close by. The food was bad, much worse than in Eboli, movement was limited. The schools stopped working, as well as all cultural-educational activities.

The first to react were the officers, so General Vojislav Kuzmanović sent a petition on June 15 to the British lieutenant Colonel Hansen, commandant of the camp in Eboli. This petition requested the return of General Damjanović and permission for all the officers to have contacts with the rest of the men: „*When we arrived in Muenster, we were separated from our commandant General Miodrag Damjanović, who is the authorized deputy of General Mihailović abroad. We were separated from our commandant who was our leader up to now, who knows us best, who has our unlimited trust. We were separated from a man who is the only one competent to guide us now and in the future. We were separated from a soldier who shared good and bad with us in our country during four years of temptation and suffering. We have no contact with them. We cannot influence them in any way or give them any advice*".²⁰⁰

They didn't comply with the requests of course, but very soon, on June 23, the British military authorities in Germany ordered demobilization and prohibited the wearing of uniforms and ranks. Everybody who wanted to could return to Yugoslavia: „*Starting from today, you are forbidden to*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's orders issued on June 28, 1947.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from Muenster on June 10, 1947.

²⁰⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives*. - The petition was also signed by: General M. Parac, General I. Prezelj, Colonel S. Stranjaković, Colonel A. Božanović, Colonel B. Živković, Lieutenant Colonel S. Živanović, Lieutenant Colonel D. Čečević, Lieutenant Colonel Ž. Andrić, Lieutenant-Colonel M. Sekulić, major M. Kapetanović, Major M. Vuksanović, Major P. Laković, Major M. Pavićević, Major D. Lazarević and Captain M. Cvetičanin. (*Van Otadžbine*, 23).

*wear military ranks (...) You are familiar with the British politics towards the dislocated persons and political refugees who are not war criminals and haven't been proclaimed traitors. If they don't want to return to their country, they won't be forced to do so. They are allowed to stay in the British zone in Germany for now, but they must obey the laws and statutes of the British military authorities and they mustn't engage themselves in political or propaganda activities against Great Britain“.*²⁰¹

That meant that propaganda against Yugoslavia was also forbidden. This decision was in accordance with the agreement with the Yugoslav authorities, that the end of June was the final time-limit to pressure the dislocated persons to return to Yugoslavia.²⁰²

General Damjanović immediately protested to Lieutenant Colonel Hanson because of this proclamation, and addressed his men for the last time as a military officer, on June 28: *„You will go to DP camps, where you must prepare for your future work. Along the way, in the camps or at work you will meet our brothers by blood and by conviction – former prisoners of war. Don't you ever forget that these people have spent more than six years in a foreign world, living under the worst slave like conditions, that in their beliefs they belong to the Ravna Gora movement but didn't have the luck to show that by fighting in the forest. Help them whenever you can, but also try to give them a bit of your Ravna Gora spirit from Eboli. Create firm communities with them, which could be counted on one day, as I count on you now. Strengthen your cultural activities. Every one of our future camps must be a miniature Eboli, and all the camps must be firmly mutually connected. A joint effort must bring a positive result. That is asked of you not only by the King and Fatherland, but by the millions who died for the same ideals you believe in. Heroes! Since you are now forced to stop being a military organization, these are my last orders as your commanding officer, and I'm ordering you, the same way I did in my first orders after Soče – to endure. In my new role I will continue to carry out my pledge to Čiča“.*²⁰³

Damjanović cherished the memory of General Mihailović in Germany as well. On the first anniversary of his murder, Damjanović wrote that Mihailović is still a Serbian hero and that his contemporaries and his fellow-combatants must respect his historical role: *„Nobody knows like we do how*

²⁰¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Proclamation of the British control zone „to the Yugoslav personnel from enemy troops“.

²⁰² *General Damjanović's Archives*.

²⁰³ According to: *Van Otadžbine*, 25.

much his words brought out the heroic spirit of our nation and how much those words stimulated the powerful swing of all the immeasurable strength that lied hidden within us. We are living witnesses of his titanic creativity. This truth awakens a justified feeling of pride for being his associates in our great Ravna Gora dream, but at the same time it represents a holy obligation to stay on the ideological path pointed out by Ravna Gora and never diverge from it, not even for a moment. That is the only way we will remain consistent followers of Čiča's beliefs and worthy brothers of our killed combatants led by our Čiča".²⁰⁴

Discharge from the Muenster camp began on July 24, but 146 individuals who were wanted by Belgrade were transported to the „Y“ camp and marked as „black“. They spent the next ten months waiting for the final solution of their destiny. After several years of miserable existence in the camps in Italy and Germany, the war finally ended for these people and they were now going to North America, Australia and countries of Western Europe.

There was still no decision on what is to be done with General Damjanović. It was still deemed that he was a danger to the government in Belgrade, while good relations with the Yugoslav authorities were a priority for Great Britain. In August of 1947, Fitzroy MacLean confirmed that Damjanović's life would be in danger if he was sent to Yugoslavia. Ales Bebler told Fitzroy MacLean and Ambassador Pieck that if Damjanović had surrendered himself in 1945, he would have been sentenced to a short time in prison for „collaborating“, but two years later he would have been „most certainly“ sentenced to death because of his activities in Italy. Bebler asked that Damjanović, since he can't be extradited, be kept as far as possible from Yugoslavia.²⁰⁵

General Damjanović was permitted correspondence on September 5, but with censorship, and visits were approved on September 26. Živorad Andrić, Sergije Živanović and Vlada Majstorović were the first to visit him. He had to announce his visits on time in order to get approval.²⁰⁶

At the beginning of September more and more people were leaving Muenster with a DP status. Finding employment was a problem, since Damjanović recommended not to work for the Germans: „*As far as I am concerned, I cannot complain the least bit about my treatment. On the contrary, everybody is treating me with care, but I have no communication with the*

²⁰⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²⁰⁵ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 452.

²⁰⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.* From General Damjanović's dairy.

outside world. At least I'm allowed visits lately, Živko Andrić is here visiting me now so I'll ask him to give this letter to you".²⁰⁷

General Damjanović and his men were not alone in their endeavour to solve the issue of their status. They were strongly supported by Richard Stokes, a Labour Party envoy who continually appealed to the Foreign Office in London to release the Yugoslavs from the Muenster camp. His first letter to Ernest Bevin, head of the Foreign Office, where he showed an interest in their status and accused MacLean's committee of being „Politically coloured“ was sent on August 29, 1947.²⁰⁸

Bevin replied on September 9, explaining that the status was debatable for only 140 individuals because they were „identical to the individuals wanted by the Yugoslav government“. These people were questioned in detail and „all the facts have been established and a great majority of them will not be extradited“. Bevin couldn't say if anybody will be extradited: „Some of them are without any doubt honourable men who did not collaborate with the Germans and they are being accused purely for political reasons. You can be absolutely sure that such men will not be extradited“.²⁰⁹

Stokes approached Bevin again on September 17, requesting precise answers to many questions: did the British government take measures to extradite certain individuals and on what grounds was it established that they collaborated with the Germans; did they take measures to assure that the extradited individuals get a fair trial in Yugoslavia; did the government define the notion 'collaboration'; can they show the public any evidence against the people still being held in Muenster and are these people informed of the reasons for their further detention; is it true that repatriation by force was prevented by the US government several times: „Some of these 140 people might be guilty of terrible crimes. I don't know that, but I emphasize that none of them should be extradited until we are convinced they will receive a fair trial“.²¹⁰

Bevin replied on September 27, saying that he isn't able to produce a „list of crimes“ that the people in Muenster are accused of by the Yugoslav authorities „because it would be a long and complicated document“ and because the Yugoslav government is constantly filing new charges. He promised that the 140 people in Muenster would be informed of the „exact reasons“ for their detention, and that MacLean's committee will no longer que-

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from September 25, 1947.

²⁰⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

stion them: *„Are the accusations justified, that will be decided by a legal committee. As you know, it is impossible to be certain that these people will receive a fair trial. The only guarantee we in fact have and apply is to extradite the people in whose probable guilt we are absolutely convinced“*.²¹¹

Richard Stokes was very persistent indeed. He wrote to Bevin on October 2, asking him to, while contemplating whether the extradited people will have a fair trial in Yugoslavia or not, bear in mind the fact there was a great change in the Yugoslav legal system – the right to a defence was abolished for those who had different political views. Besides, the Yugoslav authorities were mainly accusing people of „collaborating with the enemy“ and not of war crimes: *„Most of the people in Muenster will be sent to their death because they fought against Tito and because they belonged to the Royal Yugoslav Army. We most certainly cannot allow this to happen“*.²¹²

Bevin replied again on October 1, and it could be seen from his response that he adopted Stokes' key arguments – the British government will not allow anybody to be convicted because they fought against Tito and the communists: *„Nobody will be extradited if they didn't actively and willingly collaborate with the Germans and the Italians. I feel the need to point out clearly that His Majesty's government will not make any changes in its basic politics. The consequences of war unavoidably bring out problems which cannot be resolved perfectly. In my opinion, the adopted politics in this case is the most honourable and the most righteous one we could think of“*.²¹³

This answer encouraged Stokes and he wrote to Bevin on October 20, that it would be wrongful to extradite any of the Yugoslavs because they won't have a fair trial. Stokes visited the camp in Muenster on October 13, and read his correspondence with Bevin to the Yugoslavs, which only increased the pressure on the Foreign Office: *„I convinced them that nothing will happen to them until further questioning isn't completed, that you promised me that they will be given the reasons for their detention, and if it is decided that they must return to their country, they will be informed of the reasons for such a decision before they are actually extradited“*.²¹⁴

In November of 1947, the British committees began to make lists of the people who wanted to emigrate to Great Britain, but only the ones without families. Damjanović recommended a group departure to England, because he had heard from the people who were already there that they were

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

treated very well: „I wanted the people to stay together so they would spiritually and physically be ready for any unexpected misfortunes“.²¹⁵

More and more people were going to England at the end of 1947, and they were very pleased with the treatment they received in their new Fatherland. General Damjanović was hoping that his situation would soon be resolved. He wrote to Aleksandar Milošević on December 5: „I see that you are informed about my situation, but I believe that you won't have to hear about me from others for long. It is nearly finished and I will send word to you when it's all over“.²¹⁶ He wrote in a similar manner to Živan Knežević on December 20: „I believe I won't stay here much longer, if my path 'doesn't take me' to Belgrade, I will contact you when I get to my new place of choice“.²¹⁷

Damjanović still didn't know anything definite about his status at the beginning of 1948, and his mail was once again being censored. The Foreign Office was of the opinion that the British government had no moral foundation to extradite General Damjanović. By the middle of March of 1948, 96 prisoners were released from camp „Y“ and by the middle of the next month all the inhabitants of that camp were released. The official decision of the Ministry of justice of Great Britain, announced by the control committee for Germany, was to grant them amnesty and give them a DP status. The only unsolved issues were the status of General Damjanović, the status of General Svetislav Djukić, and the status of a certain Captain Grujić who returned to Yugoslavia on May 20, 1948.²¹⁸

Thus, two Serbian generals were still in prison, even though three years had gone by since the end of WW II. Accusations of „collaboration“ had already faded, so the wish to humiliate royal officers was the only logical reason for this. Because of this, the Archbishop of Kenterbery, Dr. Fisher, wrote to the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee: „We cannot overlook the fact that those who would be returned to Yugoslavia wouldn't have a fair trial. They would be exposed to barbarity and torture, which we find repulsive, and they would most certainly be killed. I'm sure you will agree with me: avoid extradition if at all possible, it should be avoided“.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 451.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 452. – On April 5, 1948, General Damjanović congratulated Živan Knežević on receiving the Legion of Merit decoration from the US President Harry Truman on January 23: „I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart on your well deserved decoration, which you should have received for your unselfish work much earlier. I am sure you

Damjanović was very pleased with the words of support he received from the former combatants of the YAIF. Aleksandar Milošević wrote to him on April 2, 1948: „*A whole lot of caprice of human baseness has fallen upon You. That always happens as if it is the law of nature and it will make your person even more outstanding. You have the obligation to effectuate the Ravna Gora idea. That is firmly believed by the very same people who fought and bled for that idea*“.²²⁰

King Petar asked the British Prime Minister on April 21, not to extradite the Serbian generals. Prime Minister Attlee responded on April 29, that it hasn't been yet decided on the matter.²²¹ At the end of April, Serbs from America did their best to free Damjanović – The Serbian National Defence and the Serbian National Committee appealed to the American administration to help Damjanović.²²² As a result of that, Damjanović was „liberated“ and sent to a DP camp. Even Winston Churchill asked for a quick solution of the Damjanović issue at the beginning of May, 1948. Damjanović became an inhabitant of the DP camp in Grossenbrode on May 5, until the conditions were created for his departure to London, which was his basic idea.

Damjanović wasn't pleased with the development of the situation. He asked himself how he would make a living in England. He wrote to Vjekoslav Farkaš about that on May 2: „*I was told today that I am to go to a DP camp in Grossenbrode. I will try to get to London from there. But how? That does not depend on me alone. You can see that I'm travelling the same road as my men did – through a DP camp, but I wouldn't like to have anything to do with the Ministry of labour. You told me to come any way that I could, because I was needed there. I'm not a young man any more, so I have to arm myself with patience and wait*“.²²³

A few days later, total freedom for Damjanović and Djukić was requested by Harold Macmillan, the former residence minister in the headquarters of the Allied Supreme Command and member of the British War Cabinet. On May 6, 1948, he sent a written interpolation to the deputy of the Minister for foreign affairs who dealt with the issue of Yugoslav refugees,

will continue your good work in the way that only you know and can, regardless of the fact that recognition is never on time“. (General Damjanović's Archives).

²²⁰ General Damjanović's Archives.

²²¹ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 453.

²²² General Damjanović's Archives.

²²³ *Ibid.* The Grossenbrode camp was located in the Schleswig-Holstein province.

stating that the case of General Damjanović and General Djukić was „very complicated“ and asked for a report on that matter.²²⁴

The response was very quick – on May 12 Macmillan was told that there was no proof of „willing and active collaboration“ and that the two generals were innocent. This was announced to Damjanović two days later (May 14), and Damjanović immediately sent word to Živan Knežević: „*It was announced to me that I was freed of all of Tito’s accusation and that I am now a free man. I came here to this family camp where there are lots of people from Bosnia, Lika and Drina. Bearing in mind the times we live in, the camp is exemplary in every way. I feel re-born in spite of the fact that I’m now treated as a DP and I can see for myself and feel on my skin what that means. I could see the misery our people have lived in for so long. But what’s most important for me, the men are high spirited and ready for new accomplishments. Ravna Gora is the torch that lit the way in these dark times, for all those men who became the followers of our immortal Čiča so many years ago*“.²²⁵

Damjanović wrote to Father Jovan Marčetić the same day, stating that he had chosen Grossenbrode for his place of residence: „*The camp is safe, the best camp in these circumstances, exemplary in every way*“.²²⁶ Damjanović also informed King Petar of the latest events three days later (May 17): „*It is an honour to inform you that I have been freed of all of Tito’s accusations and sent to our Chetnik camp in Grossenbrode as a free dislocated person*“.²²⁷

Harold Macmillan expressed his satisfaction with the development of events on May 18: „*I was pleased to hear that General Damjanović and General Djukić will not be extradited. To me, as a man who lived through the complicated war years and who was connected to the variable war scene, collaboration is a dangerous word*“.²²⁸

General Miodrag Damjanović finally became a free man, and the state he was in can best be seen from a letter which he received from a friend on May 24, 1948: „*We are very happy that you are a free man and that you have the possibility to freely work again. I have no words to describe the joy my men and I feel. We’re glad you’re alive and healthy, and that you’re full of hope and optimism*“.²²⁹

²²⁴ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 455.

²²⁵ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ S. Vlahović, *Anglo-jugoslovenski odnosi*, 456.

²²⁹ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

General Damjanović's new status was a great improvement compared to his previous position. He wrote the following about that on the 25th of May to Mihailo Dučić, the President of the Serbian National Defence: „I was freed of all of Tito's accusations exactly one year ago and the foreign army under whose 'protection' I was up to now, handed me over to the civilian authorities who allowed me, as a 'free dislocated person', to live in the Chetnik camp in Grossenbrode on the Baltic sea. Now I have the opportunity to see what it's like to be treated as a DP, and I can tell you that everything that I heard isn't even a pale picture of the real situation! I'm glad that our people have preserved the Ravna Gora spirit in spite of everything, and I'm happy our people are ready, even more than before, to fight for the Ravna Gora ideals“.²³⁰

Damjanović was waiting for King Petar to decide if he was to come to London and in what capacity. Damjanović wrote to Vjekoslav Farkaš on May 26: „I told you that I don't want to come there through the Ministry of labour, I think that as a representative of the Ravna Gora movement I have the right to another way. This is not a question of Damjanović, but the assistant of General Mihailović! Even my 'protectors' said that to me while I was with them, emphasizing that as the reason why I was 'interesting' and why they guarded me well“.²³¹

Communication with eminent individuals of the Serbian emigration was a problem for Damjanović because he didn't have their addresses. Thanks to Vjekoslav Farkaš, he obtained Milan Gavrilović's address and wrote to him straight away. Damjanović informed him that he was finally free of all the accusations and he asked for help for the families who still had no income. He also asked for Gavrilović's help in getting these families to England: „I only want to mention that the Chetniks would be happy if they could get one camp for accommodation purposes (one thousand and several hundred people) where they would establish a cultural-educational centre for all the members of the Ravna Gora movement outside the Fatherland, something similar to Eboli in Italy. My men have accustomed themselves to the way of life in the camps and would like to stay in a community rather than to be individually accommodated“.²³²

Damjanović wrote to Episcopa Nicola Velimirović on May 28, informing him in more detail of the living conditions in the DP camp. His words described well the situation the Serbian emigration was in: „I've had the op-

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.* Damjanović's letter to M. Gavrilović from May 26, 1948.

portunity here to see all the misery and poverty the members of the Ravna Gora movement live in. This poverty, which I could only imagine from the reports I was receiving while I was in captivity, didn't discourage my men, they are ready now, more than ever, to take up 'shining arms' if their commandant calls, and fight for themselves and their country to achieve what they wish above all – golden freedom“.²³³

Damjanović wrote to Episcopo Dionisije the very same day, informing him of the latest events. He emphasized that his intention was to go to England, where most of his men are: „I would like us all to group there and await further events. I'm working on that as much as it is possible. I'm trying my best to keep us all together as a community, united, firm and fit for future undertakings and I'll be unusually happy if we succeed to do so. Members of the Ravna Gora movement have always served as an example, and they still do, and they are aware of the Ravna Gora ideals“.²³⁴

Damjanović was sometimes disappointed because his letters weren't answered. He was also disappointed with the fact that a very small number of Serbs from America were ready to help him to begin his life as a citizen. He wrote the following to priest Jovan Marčetić: „I find it very strange that your superiors cannot find the time to respond to my letters which you had delivered to them. Maybe I'm not in fashion any more, but what can I do?! You know me, I mind my own business regardless of what somebody might think of me or whether somebody is helping me. You are the only one from over there who remembers me and helps me financially! I am ready to live in the same way my people live and I am used to it! The fact that I'm not getting any financial help doesn't make me angry, but I'm very disappointed with the fact that I'm not getting any moral support from the people I had a right to expect it from“.²³⁵

²³³ General Damjanović's Archives.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid. – Damjanović was especially disappointed with Živko Topalović's behaviour: „Do you remember Živko Topalović, member of the Central National Committee and a State delegate, his attitude then and how he speaks of us now, and how much dollars did he receive on behalf of the Chetniks from those good people?“ (Ibid).

IV. THE ASSOCIATION OF COMBATANTS OF THE ROYAL YUGOSLAV ARMY „DRAŽA MIHAILOVIĆ“

Miodrag Damjanović's basic idea was to make his organization, which was the largest one abroad and more nationally designated than any other, a gathering centre and the foundation for creating a Yugoslav army which would, when the international circumstances were right, set in motion a struggle to pull down the communist system in Yugoslavia. He therefore didn't want his men to have any national or ideological differences among themselves: *„I think it is clear to everybody that there mustn't be any formal or ideological differences between the Chetniks, volunteers and members of the SSG, between the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians among us. All of us here are uncompromising combatants against Tito, soldiers of King Petar and General Draža Mihailović. Ideological persuading of soldiers for political purposes is not to be allowed. We all have a holy obligation to stay joined together because our success here and in our country depends on our awareness, our unity and our brotherly harmony“*.¹

THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL FOUNDATION

Political organizing of the Serbian emigration imposed itself as a necessity, but there was the old problem of disunity dating from the period before the war. Slobodan Jovanović had formed the Yugoslav National Committee (YNC) in August of 1945, hoping that it would become some kind of Yugoslav government in emigration. The committee officials were Milan Gavrilović, Bogoljub Jevtić, Božidar Purić, Većeslav Vilder, Radoje Knežević and Miloš Tupanjanin. The committee later directed its activities towards gathering the whole political emigration and being recognized by western politicians, but it had very little success because it hardly had any members at all.

¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

Immediately after the committee was formed, Živko Topalović and Adam Pribičević suggested to Slobodan Jovanović that he should create „a representative democratic body“ by joining the representative bodies of the Yugoslav Democratic National Community from the homeland and the Yugoslav National Committee in London, in order to include political representatives from „all three major Yugoslav nationalities“. However, this suggestion was not accepted.²

The majority of the emigration still believed that „democratic and oppositional work“ was possible in Yugoslavia, and that the emigration’s task was to undertake „democratic action against the regime of communist dictatorship“ on a Yugoslav basis, which was creating a great problem in consolidating and organizing the Serbian emigration.

General Damjanović wanted to launch an action to organize the emigration while he was still in Italy. He soon noticed that the emigrant organizations were not mutually connected and that they weren’t very active, but he faced the resistance of the former ministers of the government in emigration even sooner. Even Slobodan Jovanović, according to Mladen Žujović’s statement, advised Damjanović to limit his work to commanding his troops in Italy.³

Živko Topalović was explicit in his standpoint that the decisions of the Saint Sava congress about a federative Yugoslavia must be honoured. He wrote the following to General Damjanović on October 21, 1945: „*I’ve heard talk that some kind of a Serbian congress is to be held in Switzerland. In the field of national politics however, there mustn’t be any straying. Our national programme for all of us is: a democratic, federative Yugoslavia. Can we today, when we need to overcome our defeat and vanquish such a great power as the Soviet Union, which conquered the Balkans, even think of breaking up Yugoslavia and think about an independent Serbia. That is the politics of Germany and its satellites. We must decisively stand up against this*“.⁴

The first more serious differences occurred when the Monarchy was abolished in Yugoslavia and a republic was proclaimed on November 29, 1945. Part of the Serbs in America thought that King Petar „got what he deserved“ because of his attitude during 1944, which only strengthened the new order in Yugoslavia. Although Živan Knežević was very critical to-

² Marko Milutinović – Đorđe Radovanović, *Iz života i rada dr Živka Topalovića*, Stockholm 1988, 379.

³ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

wards the King, he requested that the issue of the King's legitimacy be set aside until the communist regime in Yugoslavia is pulled down: „*The only international constitutional factor of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is the personage of the King. This personage was acknowledged by everybody. There hasn't been a single decision of the Soviet quisling Tito that has been acknowledged by the people of Yugoslavia. If we want to help Čiča and the Serbian people, we cannot accept any of Josip Broz's decisions and neither should the American Serbs. You should therefore condemn, not just silently remit the resolutions of Tito's Republic, which were made by an entirely communist, traitorous parliament, elected in a totalitarian manner. I ask you not to act rashly and turn to helping Tito because you have no love for King Petar*“.⁵

A great deal of Yugoslav emigrants, mainly former prisoners of war, decided to return to Yugoslavia because of difficult living and working conditions („living conditions were very poor for Yugoslav nationalists in France, especially in Paris. They were also often arrested, their flats searched, taken away by force“),⁶ as well as homesickness and powerful Yugoslav propaganda.

Damjanović was always drawing attention to the balefulness of the political disunity among the Serbian emigrants and suggested to Jovan Djonović the creation of a unique political body abroad – a foreign part of the Central National Committee „which would have the support of all of us soldiers for the good of the King and the people“.⁷

Djonović agreed with the idea and emphasized that the head office of such a body should be in London that the members should be representatives of the pre-war political parties, members of the Ravna Gora movement and people from the war camps abroad. However, „everybody agrees, but there's still no decision. As far as I could notice, the party representatives want to eliminate some members of the State Committee, while members of the Central National Committee don't have a high opinion of the party representatives“.⁸

Colonel Dimitrije Putnik came to Paris at the end of 1945, but he wasn't able to do anything serious about creating the core of the National

⁵ *Ibid.* Ž. Knežević's letter to Luka Kristiforović and Branko Pekić from December 30, 1945.

⁶ *Ibid.* Lieutenant Colonel Kosta Simić's letter to General Damjanović from January 6, 1946.

⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to J. Djonović from February 1, 1946.

⁸ *Ibid.* J. Djonović's letter to General Damjanović from February 12, 1946.

Front: „*We all expected very much from Colonel Putnik's arrival, but we were soon disappointed when we saw not only his passiveness, but also his pessimism which was turning to panic. With his standpoint and attitude he is of more use to Tito, although he is a proven nationalist and above all a Serb, because he is killing the spirit and the combativeness of the men, unconsciously of course*“.⁹

Disunity in the early stage was caused by different views about the evolution of the communist regime in Yugoslavia. Some people thought that oppositional party activities would be allowed in the country and therefore they needed to politically organize the emigration. Precious time was spent in vain, instead of creating one political centre of the Serbian emigration, which would have a unique political and national programme. Many were expecting an armed conflict between the West and the East („we must wait for a new Pearl Harbour“) and that the USA will give arms to the Serbian anti-communists so they could organize an uprising in Yugoslavia, which proved to be an illusion.

The best testimonial of these dilemmas is Captain V. Vladislavljević's letter to General Damjanović dated May 18, 1946: „*There was even no need of convincing the people that they wouldn't get any arms. As an army, we were not ready for war in our own country in 1941. During these five years of war, masses of our people were leisurely spending their time in prisoner of war camps, they got old, physically weak, not to mention what the morale of our 'professional prisoners' is like. The younger men don't trust the older ones, while the older men see the young as an abandoned and undisciplined crowd. The Allied forces don't want to have a political conflict with the Soviets because of us, which can clearly be seen from the disarmament of the Polish troops, which truly represent a real army*“.¹⁰

Disintegration of the former military elite was fatal: „*Men are in the dark, they are without any ideas, they have no goal and they are living a lie, a lie they thought of themselves or one they heard from someone. It is really sad to look at these people. I personally know many of them from before the war, especially the older ones, as elite officers with a great career ahead of them. Now they are nothing. They live as if they were still prisoners, the same habits, the same modes of life. They retell each other the radio news and try to keep up the morale. It is the same as it was under the Germans*“.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.* Colonel Kosta Simić's letter to General Damjanović from February 7, 1946.

¹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The Serbian emigration in Italy after WW II made an effort to organize itself as the National Committee, but on the old principles and the pre-war party manner, as a representative body of the parties which didn't exist any more. The plan was to include the following people as members of this committee: Adam Pribičević as the representative of the Independent Democratic Party, Mane Vukobratović as the representative of the Agriculturists, Radmilo Grčić as the representative of the Yugoslav National Party, M. Petrović as the representative of the Radicals, and Radoje Vukčević as the representative of the Democratic Party. Even General Petar Živković, who lived in Rome for a while, was being considered as a potential member.

This kind of organizing was transcended. The issue of authority came into question immediately – who would they represent and what influence would they have on the disunited and stirred up emigration. Furthermore, Milorad Drašković and Branislav Stranjaković noticed that among the Serbian emigration in Italy there was „an unhealthy atmosphere with many conflicts and antagonisms, from personal quarrels to party disputes“. The difficult situation in Rome was even being deteriorated by the „Montenegro separatists“, who came to Rome with the help of the Italian Royal Court in 1943 „and are now helping to create a gap between the Serbs and the Montenigrians“.¹²

The former commandants of the YAIF now in emigration, were exasperated by the attitude of the politicians in the same way as during the war („we, the soldiers, were the ones to stay alongside our people during the most difficult days of suffering“). The more experienced YAIF combatants were especially displeased with the attitude of Adam Pribičević and Radoje Vukčević: „*Radoje Vukčević is a disgrace to us all and a person whose role is mystical and dubious, but he is tightly connected to Adam and has a lot of influence on him, so in order to prevent his appointment to the political leadership I wrote a letter to Radoje Knežević and asked him not to allow, at any price, Radoje Vukčević to become part of the political leadership in Italy*“.¹³

Attention was drawn to the fact that this was the „last moment“ for the „sound forces“ to unite and organize themselves: „*Corrupt politicians or soldiers who were faithful servants of the Nazis and the Fascists have already begun to prevail, and they would also be ready to become communists if our allies were to reach a compromise with the Soviets for a longer period*“.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

of time. These people have now mostly taken up certain positions and they have the financial means and possibilities to work against us".¹⁴

Petar II Karadjordjević was supposed to be the one to bring together all the sympathizers of the national idea in emigration, but that was an illusory expectation. General Mihailović's former combatants pointed out that King Petar can restore his throne and become the „Great King Karadjordjević“ only if he „completely relies on the members of the Ravna Gora movement and accepts in full everything our Čiča left behind, including the graves of our fallen heroes“.

Many were of a different opinion. Živan Knežević was very clear in his opinion that we should disassociate ourselves from the King – he thought that Damjanović's work shouldn't be connected to the King: „*He went back upon his oath, he renounced his army, and with his speech from September 12, 1944, he betrayed all of us and the entire Serbian people. The King shouldn't be attacked because it would seem as if we share Tito's point of view on the matter, but don't praise him either. The freedom of the people is very important to us. A free people will easily decide about their King*“.¹⁵

While in Eboli, General Damjanović still considered himself and his men as soldiers on a combative mission – the fight to free the Serbian people from the „communist tyranny“. He often used to say: „We soldiers can follow only one policy – the national Ravna Gora movement policy. He confirmed this in his speech, held on March 27, 1946: „*Today, more than ever, we need to stay united and with brotherly love continue on our path marked by General Mihailović, the path we followed earlier and will follow in the future as well, aware that it is the only way we can bring freedom to our yoked Fatherland and proudly return to our loved ones*“.¹⁶

Damjanović deeply believed in his idea that the basic task of his organization was to „arm them and get ready to help our people, either independently or within the framework of a new war, in the fight for freedom and democracy“. He was therefore very displeased because of their internal weaknesses and the attitude of his men: „*The morale of the men is so low that they are using various personal and tribal excuses in order not to follow orders, not to recognize the authority of the commandants, to perform all kinds of intrigues, to spread false news and to undermine authority. As far as finances are concerned, many among us have begun to engage them-*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.* Ž. Knežević's letter to General Damjanović from April 23, 1946.

¹⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*selves with the black market, since we have no regular income. It is a crime to have dealings on the black market while in uniform, using official documents“.*¹⁷

The old problem of disunity was present once again and conflicts between the „volunteers“ and the members of the Ravna Gora movement continued very soon. In this case also, Živan Knežević was the one to try to calm things down by appealing to both sides on May 29, 1946: *„It is in the interest of the Serbs to stop these conflicts abroad because they are of use only to Tito. Our main enemy today is Tito, together with his outlaws. We should all unite against him to bring freedom to Yugoslavia. If all of us quarrel and divide ourselves into three groups [Nedić sympathizers, Ljotić sympathizers, Draža sympathizers], that will be of great benefit to Tito“.*¹⁸

Damjanović's idea was to at least administratively connect all the Yugoslavs in Italy, since it was impossible to assemble them in one place. Some people had an „allied soldier“ status; others were refugees, while the people from Eboli had a „surrendered enemy personnel“ status. He wanted to unite with the former prisoners of war who were still in Germany and Austria, in order to have everybody gathered round the national and anti-communist idea: *„I would like all of these people to have the same status, to be bonded by the same idea and to be mutually connected“.*¹⁹

In the summer of 1946, Major Siniša Ocokoljić Pazarac, the former commandant of the Mlava corps of the YAIF, was founding the Foreign Committee in Italy saying that he had Damjanović's approval, which was denied by Damjanović in his letter to Adam Pribičević on August 17: *„Please believe me when I say that I have nothing to do with that, as I have nothing to do with the other things he's doing in my name, without informing me. It is clear to me that we have only one political leadership: the Yugoslav National Committee in London, to which you also are connected, and as a soldier I have only one policy – the national one, regardless of some self-proclaimed committees“.*²⁰

General Damjanović was strongly opposed by Momčilo Djujić, Dobrosav Jevdjević and members of the „Zbor“. The old differences were present in full once again. Damjanović was becoming even more displeased: *„It's good here. It would be even better if there wasn't a Duke – Zbor team,*

¹⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's instructions from April 21, 1946.

¹⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

which is ready to go to any lengths to achieve its goals. I believe that will be taken care of, although I'm expecting their offensive".²¹

Damjanović was particularly affected by the attacks of the members of the „Zbor“ because they occurred after General Mihailović's arrest, which was by itself unacceptable for him and meant additional „poison to an already envenomed atmosphere“. In this situation, he asked the „true Ravna Gora movement members“ to be very disciplined, to abide by their moral principals in order to honourably represent the „Royal Yugoslav Army“ in the face of the allies: *„Only with firm unity, trust, discipline and hard work can we honour our fallen commandant General Draža Mihailović and assure our young King success in liberating our enslaved Fatherland“.*²²

Members of the former „Zbor“ were very well organized and, with nearly their entire elite, they separated themselves from the rest of the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli. Milorad Drašković and Branislav Stranjaković wrote the following about the attitude of the „Zbor“ members: *„Ljotić's movement has preserved its old gist, its leadership and the ideas they stand for. They have fundamentally remained what they used to be before the war in Yugoslavia and during the war in Serbia – a movement with national, ideological and political ideas, which were completely foreign to the Serbian people. Their national views, according to their boss Jaša Ljotić, still represent the Yugoslav ideology where brotherhood with the Croats is the goal. Ideologically, they are the only political group, not counting the communists, with a clear anti-democratic and dictatorial programme. As far as foreign politics is concerned, they are still enemies of the western democracies, but they're not showing it quite as openly as they did during the occupation“.*²³

These people were imposing the belief that they were the only true anti-communists and opponents of the regime in Yugoslavia, in the same way as they were during WW II, and that they deserve to play the leading role in the national fight for freedom. They therefore proclaimed that the „Zbor“ doesn't formally exist any more, they renounced the name *Serbian Volunteer Corps* and proclaimed a new military formation – *The Šumadija Division*. In order to disunite the Chetniks, they formed a mutual alliance with Djujić and Jevdjević against General Damjanović and launched a campaign against him.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders issued on September 11, 1946.

²³ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

An official proclamation was sent round to all the officers in emigration by Djujić and Jevdjević on October 4, 1946 in which they accused Damjanović of wanting to become the „second Čiča“ and the fact that he was in possession of a radio-station bothered them very much: *„Our country is not within range of his radio-station and he didn't find a way to inform the people to listen to it. Our people in Italy don't need it, it serves only to create the illusion of Čiča the second. The general still has one way to make his dream come true. Since he informed the men that he has a submarine at his disposal to transport the troops to Yugoslavia, let him go on board with the first crew and try to live for one year as Čiča did for five years. Then we'll talk again about that. The frivolous political experiments of General Damjanović always have the same goal – to present him as the political leader, the ecclesiastical leader, the military leader and a general leader“*.²⁴

Damjanović was making a great effort to keep up the national spirit of his combatants so that they wouldn't become classical emigrants, which would make things easier for the communist regime in Yugoslavia. It was therefore very important to him to keep alive the Eboli spirit as long as he could: *„Throughout the democratic world, the significance of Eboli is increasing from day to day. The executioner of our people, the notorious criminal Tito and his power-holders are proving this to be a fact with their endless slanders and lies, their efforts to create disunity among us at any price, their attempts to break our spirit and strength, and to turn all of us former combatants into harmless refugees, without souls, without ideals, content to just stay alive. Nevertheless, they didn't succeed nor will they succeed in the future. We, the soldiers of General Mihailović, know our path and our goal“*.²⁵

Damjanović always insisted on the unity of the emigration because the basic national interest was to „liberate our enslaved Fatherland“. He was tireless and consistent in organizing the life in Eboli, in spite of the obstruction coming from the members of the „Zbor“: *„I don't want to complain to anyone. I suffer and work with the belief in the final result. Those who need to be in harmony will be in harmony when the time comes“*.²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.* – On the same day, Momčilo Djujić issued orders to the men of the former Dinara Chetnik Division emphasizing that he will not allow any new officers to join his unit, that he is still the commandant of the division and that only the King personally can disband the division. (*Ibid.*)

²⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's orders issued on October 16, 1946.

²⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from October 31, 1946.

Djujić and Jevdjević continued with their unsparing campaign against General Damjanović by attacking all the distinguished individuals from the Serbian emigration who were supporting him. During December of 1946, they were saying that Konstantin Fotić and Živan Knežević had abandoned the idea of a monarchy and that they've „betrayed“ the King.²⁷

The situation didn't change much till the end of 1946. General Damjanović had become the subject of intrigues in King Peter's surroundings, so Dragiša Ninković, the commandant of the former Rudnik corps of the YAIF, wrote to Petar II Karadjordjević on December 3, advising him to support the Ravna Gora idea and all those who intend to fight for the liberation of the Serbian people from the communist tyranny: „*We've been informed that certain malicious, negligent and unpatriotic individuals have been giving You incorrect and tendentious facts about the special section of the Supreme Command in Italy and our commandant General Damjanović. The soul of the first Ravna Gora movement cell is in Eboli. All the commandants, combatants and invalids of the past war are here under the command of General Damjanović. Here in Eboli, teams of experienced combatants are ready to be transported to the entire territory of our Fatherland at any given time, with the goal to continue the battle. Our commandant, General Damjanović, is a man who has high military, intellectual and spiritual qualities. His enormous spiritual strength and freshness were demonstrated during the difficult days in Bosnia from 1944 to 1945. That is why he was appointed to this high position by our hero, General Mihailović. After the tragic death of General Mihailović, we, all the combatants here, consider General Damjanović his successor and our commandant, who will under your supreme command organize the whole Yugoslav army abroad at any given moment*“.²⁸

General Damjanović used the strength of his authority to organize the former members of the Ravna Gora movement („for the Fatherland and for the Crown“), but as time went by, the strong Yugoslav propaganda convinced a large number of individuals to return to the country. Before it became certain that Damjanović was to leave Italy, he believed, more than ever, that it was necessary to work on creating an organization which would prevent individuals and small groups from trying to save themselves „any which way they could“. Members of the „Zbor“ and the people around Momčilo Djujić were a particular problem for General Damjanović's plan:

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*„They’ve joined forces in order to take care of their own men at the loss of the entirety, which will only be broken up by this effort“.*²⁹

Besides the propaganda from Yugoslavia, the inhabitants of the camp in Eboli also started saying that „our cause is done for“ and that they should immigrate to the overseas countries. Damjanović was explicitly against that: *„My opinion on the matter is that we should and must stay together as a whole, which will most certainly be taken care of, so I must say that I’m against any individual departures and that I’m informing all the people who have promised to help us that I haven’t, unfortunately, received any concrete help from anyone so far“.*³⁰

Near the end of 1946, many were of the opinion that the best thing to do is to emigrate to Australia or to the USA, but Damjanović said, as he did many times before, that they all should stay together: *„This law applies to all of us, from the highest ranking officer to the last private. What you’re doing will brake us up. Who works against us being together, he means no good to himself, to us, to his people, because he’s depriving his people of their only hope: believing in freedom. The curse of the people will fall on such individuals. Only if we stay together as a community and tightly connected, can we represent something and be of use to our Fatherland and to ourselves“.*³¹

Miodrag Damjanović emphasized many times that his main tasks were to take care of his people, who were leading a very difficult life in emigration, and to continue his national work for the future. He wrote the following to Živan Knežević on January 31, 1947: *„It would mean very much to me if I could keep us all together as a whole. I’ve managed somehow to prevent everything from falling apart up to now. I can’t accept the fact that many distinguished individuals is working against me on this matter. The problem of emigration has a negative influence on the relations within the leadership, while the impossibility to form the Rome Committee as a branch of the London Committee makes my work even more difficult. The last I heard, the gentlemen in Rome will not continue their work unless they receive financial help from America“.*³²

As time went by, the Ravna Gora idea began to fade in the eyes of many of the men. General Damjanović blamed the leaders of the Serbian

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Ž. Knežević from December 22, 1946.

³¹ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* Conference of the commandants of the Independent units held on December 18, 1946.

³² *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

emigration in Rome for this: „*If certain individuals had more consciousness and more awareness, there would be no end to what we could achieve. But since things are the way they are, I don't know whether to try to bring them to their senses or to just move aside and let them 'do their work', which, I believe, will not bring any benefit to them*“.³³

While the old politicians were engaged in „general topics“, debating on when the confrontation between the West and the East will begin, and the fall of communism in Yugoslavia and in the world, General Damjanović was busy with every day problems in organizing the men and reviving the national spirit. He was therefore quite displeased with the attitude of the politicians: „*Jeftić and Slobodan Jovanović didn't even feel the need to reply to my letters, let alone inform me on what they have undertaken or answer my questions which were very concrete: Is my work on the right track? I'm left to myself but I cannot and I will not diverge from my path in spite of the fact that I'm alone. I'm convinced that I'm working for the good of my people and that they understand me, so I will continue my work with all my strength. All the threats and all the efforts made by the 'Tito sympathizers' to remove me from here, do not scare me at all. I'm firmly moving towards my goal, no matter what the price will be. Čiča's pledge is guiding me in my work and I take great pleasure in my men's understanding and help*“.³⁴

Damjanović was determined to continue his work after moving to Italy: „*If I'm able to continue my work in the new camp, I'll most certainly have results. If I add that I'm almost without any financial means at my disposal, you will be able to understand completely the situation, which awaits me very soon. I don't know anything about the conditions in the new camps and will it be possible to maintain mutual contacts, but I will do everything in my power to preserve the spirit from Eboli among our entire emigration. I believe that our Ravna Gora guiding star cannot easily be extinguished*“.³⁵

Damjanović particularly respected the work of Konstantin Fotić, Živan Knežević and Mladen Žujović („sincere associates and believers of the Ravna Gora ideology“), but he was disappointed with the work of the Yugoslav National Committee in London. He was particularly displeased with the situation in France: „*There are a certain number of individuals in Paris who could be of great use to our cause, considering the fact that the French seem to like the Serbs, but because of personal ambitions they're all working on*

³³ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Lieutenant Colonel Kosta Simić from February 7, 1947.

³⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from February 19, 1947.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

their own. One of them is Lieutenant Colonel Simić, who was a very devoted and faithful associate while Žujović was in Paris, but he is now deliberately preventing me from contacting the Little one (the King)“.³⁶

Damjanović was very displeased with the attitude of the Yugoslav politicians in Rome: *„Živko Topalović distanced himself from us as soon as we arrived here, while Adam Pribičević and Bjelajčić are completely inactive. The generals and the elders are totally against us. I received more torment from them than from Tito. Not only did they deprive me of their help and support, but they also belittled me in the eyes of the Allies*“.³⁷

General Damjanović was surprised with some of Adam Pribičević's views: *„It seems to me that you were forced to write this way by the psychosis of 'our' people in Rome, those who have less and less common ground with Eboli and its spirit of a community, which has been nurtured for so long in the way of the ideology of our Ravna Gora leader. You didn't find it appropriate even to mention Draža in your letters, in these, as you yourself say, fatal times*“.³⁸

The National Committee in Rome practically didn't exist any more and General Damjanović didn't respect the decisions of some of its members: *„I would like to let you know the following and if necessary please announce this to the gentlemen whom it may concern: the work of the committee, if it exists, cannot be compulsory for me or my men without an agreement with me on what is to be done in our name*“.³⁹

Damjanović always emphasized that he is not the one who is creating disunity in the Serbian emigration, because he never started a conflict first: *„It's not my fault that I perform my duties and mind my own business, which is not in the interest of sick ambitions. I will not abandon my men for anybody's sake, except if the King relieves me of my duties, and whether it's to somebody's liking or not, I believe that the national struggle is more important than the trifle politics conducted by the Dukes and the Ljotić sympathizers*“.⁴⁰

General Damjanović was also very disappointed with the behaviour of the former commandants of the YAIF. He wrote a very emotional letter

³⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Aleksandar Milošević from February 22, 1947.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to A. Pribičević from March 4, 1947.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from March 28, 1947.

to Aleksandar Milošević on March 28, 1947: „I avoided writing to you about this up to now. I suffered and bravely endured it all. My efforts to bring these people to reason had very little success, because their better and more pleasant way of life was pulling them down. The lack of financial means led them to accept unbecoming and unlawful jobs. Everything will be clear to you when I tell you that from all the corps commandants, I only have Sergej Živanović by my side, while all the others abandoned their men in Italy or in France – Papak, Siniša, Kolarević, Gaga Topalović, Ninković, Zvonko, Batričević, Ciga Stojanović“.⁴¹

General Damjanović explained his views in an even more explicit way in his letter to A. Lončarević on April 10, 1947: „I'm afraid that one day the unfortunate people in our country will ask themselves: who has done what for them? All the people who left the country are not as such that their superiors should renounce them, or perhaps be ashamed of them, and let them take care of themselves on their own. Perhaps they will also have the right one day to ask their superiors: what did you do to make our life easier while we were in emigration and prepare us for future actions? Believe me when I say that I too could 'find my bearings' in Naples, Rome or Paris. I have lived in the 'big world', but I don't have the impudence to abandon these men left to me by Čiča's pledge. No threats will frighten me. Common interests must come before personal ones“.⁴²

Damjanović was against the ideology which was being spread in Eboli by the followers of Dimitrije Ljotić („that was something outlived for nowadays democracy, especially for us Ravna Gora followers“). He therefore broke off all contacts with them and devoted himself only to the combatants of the Šumadija Division: „If you were closer acquainted with the distinguished individuals of the „Zbor“ and their destructive work here, you would never write in this way. I don't find it necessary to lose any more time in trying to explain to you that Eboli is still the same as it was when you were impressed by it. If I had joined the „Zbor“ with my Ravna Gora Chetniks while we were still in Vipava, Eboli would be an ideal place today, but I didn't want to, I just couldn't do that, and naturally, Eboli isn't good any more“.⁴³

When it became clear to Damjanović that there isn't going to be an armed uprising against the Yugoslav regime and that they will soon leave the camp and be free, he asked his men to remain true adversaries of Tito's

⁴¹ General Damjanović's Archives.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

regime: „We belong to two different worlds. Until the King's rule doesn't replace the five-pointed red star in Dedinje, there's no place for us in our Fatherland. You will come across brothers by blood and by conduct and by understanding – former prisoners of war. Help them whenever you can, but also inspire them to nourish the Ravna Gora spirit we had in Eboli. Create firm communities with them which can be counted on one day. Strengthen your cultural ties and keep on developing your spiritual life“.⁴⁴

Damjanović deeply believed in Yugoslavians as the best solution for the Serbian people, the idea of a federative Kingdom of Yugoslavia which was defined at the Saint Sava congress in 1944: „Wouldn't a free and democratic Yugoslavia, arranged on the principle of federalism, be a place where the Serbs could solve their issues? Isn't the issue of our internal democracy a problem which will be solved by the free peoples of Yugoslavia with their own free will? If we were to renounce Yugoslavia today, wouldn't we also be renouncing Draža Mihailović and the millions who have lost their lives? That would make our existence in emigration lose its meaning and we would lose the right to represent the enslaved people in Yugoslavia“.⁴⁵

Damjanović was very hurt by the fact that the Serbian National Representative Body in the USA didn't invite, not even one, authentic Ravna Gora movement member or somebody from the camp in Eboli to their congress, held on Vidovdan of 1947: „It hurts me very much to see that the Serbs cannot find harmony, not even in this situation of great misfortune we have found ourselves in. I completely agree with you that there is no place for officers in the Serbian National Representative Body, at least not for those who intend to remain officers, but I find it very strange that the Serbs from America, who organized the congress and praise Draža and Ravna Gora, didn't feel the need to invite anyone from the Ravna Gora movement or from Eboli! You very well know what Eboli meant to the entire emigration and what it still does. Maybe they thought that Živko Topalović is a true representative of the Ravna Gora movement in spite of what he has been doing against us in Italy and Switzerland. I have always been against officers interfering in politics, and I still am, and I think it is more honourable to remain an officer-Ravna Gora movement commandant than to get mixed up in politics, but I would kindly ask you to explain to the Serbs over there that Draža didn't have only officers by his side“.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Orders issued by General Damjanović on June 28, 1947.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from September 25, 1947.

FOUNDING THE ASSOCIATION

„Personally, I have no other ambition than to take care of these unfortunate people, who were left to me by Draža, until better days arrive. If I even partly succeed, I will have paid my debt to him and to my Fatherland“.

Immediately after WW II, about 12.000 people emigrated because of political or economic changes in their countries. According to the estimates announced at the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, about three million people didn't want to return to their mother country. The Yugoslav communist authorities estimated that the total number of Yugoslavs who emigrated during the first decade after the war was about one million (1.500.000 including the children). The number of political emigrants was somewhere about 100.000 people. Most of the political emigrants were concentrated in Great Britain, 90% of which were Serbs. The first wave of emigrants, not more than 1000 of them, came with the government in exile and spent the war years in Great Britain.⁴⁷

A large number of Yugoslavs remained in the prisoner of war camps in Germany and in the military camps in Italy. According to the data of the IRO (International Refugees Organization), about 125.000 citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia were situated in the countries of Western Europe: 20.000 prisoners of war, about 40.000 internees and about 70.000 members of the defeated military formations, 40.000 of which were Chetniks.⁴⁸

After leaving the camp in Muenster, a new period in the lives of the combatants of the YAIF began. They ceased to be soldiers, they were scattered around in various camps and they were inadequately connected. There was very little chance of them staying in Germany because the country was still in ruins, and the organization which was helping the emigrants was very limited in its resources. The western officials made an effort to create an economic category of people out of the political emigrants who wanted to continue to fight against the communist regime in Yugoslavia, so that they would lose their will for any kind of political action against Tito and communism. The intention was to assimilate these people into the ethnic surroundings of the country they were living in.⁴⁹

Most of these people went to Great Britain. Together with the people from the camps in Italy, there was about 15.000 Serbian emigrants in Great Britain in 1949, but a part of them soon emigrated to the USA, Canada and

⁴⁷ Nebojša Popović, *Slobodan Jovanović i jugoslovenska država*, Beograd 2003, 321.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 325.

⁴⁹ *Van Otadžbine*, 39.

Australia. At the beginning of the 1950s, there were between 8.000 and 10.000 emigrants in Great Britain. They settled in almost four equal groups in four parts of England: London, Derby, Birmingham and the largest group settled in York.⁵⁰ They had the obligation to work on the jobs determined by the State, which were mainly jobs in mines and farms. Only after 2–3 years could they independently look for work, so they sought employment close to their place of residence, which were work camps or so-called hostels.

While he was in internment, separated from his men, Damjanović was constantly thinking about how to gather his former combatants, scattered around the world, in order to form an organization, which would nurture the traditions from WW II. It wasn't possible to do this on a military basis, to do it on a political basis was undesirable at this given moment, while such a thing was even forbidden in some countries. On the other hand, as soon as the tempests of war calmed down and there was no more danger of being extradited, the old problem of Serbian disunity became present once again, nearly in the same way as during the war. While they were still in Italy, part of the officers left the centre and started joining other organizations already in existence. The former Dukes, Momčilo Djujić and Dobrosav Jevdjević, went so far as to launch a silent action against General Damjanović and his authority.

The former Serbian „volunteers“, which were part of the Šumadija Division in Eboli, were gained over by the political leadership of the Zbor, which became active in Germany. While they were still in Eboli, certain individuals from this group were upset with General Damjanović because, as they used to say, „He poisoned every atom of the air in Eboli with Ravna Gora ideals“. A large part of these people were never politically connected to the „Zbor“, but once they were alone in Germany and saw that the members of the „Ravna Gora movement“ were avoiding them, they went over to the side which accepted them without any hesitation.

General Damjanović could count on one part of the prisoners of war from the April War, who were politically divided up into two groups (*Zajednica and Dušan Silni*), because they came into contact with the combatants from the fatherland in Germany when they were all released from the camp in Muenster and placed into the same camps. While he was still in internment, towards the end of 1947, Damjanović gave his approval to a few followers of the Ravna Gora movement to begin organizing the men in the camps. He didn't want the organizing to be completed until most of the men

⁵⁰ N. Popović, *Slobodan Jovanović*, 322–323.

weren't transported from Germany to England, which was the only country the Serbian emigrants could go to.

Damjanović's basic idea was, as always, to achieve unity of all the members of the Ravna Gora movement, in order to overthrow the communist regime in Yugoslavia. He wrote about this to Jovan Marčetić, a priest living in the USA: „*We can't get rid of our old problem in the shape of 'I and only I'. We are all the most meritorious, we are all the most efficient, and we are all capable of doing everything! All of this is only doing damage to our harmony, unity and strength of the common good. It is very difficult to convince these people that our future depends on us alone, that only in harmony, strength and unity lays the future happiness of the Serbs, in a powerful and significant federative Kingdom*“.⁵¹

General Damjanović sent a circular to all the officers under his command on May 19, 1948: „*Do everything you can to mutually connect, as firmly as possible, all of our Chetniks who are in the camps in Great Britain and organize the members of the Ravna Gora movement and it is necessary to form a local committee in each camp as soon as possible*“.⁵²

Former members of the YAIF formed a Ravna Gora committee in the camp in Debach (near Woodbridge in England) on June 13. The committee was headed by Major Vaso Milović and they all acknowledged General Damjanović as their commandant: „*After sending a salute with our Ravna Gora solemn oath to His Majesty King Petar from this assembly, we are sending one to you as well, because you are Čiča's valid assistant and deputy and therefore our commander-in-chief. After our beloved King, you are our lawful representative of the Ravna Gora struggle abroad and the interpreter of our Ravna Gora struggle in our Fatherland. We are placing at your disposal all of our forces and our lives to be used at any time and any place in the service to our King and Fatherland*“.⁵³

One of the most active people in this committee was Jordan Kimić. He sent very optimistic reports to General Damjanović about the Ravna Gora activities in England: „*Thanks to our gracious God, everything is getting better. The committee is composed of good men, each one better than the next one, everything is moving forward and going well. All the conclusions of the State conference were accepted in full, especially the one referring to you that nothing is to be done without the approval of General Damjanović. We are now only waiting for you to come here and hurriedly make all the*

⁵¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁵² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's official proclamation from May 19, 1948.

⁵³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

necessary preparations concerning the newest events taking place in our enslaved Fatherland, where we are needed the most".⁵⁴

A group of former members of the YAIF who were in Paris, headed by Lieutenant Dragan Sotirović, formed a Ravna Gora committee in the second half of May, with the ambition to be the originators of the founding of the Central Ravna Gora Committee, which would practically mean limiting the work of the association Damjanović was aiming to form. However, this group hurried and founded the Head Ravna Gora Committee, an organization that gathered about 500 people.⁵⁵

The people from this committee pointed out that their organization was open to every „*true follower of General Mihailović, who not only claim they are, but work as Ravna Gora members do. We were very strong in our country because we were organized. We will be strong abroad as well only if we stay joined together, we'll be organized and united, belonging in body and soul to the Ravna Gora movement*“.⁵⁶ This committee undoubtedly had political ambitions, which made any co-operation with General Damjanović impossible, because he was explicitly against that. Be that as it may, the Committee was always pointing out that the Ravna Gora movement had the greatest influence on the Serbian people during WW II, and that it should remain so in exile as well, until the final „*liberation of the Fatherland*“.

Damjanović later explained that he agreed with the founding of the Ravna Gora Committee „*because we had to have someone who would take care of the community, since the military troops were disbanded*“. He was, however, very clear in his standpoint that this kind of work will prove to be unsuccessful, and already on June 14, he expressed severely his discontent in a letter to Colonel Vojislav Petrović: „*Today, we don't need any quibbling and there mustn't be any sophistry! You haven't all arrived and you haven't even organized yourselves yet, and already you want a competent leadership! Who is to be in the leadership and who will they lead? What isn't done correctly now, no emergency meetings will set right. I've said what I have to say, you do as you please, but you must be aware of your responsibility*“.⁵⁷

Alternative solutions needed to be found: „*Something that would better suit our needs. The Ravna Gora movement was distinctly revolutio-*

⁵⁴ *Archives of the Association of the Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army*. Kimić's letter to Damjanović from June 29, 1948.

⁵⁵ *Van Otadžbine*, 29–30.

⁵⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

nary-military, and what we need now is men like teacher Jakovljević and Čeda Petrović whom you don't know very well, but you've heard of their vociferousness. All that is wrong must be set right by us who led the soldiers up to now, we shouldn't leave it up to the politicians".⁵⁸

When it became obvious that Damjanović will no longer support the Ravna Gora Committee, Miloš Jakovljević, the secretary of this committee, wrote a letter to Damjanović on June 24, offering him some „advice“ – first of all to reconcile with Momčilo Djuić, so that the „confidence which our immortal Čiča had in You wouldn't come into question“. Jakovljević further wrote: „I know that your closest associates and his assistants did a lot to deepen the gap between the two of you because of their own personal prestige, but if you two don't settle your differences, you will lose your armies and the reputation you would have had in emigration. I would say that your official proclamations brought a lot of confusion into the only possible way of organizing our people in England. You must know and believe that there exists a Temporary Ravna Gora Committee, which is composed of people who will want to, and be able to cope with any problem in any situation, and will not diverge from the true Ravna Gora path. That is why you should have approached us“.⁵⁹

Damjanović replied to this letter out of sheer courtesy on July 1, but his anger was more than explicit: „I don't know who gave you the right to address me in such a manner and lecture me as if I were your little pupil. Perhaps it's because of my DP status, while you are an elected high official? However it may be, allow me to recommend that in the future, when you want to do something similar, you must previously examine yourself (you are a teacher) and do some thinking about your work, and only then can you approach others with your lectures. How did you come to the idea to meddle in my relations with Duke Djuić and to interpret them as you did? Everybody knows the both of us, and everybody knows what is going on between the two of us. In your letter, your attitude is as if you were a newcomer among us who doesn't know that I have never quarrelled with Djuić, and that I don't need a go-between for reconciliation. Don't you and the members of the committee forget who I am and that I don't want anything done without my knowledge. If you feel so sure of yourself, so strong and competent to work without me, I wish you all the prosperity, but do not forget that there is something called responsibility, not only towards the people here, but also towards the ones who stayed

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

*behind in the Fatherland. We are not so numerous that we do not know who is who“.*⁶⁰

Damjanović received a letter from Episcopate Dionisije from Libertyville on July 2, supporting him in his task of uniting the national emigration: *„I’m unusually glad and immensely grateful to God, because he freed you from that horrible prison and camp in Muenster. I’m happy I could help as much as it was possible. I heard of your release from prison from His Majesty the King while he was visiting America. Today, general sir, today more than ever before, a problem presents itself, the problem of uniting all our Serbian forces into a strong joint front to fight against our common enemy. In particular, the Chetniks and the fighting forces need to unite, in other words, our Chetnik leaders need to get along well together and continue, in concord, their commenced fight for liberation“.*⁶¹

Certain pre-war Yugoslav politicians were preoccupied with forming different societies which were gradually becoming their private associations. In these societies, they took more care of their personal interests than they did of the common interests of the Serbian emigration. Vjekoslav Farkaš left a lot of data about this. He wrote the following to General Damjanović on July 9: *„Gavrilović and a few others work in a private charitable society called ‘The Yugoslav Welfare Committee’, which was formed by Boško Jevtić and is now headed by him. Many criticize this society because it didn’t give any positive results up to now. There is also ‘The Charitable Society of Yugoslav Ladies’, which is headed by B. Jevtić’s wife, so this whole family is ‘employed’ in these private societies. In the second mentioned society, a severe battle for the position of president took place recently. It was won by Mrs. Jevtić, which of course offended the other wives of ministers, so they don’t take part in the activities of the society. Besides that, in order to keep all the glory in the family, Mrs. Jevtić refused to co-operate with the British Charitable Society, and therefore, the whole situation is very unstable. Believe me, sometimes I’m sorry I don’t have the pen of one Branislav Nušić, because I think there’s no better material for a comedy than the situation with our people here in London. Unfortunately, I’m completely aware of the great damage this situation is creating for our people who are rotting throughout Germany and Austria, or dying of tuberculosis in DP hospitals“.*⁶²

The work of these societies did very little to improve the position of the former members of the YAIF and to help them in getting accustomed to

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

life in emigration, which was described very convincingly by Farkaš: „*Our people, Ravna Gora movement members and former prisoners of war, who are coming to England to work, are disgusted with The Yugoslav Welfare Committee, with our politicians and the rest of the 'highnesses'. A group of about 100 men, mainly active service officers, arrived yesterday. They all have to pass through London, where they stay for one night only. When even the smallest group of our people arrive, the British inform The Yugoslav Welfare Committee so it could send some of its 'highnesses' to greet these people and welcome them, or at least visit them. A few warm words upon arrival, in a country where the centre of our emigration is located, means a great deal to these people, who came to this country as ordinary labourers. However, nobody, absolutely nobody came to greet them, to welcome them, to give them a bit of hope. Why? They're too busy 'taking care of the people'. Contrary to that, representatives of other nations always come to greet even the smallest group of their people*“.⁶³

Many more individuals, however, supported General Damjanović. One of them was Jezdimir Miljković from a small town in South Wales, who wrote to Damjanović on July 10: „*We have the Ravna Gora spirit here at our hostel. Part of the men are from the Drina regiment, there are some Ljotić sympathizers, but most of us are from the Dinara Division. The harmony between us is, nevertheless, very good. There weren't any incidents up to now, neither with the authorities nor with the other national groups*“.⁶⁴

Miljković reported about the very poor relations between the Serbs in London: „*Everybody has a different point of view, various groups and clans are being formed, all with only one goal: to win the King's favoured in order to use his name for their future plans. Members of the Ravna Gora movement do not have a distinguished individual who could represent them successfully. About a month ago, we heard that you were making an effort to come to England. Your political opponents and your personal enemies immediately began their action to degrade you as much as they could. They say: General Damjanović is nothing but a quisling who sat in Nedić's cabinet and backed him up. Djujić joined them in their actions. The biggest supporter of the „Zbor“ is dr. Irinej Djordjević. The military officers who live in London behave as if they don't exist, their too busy trying to do each other harm. I can't see any good coming from this situation and the only possibility of anything good happening is if you were to come here as soon as*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

*possible because you are our highest authority and I've noticed that even your opponents respect you“.*⁶⁵

Damjanović was aware of all the differences among the Serbs in emigration, so he thought that founding a society on a purely military and humanitarian basis would help consolidate the emigrants and improve their living conditions. He emphasized the necessity of organizing in the camps and establishing mutual connections so that the movement wouldn't become a political party: *„I believed I would go there soon, and then we would see what can be done about the living and working conditions, as well as what can be done about our ideology. However, I'm sitting here and doing nothing, while some gentlemen have the wish to do anything for their personal gain, but which is of no use for the Ravna Gora movement members. This is a very inconvenient situation because such occurrences are creating an ugly picture of the Ravna Gora movement members. This is not the time to be politically 'designated', since none of us followed Draža because we were members of one party or another, but because we were combatants for freedom and democracy“.*⁶⁶

Damjanović received word from Episcope Nikolaj Velimirović in the second half of July: *„I was delighted when you were liberated from your long-term suffering. All the true Serbs in this country were very happy to hear that you and all the others were released from the camp in Muenster. The uncertainty and evil presentiments, the destiny of all of you in that camp, gave us a terrible amount of pain. But thank God, everything came out well in the end. I think the best thing you could do is to go to England and be a good influence on our people over there. My general opinion is that as many of our people as possible should go to England. I think that is much better than going to far away countries“.*⁶⁷

Damjanović attended a meeting in Salzburg (Austria) at the end of July, 1948, where the topic of discussion was the organizing of the intelligence service on the territory of Austria, and the preparations for sending men to Yugoslavia „to make contact with the resistance and information centres in order to create conditions for further work“.⁶⁸ The goal was to try

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.* Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from July 16, 1948.

⁶⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* From the minute-book of the meeting held on July 27, 1948 in Salzburg. Besides Damjanović, the following people were present at this meeting: Majtnar, Kovačević, Brka and Zaječarac.

with some activities in the country, with the help of western intelligence posts, in order to overthrow the communist regime as soon as possible.

Organizing the intelligence service was a priority, while sending the men to Yugoslavia would begin when the circumstances are right. Damjanović suggested that contact should be made with certain individuals in Italy and Greece, where it would be easier to plan and eventually perform certain activities in the country. Damjanović requested „absolute secrecy of all activities“ and that the number of men who have knowledge of future actions should be at a minimum.

Another meeting of the same men with the same topic was held in Bad-Gastein on July 28. The plan was approved by the Allied (British) authorities in Austria, and Damjanović requested the inclusion of an organization in Italy „which he had made contact with“. Trieste was chosen as the most suitable working centre in Italy. They talked about preparing four groups of people (11 men in each group) which would be sent to Yugoslavia (Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia).⁶⁹

General Damjanović's ideas were supported completely by Borislav Trifković, one of the leaders of the Serbian Agrarian Party in emigration. He was of the opinion that all the political organizations should have only one programme – the Serbian programme: *„Today, we should be good, correct and honest Serbs, and tomorrow, when we return to our liberated country, we can start talking politics. Today, we should be in concord in order to show the allies that we are worthy of their efforts for our cause. We are combatants for freedom and we shall die as such. Unfortunately, some of our people here in emigration are looking after their own interests only, instead of the interests of all of us. There are even some worse people than these, who give our emigration a fascist character and are slowing down the process of our liberation. When I say this, I'm thinking of the Ljotić sympathizers and Slobodan Drašković. Whom do these people represent? A few pathetic individuals and themselves“*.⁷⁰

Vjekoslav Farkaš, one of Damjanović's most reliable associates, visited the camps in Great Britain where the Serbs were located in July of 1948, and wrote the following to General Damjanović: *„I've come to the conclusion that most of the men are of the opinion that the only way to organize our people is through an association which would be headed by you.*

⁶⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. There is no valid data wither something from this plan was realized.

⁷⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Trifković's letter to General Damjanović from July 29, 1948.

*The men have told me that we are the only people who don't have such an association. There's about 10 000 of our people here and more are arriving every day. We can deduct 2000 from this number on Ustashas, Ljotić sympathizers, degenerates and fools. The remaining 8000 are mainly members of the YAIF or former prisoners of war. If 6000 of them were to become members (in time) and the membership fee was to be 6 pennies a week or 1 penny per day, it would be enough to cover the administrative expenses and to acquire a building in London later on. People from other nations have already done so; they started in the same way, alone with modest means“.*⁷¹

Damjanović agreed with Farkaš's ideas, emphasizing that nobody should be „an eternal member of the Association, but a combatant for freedom“. We should make sure that only honest people can become members of the association („no Ustashas or members of the Zbor“). Damjanović expected that King Petar would accept the patronage of the Association.⁷²

Damjanović was satisfied with the work of the Committees in the camps, which functioned on a strictly military basis. At the beginning of August 1948, he wrote the following to Lieutenant Colonel Živadin Mladenović: „*The Ravna Gora Committees were formed only because there were no more military units, to keep the Ravna Gora movement members together and ready to achieve new accomplishments, when the time arrives. Any attempts of political party activities among the Ravna Gora movement members should be prevented with severe force, because they followed Čiča as combatants for freedom and democracy, not as members of certain political parties. When our ideals are achieved, those who wish to engage in political activities will be able to do so, while the soldiers will be in their barracks, as always“.*⁷³

Damjanović was very displeased with the fact that nothing was being done about his status and he knew nothing about his future. He wrote about that to A. Trifunac on August 9: „*I'm not complaining about my life, I've lived under worse conditions, I live in the same way as the people here, but I'm astonished by the indolence (not to use another word!) Of the authorities and it all seems like nobody is authorized to find a solution in my case! If that is so, I'll manage as I did up to now. I will not go begging in order to be able to work and I will not live on anybody's charity. I only wanted to show you, my true friend, the reality of the situation I'm in. I also want you*

⁷¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from August 4, 1948.

⁷² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from August 10, 1948.

⁷³ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

to know – the dollars you gave me in Innsbruck, I've only just exchanged them here, and I now feel very grateful to you for your generosity".⁷⁴

The Committee in London didn't function as General Damjanović had expected it to. It had a lot of „self-proclaimed Ravna Gora movement members“ who worked on their own, without any regard to common interests, at least that's what was reported to the General by Jordan Kimić. He was very displeased with the fact that the general's name was not even mentioned in the official documents, nor was it mentioned in the journal *Glas Ravne Gore* [The Voice of Ravna Gora]. Damjanović was only able to say that he immediately noticed that the people in the Committee had very poor interpersonal relations, „*but I said to myself, they were elected, so be it! However, I see now that no good will come from it and that the Ravna Gora movement members will suffer the damage. That mustn't happen*“.⁷⁵

Although he was very busy with forming the Association, Damjanović didn't forget his men in the camps and he asked for more help from America for them. He maintained a good relationship with Mihailo Dučić, the President of the Serbian National Defence; the two of them made an effort to send as much people as they could to America, which was easier to do after the emigrational law was adopted. Damjanović took special care of the sick and disabled: „*The people are interested in going to America and I'll be very grateful for any information you can provide. I have great worries about the sick and disabled, the families who still live under very difficult conditions, especially after the currency reform. The students have not been enabled to attend universities, in order to be prepared for the very difficult tasks which await them in their Fatherland*“.⁷⁶

In a letter Damjanović received on August 20, Farkaš informed him that he was the only person who could run the Association: „*You are the most competent person to give the initiative, to set the wheel in motion, to lay the foundation of the Association. This is before all, without any flattery, because the people trust you, because you have proven, as did our Čiča, that you care about the interests of the little man, the little combatant but a great hero, while, unfortunately, many competent people act as if they're afraid to mix with the little people. That is the secret of your great popularity*“.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to J. Kimić from August 13, 1948.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to M. Dučić from August 15, 1948.

⁷⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

Damjanović was disappointed with the attitude of the leaders in the Serbian emigration, before all with the standpoints of Slobodan Jovanović and the absence of desire to create a national organization: „*First of all, I want to tell you that we have began to make some conclusions. It seems to me that the members of the Ravna Gora movement are no longer in fashion. The people are compact here and in Great Britain. They're watching what is happening, they're waiting and hoping. Who deserves credit for this and who will benefit from this, I cannot say, but I feel much better now that I have opened my heart to you. I've been suffering for years, but nobody cares! That isn't a great burden for me, but doing nothing is*“.⁷⁸

Miodrag Damjanović intended to go to England, where there already was a large number of Serbs, but that was easier said than done. In this period, news had already arrived about the Yugoslav – Soviet conflict, so Damjanović expected the West to direct their politics towards overthrowing the communist regime in Yugoslavia, and that the Serbian emigration would have an active role in that. He was therefore very disappointed when Živan Knežević informed him that in the USA, they're not even thinking of doing so: „*I'm very surprised that they don't want to co-operate with the national emigration. We do have a lot of patience, but as far as we can see, we're afraid that later on everything might be just a bit too late*“.⁷⁹

From Damjanović's letters we're able to see that he was very displeased with his position, which prevented him to engage in any concrete activities: „*My activities are reduced to writing letters. I feel that's not enough to improve the situation our people are in, and certainly not enough for the events to come. I cannot adapt myself to this situation, but I must say: what can I do, all this doesn't depend on me*“.⁸⁰

Damjanović emphasized more than once that it is his duty to initiate the forming of an association of former combatants of Draža Mihailović, and he intended to announce this fact officially on September 6, 1948.⁸¹ As a loyal officer, he informed King Petar II about his intention to form the Association. He also asked that Aleksandar, apparent heir to the throne, be the patron of the Association: „*In connection to the conditions the combatants of Draža Mihailović live and work in today, I intend to organize the forming*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from August 22, 1948.

⁷⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from August 22, 1948.

⁸⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to „uncle Goran“ from August 23, 1948.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from August 25, 1948.

*of an association with the free will of all its members and in a democratic way, and the common wish of all of us here is that the patron of this association be your exalted first-born, His Royal Majesty Aleksandar, apparent heir to the throne. The name of the Association is to be 'The Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army Draža Mihailović'. I kindly ask for your high consonance and your approval, which would be announced on September 6, so that we could start organizing the Association straight away“.*⁸²

There was no response to this letter. Vjekoslav Farkaš informed Damjanović that he couldn't reach King Petar during his stay in London at the beginning of September 1948.⁸³ Farkaš suggested to Damjanović that he should send a written request, previously signed by as many people as possible, to the British Prime Minister and to the head of the Foreign Office (Attlee and Bevin) asking them to enable Damjanović to come to London: „*We must do this if we want you to come here*“.⁸⁴

In August of 1948, the Ravna Gora Action Committee in Paris, headed by the former officers of the YAIF: Dragan Sotirović, Borivoje Radenković, Ljubomir Jovanović, Velimir Piletić, Borivoje Manić, Svetozar Ciganović and Veljko Remetić, decided to organize a Ravna Gora congress. The congress was held from the 4th to the 6th of September, and the organizers claimed that they had the support of 80% of the Ravna Gora movement members now in emigration.

The organizers of the congress announced that their goal is to elect an authoritative and responsible Ravna Gora movement leadership in emigration. Members of the Action Committee of the congress were: Borivoje Radenković, former colonel Ljubomir Jovanović („Patak“), former major Borivoje Kovačević, Milan Stojanović, Svetozar Ciganović, Dragan Sotirović and Rade Mihajlović, former captains Branko Jovanović, Veljko Remetić, Tihomir Stojković, Milosav Popović and a few more emigrants.⁸⁵

⁸² *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from September 14, 1948.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* – Damjanović sent his best wishes to the King for his birthday on September 6: „*Following the lead of an indefatigable enthusiast, the first combatant for a new, felicitous Yugoslavia, all of us here far from our Fatherland have the holy duty to follow the example of our Supreme Commandant, and each and every one of us must, within the boundaries of our possibilities, help in reaching the King's and our own life goal: creating a free and powerful Kingdom of Yugoslavia. We must all follow our King in harmony, united by the spirit of immortal Draža*“ (*Ibid.*).

⁸⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

General Damjanović was informed about the congress by Slobodan Drašković: „*We expressed our scepticism towards these facts from the very first moment and we had enough concrete examples to show that the Action Committee didn't act according to regulations Konstantin Fotić, who happened to be in Paris at the time, held a short convenient speech, full of optimism, dignified and without any elements which could in any way stir the flames of passion. However, when he left the congress hall, the chaos began, disputes and quarrels went on for two whole days. There were about 120 individuals in the hall and they could be divided like this: on one side, about one third of the people present were ready to support the Action Committee in advance (among them were a few delegates from the French countryside and Belgium); on the other side there were 10–20 Ravna Gora movement members representing political parties, headed by Mane Vukobratović, who only wanted to pull down the Action Committee, more because they wanted the congress to be a failure than they had a wish to reach a just solution by way of criticism; Most of the people present were undefined, not in favour of the Action Committee's mode of proceedings, but for different reasons than the politicians*“.⁸⁶

Because of the opposition of a group of youth organization members from the former JURAO „501“, the congress didn't finish its work, and a new working committee was to be formed, which would prepare a new congress. It was obvious that the disunity of the Serbian politicians in emigration was very deep. The most difficult issue was whether to follow the Yugoslav direction or the Serbian one. The Yugoslav National Committee in London and the Serbian National Defence in the USA had different views on this matter. Slobodan Drašković was of the opinion that it was necessary to keep aloof from the idea of Yugoslavia because of the tragic experiences from the past, and because the old „politicians in emigration have already started negotiations with the Croatian emigration and excluded 99% of the Ravna Gora movement members and distinguished members of Čiča's Central National Committee. Drašković emphasized: „*I don't want to enter into a discussion here about that and to prove how absurd, undemocratic and cynical it is that people who don't represent any power in our emigration, some of them even traitors of Draža Mihailović's cause, Živko Topalović for example, are obtruding themselves upon all of us as our leaders. What I want to point out is that a lot of damage can come from such a gathering and I'm completely convinced that we should use all the force necessary to*

⁸⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*. S. Drašković's letter to General Damjanović from September 27, 1948.

stop further capitulations and that the Serbs should break up the vicious circle of political defeats which were the work of political parties from August 26, 1939 and onwards. I also know that a large number of Ravna Gora movement members feel the consequences of these problems as I do, they also think that General Damjanović should be here with us today, with the Serbian Chetniks, not with the executives of 'Yugoslav legality' who played a big part in sending us away to the forest. At the meeting, the six of us had a conversation with Mr. Fotić tonight, we told him our opinion about you, our opinion that you are totally devoted to the Chetniks' cause. We expressed our wish that you and Mr. Fotić meet in person and clear up all the misunderstandings, caused by human malice and intrigues, between people who in general have the same views and wishes. Mr. Fotić heard us out very carefully and agreed with the idea to meet with you personally in Germany“.⁸⁷

In this period, Damjanović was in active correspondence with reputable individuals from the Serbian emigration, explaining to them the need to form a representative association. He wrote the following to A. Trifunac on September 12: „*We have to consolidate ourselves, disassociate ourselves from all political activities until we return to our country, we must do everything we possibly can to make sure that everybody here returns to the country as healthy as possible – in every way! In order to do that, we must first help ourselves. The Poles are a good example, why wouldn't we use that? Social care, as you called it, must be organized first. The rest will come by itself, I believe the people will understand me and I don't care much what the superiors will say. The new association will be closely connected to my hosts and the Poles, and I believe we can expect much more success than the Committee had. I personally have no other ambition than to take care of these unfortunate people, left to me by Draža, until better times come. If I even partly succeed, I will have paid my debt to him and to my conscience“.⁸⁸*

Damjanović was satisfied with the work of certain Ravna Gora movement committees, as was the case with the committee in the camp in Borghorst: „*That is how the Ravna Gora movement members do things, aware of their ideology and their tasks ahead of them. Personal and party interests, are not a tool used by the Ravna Gora movement members. The interests of the community must be before all and above all interests to the Ravna Gora movement members, while the only politics they know is the national one. Political parties mustn't influence the work of the Ravna Gora*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*movement members – we are combatants, and when we fulfil our duty to our King and our people and return to our liberated country, there will be time for political work“.*⁸⁹

General Damjanović mostly counted on the help of Vjekoslav Farkaš and Jovica Ljubojević in preparing the forming of the Association, so, on one occasion, he had to intervene in order to smooth out some of their mutual misunderstandings: *„The most important thing to me is that you’ve understood me and that you’re willing to work. I received Farkaš’s letter after having received yours, so I wish to emphasize once again how important it is to me to combine Slovenian methodicalness and the Serbian temperament, which must become prominent in your work. I know you as a rational man, so I expect results from you! Do not forget that your agreement to work together with one another is the basis of our future work, that everything you do is of a temporary character until everything is exactly defined at the Assembly. You must, as a high official, mitigate that crudity, you know you can do it! I kindly ask you to do that“.*⁹⁰

In his letter dated September 19, Farkaš expressed his belief that King Petar and the people around him will change their minds when they understand that the „Association will succeed“. He continued his propaganda activities on forming the Association on all the people who came to London, always using the example of the Polish emigrants: *„I met with a group of non-commissioned officers last week. I walked around London with them and showed them the Polish Association. I don’t want to exaggerate, but I must say they were surprised, and when I told them that you were preparing something similar, they were enraptured. They were very impressed when they saw with their own eyes what can be done with one shilling a day“.*⁹¹

Damjanović visited the camps in Germany, where there were still some Serbian emigrants and former prisoners of war, in the middle of September 1948, in order to see the situation they were in. He wrote about his impressions to the former judge Kosta Kulišić: *„I can tell you that I’m satisfied with what I have seen and that the situation would be even better if we, the superiors, were better. The people are pretty much left to themselves and to all the consequences of such a situation. But I am an optimist, as always,*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Jovica Ljubojević from September 14, 1948.

⁹¹ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* V. Farkaš’s letter to General Damjanović from September 19, 1948.

and I'm convinced that the situation will be as it should be as soon as the circumstances improve".⁹²

Damjanović received word from Borivoje Radenković from Paris at the beginning of September. He informed Damjanović about the situation of the emigration in France and about the congress which was held at the beginning of the month, which Damjanović was already informed about by M. Drašković. Radenković emphasized that he sees his work as one of use to „the national rebirth“ of the Serbian people, and also as a defence of „Yugoslavia itself, as goods the people have paid for“ with a large amount of lives. He denied that he organized the congress because of his personal ambitions: the goal was to connect all the Ravna Gora movement organizations, not a political struggle in the interests of some political party. At the end, he invited Damjanović to co-operate with him.⁹³

Miodrag Damjanović decided to announce the proclamation about the founding of the Association even without the patronage of the Royal House: „*Only in that case, we must be even more careful and avoid every unfavourable comment, especially about the choice of personnel. We must be so arranged that everybody is represented, so we can stand on our own two feet straight away, and after that the assembly will elect who ever it wants to*“.⁹⁴

Damjanović still had a hard life: „*I very much like the idea of a collective request for my arrival. Only you must hurry because I can't stand sitting here and doing nothing. For my last tour of the people I had to sell my binoculars in order to buy my railway ticket. Many people have offered me help, but I don't want to accept help from anybody. Since I don't have the right to a better life, I don't want to live from charity*“.⁹⁵

Problems arose in connection to the name of the Association, because it wasn't politically „convenient“, as well as because of some initial fazes of the work of this organization. Damjanović insisted on forming an „association“, not a „committee“, which will not be a political organization. He wrote about that to Kosta Kulišić: „*We are not a political organization. We still haven't completed our military task. Because of that, this must be the most important issue of our association, which is an expression of our momentary necessity. We, the members of the Ravna Gora movement, must re-*

⁹² *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁹³ *Ibid.* B. Radenković's letter to General Damjanović from September 29, 1948.

⁹⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from September 30, 1948.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

*main what we were – the King’s soldiers. The way the ‘committees’ are organized and run, we’re not able to do so. This must be improved as soon as possible. We were and we will be the Royal Yugoslav Army all until we liberate our Fatherland from the red monster that is tyrannizing it today. Nobody can stop us in our intentions, not even those „Ravna Gora movement members“ who wish to pull us into the maelstrom of political battles. We must leave the political battle for later, when we return to our country, because now we wish and want only to fight for the freedom of our Fatherland“.*⁹⁶

Damjanović insisted that the Association must have a „national-Ravna Gora character“ and to stay away from political activities: *„That is why we must be very careful in choosing the people who will be in the management. In propagating the Association we must always emphasize that this is a temporary management, and that the members will be free to decide at the first assembly who will run the Association“.*⁹⁷

On October 1, 1948, Miodrag Damjanović sent a proclamation from Germany to all the Ravna Gora movement combatants „in the free world“ to join *The Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army „Draža Mihailović“*. The proclamation was as follows:

*„We have to be aware of the truth that as soldiers of our Fatherland we still haven’t completed our task. And tomorrow, in our liberated country, everybody will be free to decide for himself what political option to follow, while the soldiers will be in their barracks. Today, we must bind in an association in order to take care of each other and help each other live through this arduous emigrant life; to take care of our disabled combatants and prepare our young people for their future. And we will, if with God’s help we succeed, prepare ourselves for everything that inevitably awaits us: difficult tasks and battles for the liberation of our holy Fatherland, to continue the struggle our immortal commandant gave his life for, the struggle in which Čiča’s heroic combatants are still shedding their noble blood“.*⁹⁸

General Damjanović wanted the Association to function as a non-political and non-military organization. The goals of *The Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army „Draža Mihailović“* set by Damjanović were: 1) to „nurture“ the love for King Petar; 2) to foster and raise the cult of General Dragoljub Mihailović, „as the first guerrilla fighter of the peoples’ resistance against any tyranny and the bearer of the national and state

⁹⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

revival“; 3) to „fight uncompromisingly“ for the liberation of Yugoslavia from the communist terror; 4) to maintain and deepen the mutual relations and brotherhood among the members of the Association; 5) to co-operate with the combatants of the ally countries; 6) to spread the „historical truth“ about the 27th of March and the contribution of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in WW II; 7) to request the same rights for the combatants of the Army of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as the combatants of the allied countries have; 8) to help the war orphans, the sick and disabled; 9) to prepare the young people for creative work which awaits them in their „liberated country“; 10) to participate in the cultural- educational activities in emigration.⁹⁹

Damjanović took care of various technical details: every full member will be issued a membership card „explaining in English who we are“; the membership card is to contain a blue membership fee file-card. The procedure of acquiring a membership card included the request of the commissioner of the Association for the demanded number of membership cards from the district secretaries, according to the number of members in his commission, and every membership card had to have Damjanović’s signature.¹⁰⁰

In this period, it seemed like Damjanović had definitely abandoned the idea of organizing a group of men to send to Yugoslavia to fight against Tito’s regime: „*I can’t go to the meeting. I have no means to do so, and I don’t see the need for it. Tell that to your hosts. Who wants to talk to me, let him come to me, if I’m still here, because I’ve undertaken certain measures to leave with my men, even to be a labourer, just to be with them in order to be able to help them. I don’t have anything left to sell in order to be able to live here*“.¹⁰¹

Damjanović wanted the name of the Association to include the words „Royal“ and „Yugoslav“ so the members of the „Zbor“ wouldn’t join it, and to attract the former members of the Democratic Party. He planned the first assembly of the Association to be held in January of 1949, on the fifth anniversary of the Saint Sava congress. He was also against the admission of members of the former Ravna Gora Committee. His departure from Germany was still uncertain, but his recommendation to all of his people was that they should go to England: „*We should bind as tightly as possible*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *General Damjanović’s Archives*. General Damjanović’s letter to „Brka“ from October 6, 1948.

*in order to create a firm entirety, that is why we formed the Association“.*¹⁰²

It was more than clear that the work of the Association will make the situation in the Serbian emigration even more difficult. Vjekoslav Farkaš was very displeased with the attitude of the King, who was surrounded by members of the „Zbor“ and thus was heading, as the former close associate of General Mihailović indignantly put it, towards certain ruin: *„Instead of our Master washing himself of the sins from September 12, 1944, he’s gone even further, because he is surrounded by thugs who wish to save his throne, but in fact they’re undermining him! The Maser cannot and doesn’t want see this. I’m even going so far as to say that he has an aversion towards the Chetniks, although they have forgiven him for the 12th of September, but they will not forgive him for giving preference to the members of the Zbor. The Queen gave patronage to „The Association of Yugoslav Ladies“ but the Master won’t give patronage to an association of his combatants!!! We’ve gone too far“.*¹⁰³

Damjanović informed Zoran Raketić on October 8 that the relations within the Serbian emigration in Paris were drastically deranged. He also wrote to Dragan Sotirović and his closest associates (the most frivolous men in our emigration) who joined Djujić *„and they think Djujić will save them considering the men he has with him, because they have no soul. Djujić presumably has his own interests in all of this. If all this continues in the future, we won’t get far“.*¹⁰⁴

Miodrag Damjanović replied on October 19 to Milorad Drašković’s letter from September. He emphasized that he was still the commandant of all the forces of the YAIF in emigration, that he hasn’t been relieved of his duties and therefore, doesn’t recognize the resolutions of the Ravna Gora congress which was held in Paris: *„There is still, however, a certain order that even these gentlemen shouldn’t forget. I will also reply to Mr. Radenković in the same way, and I ask you to inform him of this and everything else I say, because the entire Ravna Gora movement work must be done in an atmosphere of sincerity and reality. I would be very happy if the congress could be a success and therefore it wouldn’t be yet another piece of evidence that we are incapable of any constructive work“.*¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *General Damjanović’s Archives.* General Damjanović’s letter to Vjekoslav Farkaš from October 7, 1948.

¹⁰³ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Damjanović was also against the involvement of Ravna Gora movement members in the political struggles within the emigration: *„Politics should be left to the politicians, and when I say politicians I don't mean the professional soldiers who are trying to involve themselves in politics. Our place is in our barracks. I don't want to get involved in the contemplation of the conflict you had with the Ravna Gora movement members who are party representatives, because I still remember the resolution from Ba: political party activities are to be postponed until our country is liberated. Our country has never been more enslaved than it is today and it was never so desirous for freedom“.*¹⁰⁶

Damjanović replied to B. Radenković in connection to his co-operating with the Central Ravna Gora Committee from Paris. Damjanović sent him a proclamation of his Association saying that it was impossible to cooperate with them while Momčilo Djujić participates in their activities. Damjanović was also dissatisfied with some of Radenković's associates: *„I never expected Ciga Stojanović to behave the way he does. Sotirović is again giving himself titles which didn't exist at all, and considering the position the SDP [Serbian Democratic Party] had in Serbia, he wouldn't deserve them if they did exist. The two of them are your closest associates! Your offer to put me in contact with the Committee for the Congress was very unpleasant for me, since these young people who prepared the congress were once under my command. This is a very 'modern' understanding of the relations in the army, as you yourself wrote: – They are all still under some kind of psychosis of commanding. I therefore cannot accept your very kind offer. But I kindly ask you to draw their attention to the fact that their actions could have negative consequences for the Ravna Gora movement“.*¹⁰⁷

Damjanović wrote letters to too many people during October of 1948, informing them of the goals of the Association he was going to form. He emphasized distinctly that the Association will bring together people who are ready to fight for freedom against the communist regime in Yugoslavia *„until we become combatant-soldiers with rifles in our hands“.* He expected most from the people who were already in London and the most important task was to form a temporary leadership. He still believed that he himself would soon be in England: *„I am in the same situation as the others who I share good and bad with. I'm doing everything I can for the common good, that is my duty and it gives me pleasure because by doing so I'm fulfilling*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to B. Radenković from October 20, 1948.

Čiča's pledge. I hope that all this will come to an end soon, and I would be very happy if I could join you over there, even if I have to be a common labourer. I have undertaken certain measures here and I'm hoping that my wish will soon come true"¹⁰⁸

Damjanović received the biggest support during this period from Milorad Drašković and Dragoslav Stranjaković, who wrote to him on October 9, expressing their support for his work in bringing together the old members of the Ravna Gora movement. At the same time, they came to the conclusion that King Petar was under the influence of the members of the 'Zbor', and for that they blamed the Yugoslav National Committee in London, because it was extremely inert and distrustful towards the former combatants of General Mihailović.¹⁰⁹

Damjanović wrote to King Petar again on October 22 and he sent him a copy of the Proclamation of the Founding of the Association of „combatants and followers of the hero and martyr General Draža Mihailović“. He asked once more for Aleksandar, apparent heir to the throne, to be the patronage of the Association and he sent a complete list of the members of the temporary management: *„I've sent this list of names to show Your Majesty how united all the combatants and followers of General Mihailović are in their unanimous wish that the Association should be headed by a member of the glorious Karadjordjević dynasty, your first-born, our beloved heir to the throne. It is my honour to inform Your Majesty that I have taken measures in order to join our people in Great Britain as an ordinary labourer, so that I could work more efficiently on accomplishing the goals of the Association and to fulfil the pledge of our immortal Čiča*"¹¹⁰

Damjanović received word from Captain Radomir Petrović („Kent“) from Geneva at the end of October, the former commandant of the Boljevac brigade of the YAIF. He had a negative opinion of the Ravna Gora congress held in Paris and of the disunity in the emigration: *„I received an immense number of letters from various countries the last few days, especially from England. Everyone is asking nearly exactly the same question: what do you think about the Ravna Gora congresses and various committees and groups abroad? I answered them very shortly that they shouldn't get mixed up in these things, because we have our own organization and our own path, which we followed together with Čiča while we were in our country, we have Čiča's representative here abroad and a considerable number of com-*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Sima Lojanica from October 22, 1948.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

mandants, so we have no choice. The only remaining thing we can do is to wait for the right moment, but if the circumstances allow it we could meet from time to time to see each other and share our experiences. I kindly ask you, general Sir, to give me instructions-explanations on how to reply to these people so that my answers wouldn't come into discrepancy with your work and your orders".¹¹¹

Damjanović was disappointed to a certain point with Konstantin Fotić's attitude, because he was spending his time in Rome in the company of Dobrosav Jevdjević. He wanted to meet with Fotić, but in his camp, „so that he can see these people who are left to themselves“. Damjanović came to a definite conclusion that any kind of co-operation with Djujić was impossible: „*It was not Jevdjević who ran away from Eboli, but Djujić, who is now forming a union with members of the Zbor. He left for Paris with Jaša Ljotić a few days ago, while previously spending several days with members of the „Zbor“ as their guest, but he didn't find it necessary to even visit his own men here at the camp*“.¹¹²

Many people wrote to Damjanović expressing their support. Jordan Kimić wrote to him on November 1, 1948: „*It is a good thing that you have given your Association the role of a national-patriotic struggle for the liberation of our country and that you have included all the combatants regardless of their activities in view of their approach to this struggle. One can fight with weapons, with a pen, with words and financial help, or by simply belonging to the idea spiritually, since all the people are not capable of fighting in only one way, and only one way of fighting on only one territory isn't enough, it is necessary to fight simultaneously in many ways in various parts of the world. For the people who are not capable of fighting, just belonging spiritually and ideologically to the struggle is quite enough*“.¹¹³

Nevertheless, Damjanović's intentions were not received with enthusiasm by all the Serbs. Those of them who had political ambitions saw the Association only as their competition. Vjekoslav Farkaš wrote about that to General Damjanović on November 1: „*Many will obstruct us on this path of ours, many have already started. The following people are against us: the King, Irinej, Boško Jevtić, Djujić, Mita Živković and, of course, members of the Zbor. The King doesn't even want to reply to your letters. The time is right to begin with bringing out the truth about the members of the Zbor, re-*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Captain Petrović's letter to General Damjanović from October 29, 1948.

¹¹² *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Borislav Trifković from October 29, 1948.

¹¹³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*ardless of which group they belong to or what position they are momentarily on. My opinion is that you mustn't attack anybody publicly. Regardless of the obstacles they place in front of us, we must make an even greater effort than we ever imagined and simply ignore everyone who is trying to harm us“.*¹¹⁴

Although many people in the Serbian emigration in Great Britain disputed the appropriateness of the founding of this Association, it was obvious they understood that thanks to General Damjanović's authority the Association will become very popular very quickly. That is why they tried to win over as many emigrants as they could to their side. A similar action was undertaken by Bogoljub Jeftić, the President of the Yugoslav Charitable Society, who held a meeting with a large group of Serbs-emigrants in the north of England at the end of October.

Jeftić promised that the Yugoslav Charitable Society will get more involved in taking care of the emigrants in the future, but he also asked for financial help: *„Many of the Ravna Gora movement members were against this and they requested: that the committee shouldn't have the word 'Yugoslav' in its name, but 'Serbian', since all the members of the committee were Serbs; that the committee should issue a report on its activities up to now; that the committee should help and take care only of the Serbs and the Slovenians, not the Croats. A political discussion followed after that. The supporters of the 'Yugoslav idea' were claiming that we have to be Yugoslavs, because the King is the King of Yugoslavia, and they wanted to join these notions into one, Yugoslavia as a State and the King as the King of Yugoslavia and Yugoslavians as a political idea“.*¹¹⁵

Nothing concrete was agreed upon at this meeting. Jevtić was satisfied with the adoption of a fictitious resolution which preserved the Yugoslav character of his Society. On the other hand, The Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ were of the opinion that Jeftić's goal was to try to break up the Ravna Gora movement combatants gathered around General Damjanović: *„This meeting was an attempt to show the Serbian politicians in America that the Yugoslav Committee is our official representative in England, and that one representative of the Committee must be taken into consideration in all political combinations when forums abroad are being created“.*¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Jevtić's report sent to General Damjanović on November 2, 1948.

¹¹⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

Damjanović intended to re-establish contact with General Matija Parac and General Ivan Prezelj in order to give his Association a broader Yugoslav basis. Vjekoslav Farkaš informed him on November 2 that all contact was lost with General Prezelj. Farkaš was against the idea of forming separate Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian parts of the Association: „As far as the Association is concerned, favourable opinions are heard everywhere. At first we will focus on the quality of the people, the quantity comes after that“.¹¹⁷

We can find out a bit more about Damjanović's motives for forming the Association from his letter to Živan Knežević dated November 3, 1948: „I wish the Ravna Gora movement members to remain what they are, to stay grouped together so they can be counted on for all the tasks that await us in the future. And when we complete the task we began in Ravna Gora, let everybody engage in political activities, in any way they see fit, while the soldiers will return to their barracks, where they belong. Who wants to be politically active after that, must take off his uniform. When we finish our work in Great Britain, where most of my men are, we will continue organizing ourselves in other countries as well, in order to finally create an entirety“.¹¹⁸

Damjanović was aware of the fact that his Association shouldn't engage in politics, because that would lead to new disunions in an already fragmentised Serbian emigration. He wrote the following words to Vjekoslav Farkaš on November 3: „I don't see the need to convince professor Jovanović that I have no political pretensions, since I never had any nor did I ever express them anywhere. It would seem funny if I were to defend myself from something which never existed. I respect the professor very much and I know that he is highly respected among our politicians, who are unfortunately disunited among themselves, and I reached out to him ready to support him in taking care of our people in emigration, without any intention to get mixed up in his political activities. The Association has to become a significant factor, or we shouldn't even begin with our work. It was formed as a non-political organization and it must remain so if it is to exist. Otherwise, it will have the faith of all the other organizations, which are under various names barely surviving.“¹¹⁹

Damjanović decided that the Association will celebrate Saint Nicola (General Mihailović's family patron's day) as the patron's day of the Asso-

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

ciation. He gave instructions for the forming of the „Draža Mihailović“ fund. A membership fee was determined in the amount of six pennies per week. He issued special instructions for the implementation of the organization of the Association in Great Britain and appointed the members of the management of the Association until the constitution is adopted and a full management is elected by the free will of its members. The management of the Association was to consist of: a president with a secretariat; a parliament; a treasury; an executive committee; a managerial committee and a supervisory committee. The following sections were to be within the executive committee: the women’s section, the young people’s section, the family section, the section for the disabled, the labourer’s section, the cultural-educational section, the journalist’s section, the historical section, the religion section and the legal section. The territory of Great Britain was divided into six districts: Scotland, northern England, eastern England, Wales and western England, southern England and London.¹²⁰

Although all the individuals who supported Damjanović didn’t agree with the idea of appointing a temporary management, he emphasized that it was necessary in order for the association to begin its work as soon as possible.

As the temporary President of the association, Damjanović appointed these people to the following duties: Colonel Brana Živković – Vice-president, Lieutenant Colonel Petar Pavasović – President of the executive committee, Captain Bogdan Drobac – treasurer, secretaries: Major Petar Vukadinović – for Scotland, Lieutenant Jovica Ljubojević – for northern England, Major Vasa Milović – for Eastern England, Lieutenant Colonel Sima Milušević – for Southern England, Lieutenant Vjekoslav Farkaš – for London. Secretaries were appointed for the following sections: the young people’s section, the labourers’ section, the religion section and the women’s section. The following people were appointed members of the supervisory committee: Colonel Dragoljub Gojković, Major Petko Laković, Major Dragiša Jevtić, Lieutenant Memo Trivić and Lieutenant Boško Deura.¹²¹

Even though his living conditions were very difficult, Damjanović didn’t become disheartened. He wrote to Živan Knežević about that on November 3, 1948: „*My life has been arduous for a very long time, but that cannot make me diverge from the path I decided to take so many years ago. Especially when I see that I’m not alone, I know that I should continue my*

¹²⁰ *General Damjanović’s Archives*. Instructions for the implementation of the organization of the Association in Great Britain.

¹²¹ *Ibid*

*work because of all of those who are going straight forward towards the goal set by Čiča, without ever looking back, regardless of all the difficulties created by people who don't share our views“.*¹²²

The most important thing for the Association in this period was to define its character as a non-political organization. Zoran Rakitić wrote to General Damjanović on November 10, informing him that many individuals who would support the work of the Association are having disputes about whether it should be a Yugoslav or a Serbian organization: *„According to one side, a Serbian front is to be created regardless of everything else. According to the other side, you should explain whether you represent the Yugoslav ideology or the Serbian ideology. A party member, in all his political blindness, didn't even want to read the proclamation after having seen who signed it, and immediately started slandering and cursing, claiming that the document was a forgery because the only authorized representative of Draža Mihailović is Brana Panić (a drunkard) and, forgetting that I was in Italy, began to tell me fairy-tales about Djujić and the Zbor, whose work is completely contrary to your work. A difficult battle awaits you with these patented patriots and diehard chauvinists, who are very far from reality, but they do seem to think that they are politically significant“.*¹²³

People started officially joining the Association at the beginning of November: V. Farkaš sent word to Damjanović on November 6, that nine people (paid membership fees) have been admitted in Scotland: *„Major Jevtić together with eight officers. Scotland is one hundred percent secure for us, since the influence of Londoners is not as strong as it is in the parts of England close to London. Besides, Justijan is there, and so are people such as Sima Lojanica, who I have a brotherly like correspondence with. Members of the Ravna Gora movement in Scotland, more than a thousand of them, are very devoted to you and you don't have to worry about them“.*¹²⁴

The best results in Scotland were achieved in Stirlingshire, where the Association was established on November 7. The management was elected and there were 144 members, mainly military personnel: *„We are expecting instructions on collecting the membership fees and further procedures from you, or from the district secretariat. I assure you, general Sir, that all of us here will faithfully work for the good of our King and our*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

*Fatherland, following the example of the immortal General, Draža Mihailović*¹²⁵.

*In his private life, Damjanović had to do without nearly everything. Hard work and poor nutrition had left a trace on his physical appearance. When Jovica Ljubojević showed his concern about the general's appearance, Damjanović replied: „Don't let my poor appearance surprise you. That is the least of my problems, since we sometimes don't even have any bread. Believe it or not! However, that is nothing compared to the work we took upon ourselves to complete. The people here live under very bad conditions, and so do I. You know that I never asked for anything for myself. That is what keeps us going, because in the end we will be a success. That is what all of us wish for*¹²⁶.

*In this period, Damjanović asked the people who supported him to engage themselves in further organizing the emigration. He wrote to Captain R. Petrović („Kent“) on November 19: „I kindly ask you to make an effort to gather and organize the members of the Ravna Gora movement over there (in Switzerland) despite of the fact that many are against them! I know that you're capable of doing that. You know that I was not able to do my work for a whole year because I was under the 'protection' of the British, and now it is also very difficult for me to do my work the way it should be done today! I'm trying to get to England, even if it means I have to be a labourer over there, but at least I'll have a better chance of being successful in performing my duties. All I can do here, is write letters*¹²⁷.

The Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ issued its first instructions on November 20, 1948, concerning the implementation of organizational procedures. The instructions predicted the election of commissions in all of the hostels where the emigrants were living: *„In hostels where there are not more than 25 people, a commissioner and a treasurer are to be elected. In hostels where there are not more than 50 people, a commission, consisting of a commissioner, a secretary and a treasurer, is to be elected. In hostels where there is a larger number of people, according to the local conditions, besides electing the abo-*

¹²⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Lieutenant Vasa Marković's report to General Damjanović.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to J. Ljubojević from November 14, 1948. – There were 98 families with 334 members living in the camp at that time, 105 of which were children.

¹²⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

*ve mentioned three officials, elect up to three members of the commission“.*¹²⁸

Women and girls were to take part in the work of the commissions, and commissions were to be formed in the transit hostels, in order to enable „the combatants and followers of general Mihailović“ to inform themselves of the work and goals of the Association. Procedures for clerical work, issuing membership cards and Ravna Gora cards, managing the book of members, have been regulated. The official membership fee was 6 pennies a week; reports were to be sent once a month to the higher instance (the district secretariat of the Association).¹²⁹

Vjekoslav Farkaš, always active as he is, made contact with the Association of Polish Combatants, and their President B. T. Lazevski promised his full support and help: *„I will visit their President in the next few days, who will help me with everything. I’ll inform you of everything later on. I think that the members should be informed of the contacts we are making“.*¹³⁰

What kind of conditions was Damjanović working under can best be seen from his reaction to Jovica Ljubojević’s comment that he sent too many proclamations to too many addresses: *“You’re exaggerating, my dear friend. I wonder what you would say to me if you were starving together with me today because of my proclamation. And if you had a pile of letters in front of you because of it like I do, which I’m not able to reply to. I’m not used to that, it is common decency to reply to every letter. You say that you’re familiar with my financial situation, but I’m afraid you don’t understand it. I’ve never lived from charity or on somebody else’s account, and today I want that least of all. I will endure this, with God’s help“.*¹³¹

Farkaš wrote to Damjanović about some of the reactions to the forming of the Association on November 25. Vanity and ideology was still a priority for many individuals: *„Lieutenant-colonel Miloje Dinić, ordinarily a very likable man, attacked me furiously. He stated that he respects you very much of course, but he finds your proclamation inappropriate and that he is very disappointed. How could you name the Heir to the Throne as the patron without asking? People who were present convinced him that this was not the case. How could you issue a proclamation about*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* V. Farkaš’s letter to General Damjanović from November 22, 1948.

¹³¹ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* General Damjanović’s letter to J. Ljubojević from November 23, 1948.

*founding the Association when there are officers superior to you in London, General Arsic for example, who you should have contacted and asked him for his opinion? You cannot do things this way, it isn't right. We are still soldiers and you know how things are done in the military! You must respect your superiors! Who gave you the right to issue orders? I tried to explain to the gentlemen that the Association is not a military unit, that anybody can be the President of the Association if he is elected by its members. It is an association of combatants, not a combat unit. I then added something roughly like this: – Unfortunately, there is a certain group of people within our emigration who were not in the country during the war, they were either in London or in captivity, and they look upon us as an undisciplined army, as bandits, and although they know who the Ljotić sympathizers really are, they seem to believe their propaganda against you, and what is most unfortunate, these people think of themselves as being 'clean', who didn't 'get their hands dirty with brotherly blood' as we Chetniks did, so because they're so 'clean' they took it upon themselves to save Yugoslavia and to represent us in the civilized world. I also brought up the issue of the Ljotić sympathizers: – What right do they have to request that the Ravna Gora movement members put themselves under the command of such people, to be shoulder to shoulder with members of the Zbor? How can a man whose father, mother, brother or sister was killed by the Ljotić sympathizers, and whose house was burned to the ground by them, stand shoulder to shoulder with them? I answered that I agree our first and only goal is to free our country from communism, but until that moment comes, we must get rid of the remainders of Fascism and Nazism and to use this break called 'peace' to do that, because that is also a part of the preparations for the main battle. If the remainders of Fascism and Nazism remain among us, they might get stronger after our victory over communism“.*¹³²

Miodrag Damjanović's comment on this event was: „*Your conversation with Aračić and Dinić doesn't surprise me at all. All the people such as them are for 'respecting military ranks', but they all slept through the revolution! They allowed themselves to be led in bloody and infamous battles by priests and people who know nothing about the military science, but today they request 'military order'!* You can be completely certain that you will not be able to bring them to reality. They will just repeat over and over again that communism is their only enemy! Why don't you ask General Ara-

¹³² General Damjanović's Archives.

*čić why he came to London and when did he ever visit any of the soldiers in DP camps or ones working as labourers? We have become too forgetful“.*¹³³

About the way he wrote the proclamation of forming the Association, Damjanović said the following: *„I accepted to do it as the commandant of the people who will be the backbone of the Association and as General Mihailović’s assistant. I couldn’t address the proclamation to my ‘brothers and sisters’, but nevertheless, I think the proclamation was written in a very democratic way, it’s very clear that the Association will elect the people who will lead it only until the assembly, when it will become firm enough to stand on its own. I undertook this task as an officer who wants only the best for his soldiers. I have never engaged myself in politics, and it is not my intention to do so now through the Association, which I want to keep as far away from politics as possible! The proclamation is very clear on that“.*¹³⁴

In the meantime (November 28), the temporary Ravna Gora Committee in London decided to hold its general assembly in Great Britain on January 7, 1949, where a leadership of the Ravna Gora movement is to be elected. That was supposed to be an attempt to eliminate General Damjanović’s Association: *„In connection to General Damjanović’s proclamation, the Working Committee and the participants regret to say that the proclamation had a negative impact on the unity of the Ravna Gora movement in Great Britain. Therefore, the Working Committee and the participants have decided to send a letter to General Damjanović asking him to withdraw his proclamation about organizing the Association of Combatants ‘Draža Mihailović’ until December 15, 1948. If we don’t receive an answer from General Damjanović by that date, the Working Ravna Gora Committee and the participants will deny any responsibility which might arise from that and will continue to follow the Ravna Gora path and its ideology“.*¹³⁵

Damjanović received the following message: *„We, the combatants and followers of the immortal General Draža Mihailović, are astonished by your order-proclamation, which has the intention to leave all the activities and achievements of the Ravna Gora movement battles to the past. This proclamation of yours is an act against the deepest feelings of those combatants who joined the fight against the enemy and the usurper of the freedom of our people. You came to a fatal decision without consulting a certain number of active combatants and followers of Draža Mihailović, and by do-*

¹³³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to V. Farkaš from December 3, 1948.

¹³⁴ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

*ing so you have made a precedent which is unknown in the history of the Ravna Gora struggle. We kindly ask you to obliterate your decree. We leave it to you to decide how you should do that“.*¹³⁶

In spite of all the troublesome circumstances, the Association came to life. The number of members in the first phase was somewhere about 2000. Vjekoslav Farkaš was optimistically reporting that the number of members was increasing, „and it will be even bigger later on, when the people see that the Association is functioning, that it is not just talking hot air, as all the others are. The only difficulty is that the people are busy all day long during the week, so they only have Saturday afternoon and Sunday to devote their time to the association. If we take into consideration that only three weeks have gone by since the Association began to work, the results are excellent. The important thing is to complete our work in the countryside, and if we win over the people in the countryside, we'll win London, although winning London is not such a great success. In general, I am making an effort to convince the Londoners that your proclamation was not an order by which the Association was formed, as some people like to say, but that your proclamation was one of a democratic nature, although it wasn't written in a democratic way, as one Londoner said. I had to explain to him that you are not a priest, nor a politician, but a soldier, and that you have been using military terminology for 30 years and thus become accustomed to it. The Association runs into an obstacle here and there, placed by 'well-intentioned' people, but the idea has begun to spread. I received a letter from Dr. Bratić a few days ago. He's afraid the Association will not succeed and so forth. I know that Dr. Bratić is inclined to engage himself in politics, but after all, with you Serbs, it's hard to imagine anything without politics. Please don't take offence because of this remark, because the same thing was said by Dr. Gavrilović. Many people find it very strange of course, that the Association has no intention of engaging itself in politics. It seems like some people simply can't get this fact into their heads, but we will continue to work slowly and safely and, God willing, we'll create at least one shelter where every man, who is fed up with politics and willing to work, can fall back to“.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* – The letter was signed by 24 people, among which were: Miloš Jakovljević, Žika Andrić, Nikola Bojović, Vasilije Milović, Milomir Kolarević, Božidar Delibašić, Čeda Petrović, Kosta Kulišić, Miloje Nikolić, Miodrag Ratković, Vojislav Petrović, Dragutin Mirić („uncle Goran“) and Mihailo Bojanić.

¹³⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*. V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from November 19, 1948.

In the beginning, the Association functioned like a charitable organization, semi-military organized, financed by its membership fees. Its main goal was to uphold the spirit of the former Ravna Gora movement, while its programme was based on the resolution of the Saint Sava congress. Farkaš was in charge of preparing the Statute of the Association and he was optimistically estimating that General Damjanović would come to London by the end of January, 1949. He suggested that the Association should issue its own newspaper because of the significance of the press, especially in the new circumstances the emigration was in. The other members of the temporary management of the Association also emphasized the need for starting a newspaper or a magazine which would be the Association's journal „*in the free world, and its weapon in the exhausting battle for the survival and liberation of our Fatherland*“.¹³⁸

The first bulletin of the Association was published in London under the name *Freedom or Death* (the bulletin is still being published). It is the oldest bulletin of an emigrant organization. P. Pavasović and N. Nikolić, members of the temporary management, suggested that the Association should publish a magazine as well. On February 26, 1949, General Damjanović decided to start publishing the Association newspaper in the whole world under the name *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*. An editorial board was appointed, a part of which were the two men who suggested it in the first place. The editorial board decided that it should be a monthly magazine in lithographic printing.¹³⁹

Lieutenant Vjekoslav Farkaš was the first editor. He was later replaced by Dragoljub Mirić („Uncle Goran“), who edited the *Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* until the beginning of 1951, when he got ill and died in London on May 3, 1951. Journalist Dušan Kasapinović became the new editor in February of 1951. *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* began being printed in Germany in the shape of a newspaper from October of 1953.

The number of members of the Association grew rapidly, and with 4000 members it became the biggest Serbian emigrant organization. Damjanović made a few organizational changes on November 25: Major Sava Dudaković was appointed the temporary secretary for Wales and Western England, and professor Nikola Nikolić was appointed chief of the cultural-educational section of the Association: „*In connection to the notifications received after the invitations for the founding of the Association have already*

¹³⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

*been sent, the place for the meeting of the members of the management doesn't have to be London, it can be a place closer to where the members of the management are employed. The President of the Executive Committee, in consonance with the other members of the management, will make the final decision about that, making sure that the meeting is held as soon as possible“.*¹⁴⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Petar Pavasović, the temporary president of the Executive Committee of the Association, announced on November 27 that he had made contact with the Polish Association of Combatants: *„As the temporary secretary for London, I sent a letter to the president of the Polish Association of Combatants, explaining in detail what kind of co-operation should be achieved between our two associations. I received an answer to my letter from Mr. Lazevski, the President of the Association of Polish Combatants, who promised to fully support and help our Association and its members. He referred me to Mr. Klezniski, the Vice-president of their Association, who confirmed in a conversation with me that they will help us in any way possible“.*¹⁴¹

For the beginning, it was agreed upon that the members of the Serbian Association could use the hotels, restaurants and reading-rooms of the Polish Association. They also promised to help us with their contacts at the British Ministry of Labour, in order to help our members find employment: *„Well, if our co-operation proceeds in the spirit of brotherhood, The Association of Combatants of the RYA 'Draža Mihailović' will be able to use a well-organized service under the same conditions as the members of The Association of Polish Combatants“.*¹⁴²

Although Damjanović always pointed out that he wasn't a politician and that he doesn't want his Association involved in politics, some of his friends advised him to use political methods to achieve the goals of the Association. Zoran Rakitić wrote the following to him on December 2: *„You always used to tell me that you don't have any political ambitions. Since politics includes a lot of things, I don't fully understand you and I took the liberty of engaging myself in an analysis. Politics should be understood as a tool to defend certain interests, using all possible means to achieve your goals, all except arms. We do see the difference between party interests and the people's interests. If you don't think of politics in the way of party politics, you're right. Since you are heading a movement*

¹⁴⁰ General Damjanović's Archives.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

*which has the goal to protect the vital national interests, you must not renounce politics as means to accomplish that goal. Therefore, you must engage yourself in politics, at least until the moment comes when we will use arms. We, thank God, don't have a shortage of politicians, but I don't see any results from their year's long efforts, because each one of them (or in small groups) works divergently. In order to achieve the goals they must work together. In my opinion, you are the only person who can make them work together, in the name of our armed combat. There you go, that is your political goal. I am convinced that you will not reject it“.*¹⁴³

At the beginning of December, Damjanović wrote to Slavko Bjelajac, one of the former commandants of the YAIF. Bjelajac responded from Washington on December 3: *„I've seen a lot of our people. I've seen good and evil. I can tell you that you can rely only on yourself and the people close to you over there, who you personally trust. The people here are fighting over positions, money and leadership. Draža is being misused (his name and his struggle) in every way possible. For some people he is the source of income. His ideas and his views, as well as his struggle, are being represented in any way they need to at any given moment. I think that we, the ones who fought unselfishly and had honourable intentions, should rely only on ourselves and that we should announce decisively what our standpoint is. Otherwise, all our efforts, work, battles and aspirations will go in an undesirable direction“.*¹⁴⁴

Captain Petrović reported from Geneva that the „Chetniks“ in Switzerland support Damjanović and the Association completely, but that some of the politicians have already tried to obstruct the organization in any way possible: *„They're using all possible means, such as: the King is angry because you're working without his approval; the English are against the organization and that's why they don't allow you to come here, and so on. They're doing this only because they are afraid of losing their positions. The first question everybody was asked when they got here was: – What are General Damjanović's political ambitions? It's sad to see that some of the members of the Ravna Gora movement don't understand that the only friends they do have are the ones among themselves, and that each and every one of us will be alone if we don't organize ourselves. Many of them have already knocked their heads against the wall, so I believe they're fed up with high politics*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

*and that they are ready to join the Association. A lot depends on your success in England“.*¹⁴⁵

Damjanović was still occupied with the problem of his status. In order to resolve the status of the dislocated persons who were still in the camp in Grossenbrode, this place was visited on December 9 by Harry Rosenfield and Edward O'Connor, members of the Committee for dislocated persons. They promised that they would do everything to help the dislocated persons, especially to help them go to a country of their choice: „*When asked what could be done in employing officers as civilians, Rosenfield said: for example, an artillery officer is expected to know how various kinds of machines work, he is trained in several technical fields, so he could find employment as some kind of mechanic. He feels that it's the same thing with all the other branches of the army and that the knowledge one acquired in the army is to be his future profession. O'Conner said that it is very important for the Serbian national groups and the church to organize a campaign, in order to inform the American people with the fact that there are a lot of diligent and qualified Serbian dislocated persons who could be of great use to America“.*¹⁴⁶

The tireless worker Vjekoslav Farkaš had already made a concept for the newspaper that was to be published as the bulletin of the Association and suggested the name *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*. He planned the first issue to be published by the end of January, 1949: „*I will have to make a lay out and arrange the texts in a way so that they're heterogeneous and not monotonous. We agreed that I should prepare the texts, make four copies of each text and submit them to the secretaries. Surely you remember the magazine 'Yugoslavia' which I used to edit, it was of the same size as 'The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant', more suitable than the size of a newspaper since it will be published once a month, more like a review, but it will be good. We should have a picture of the Master (King Petar) on the front page. He will pay attention to that. It would be very good if we published an article about the congress held in Ba, but it must be something new, something serious. The article should have more information about Draža than about the political aspects of the congress“.*¹⁴⁷

Damjanović's health wasn't so good in this period: he had a high fever on December 10; on December 13, he left for Austria in order to conti-

¹⁴⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Captain Petrović's letter to General Damjanović from December 9, 1948.

¹⁴⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from December 13, 1948.

nue his activities in preparing a group of men to send to Yugoslavia, but he was stopped at the border by the German police because he didn't have a permit for entering Austria: „*Never did I in my entire life experience something like what happened next! We had to go to the police station to be interrogated, along with some very suspicious characters, luckily we weren't frisked, so I didn't even say who I was or where I was going! If they had found the papers which I had with me, it would have been very unpleasant for me. They ordered us to go back where we came from and let us go when they saw that we had train tickets. We returned today at noon [December 14] completely penniless*“.¹⁴⁸

Damjanović was very encouraged when he was contacted by the former Captain Miodrag Urošević, who spent WW II in captivity and is now living in London. Urošević informed the general about the activities of the Ravna Gora movement Committees in France and England, emphasizing that they see Damjanović's Association as their competition: „*The former politicians here in London are even more severe opponents of your work. They believe that your movement, like any other movement whose goal is to gather and organize the emigration, is a danger to them because they think they're the only ones who should do that. The result of their work in this field up to now is equal to zero. If somebody else was to achieve positive results, they wouldn't have any capital to live from later on. They have a lot of tactics of course, and they have very subtle methods of ruining their adversaries. I therefore think that they are more dangerous than various professors who are using frontal attacks*“.¹⁴⁹

Urošević was very sceptical about the fact that Vjekoslav Farkaš was appointed the secretary of the Association for London, considering that he was very young and that he wasn't of Serbian descent: „*I personally don't mind, but there are a lot of older officers whose pride has been hurt because they had to 'click their heels' in front of a lieutenant, as Lieutenant Colonel Dimić told Farkaš to his face, and Farkaš told me. There is, however, another aspect of this problem. Mr. Farkaš is a Slovenian by nationality, but his surname is Hungarian. General Sir, you seem to have overlooked this fact. As the smallest part of our people, the Slovenians have succeeded in getting the best positions, while we Serbs were the ordinary people. The Serbs are good only when there's a need for fighting and getting killed, while the Slovenians and Croats are good when there's a*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to „Brka“ from December 14, 1948.

¹⁴⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* M. Urošević's letter to General Damjanović from December 21, 1948.

*need for a General-staff officer, an orderly officer at the royal court or a military attaché abroad“.*¹⁵⁰

In his communications, Damjanović always emphasized that he doesn't have any political ambitions and that soldiers shouldn't engage themselves in politics: „*Know that my only wish is: the success of the Ravna Gora movement struggle. My political ambitions are only the unity and success of the Ravna Gora movement. It is our misfortune that all of our people have the idea that they're capable of being politicians. This of course applies to all of us soldiers. Commandants want to be commandants and politicians at the same time. But these two things don't go together. If somebody feels capable of being a politician, let him take of his uniform“.*¹⁵¹

Vjekoslav Farkaš was by far the biggest optimist as far as the success of the Association was concerned. He believed that the year 1949 will be the turning point, providing they keep away from politics: „*The perspectives are very colourful, and if the Association doesn't engage in politics in the future, but works for the benefit of its members, know that you have set in motion a great thing. It has come to my knowledge that General Popović has also formed some kind of a Serbian central national committee together with General Svetomir Savić, and that they've issued a resolution. There you go, the generals are becoming politicians. Why do they need to do that? They should know that by doing so they're doing a lot of damage to our cause, because nobody will take the generals-politicians seriously“.*¹⁵²

In co-ordination with the proclaimed principals, Damjanović wished a merry Christmas to the members of the Association who were of the Catholic persuasion: „*We, the royal soldiers and followers of our immortal Čiča, are aware of the always relentless truth: that the war has not yet ended for us and that only if we stand together, united and strong, with a strong spirit and deep faith in a better future, can we represent a force capable of fighting the battles which await us, battles which will liberate our Fatherland and bring it peace, order, happiness and prosperity that the western people are so proud of“.*¹⁵³

Damjanović wanted the first issue of *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* to appear on Saint Sava day of 1949, with the picture of King

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Captain R. Petrović from December 26, 1948.

¹⁵² *General Damjanović's Archives.* V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from December 18, 1948.

¹⁵³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

Petar on the front page, the picture that the King himself signed and sent to Damjanović while he was still in Italy.¹⁵⁴

Although he was dissatisfied with the attitude of the former Serbian politicians, Damjanović didn't have the will or the time to fight a political battle against them: „*We have no competition with them since we're not a political organization, so those gentlemen needn't be afraid. The intention of the Association is to preserve the unity of the Ravna Gora movement till better times come, and its capability to do all that awaits us. Our duty is to help each other and nothing more! That is so clearly written in the proclamation*“.¹⁵⁵

Damjanović rejected all the comments about Vjekoslav Farkaš: „*What can I say about 'clicking heels'? I see it is incomprehensible for you also! Don't forget that somebody who is not a Serb should also join the Association and I feel that Farkaš doesn't deserve all those reprimands! After all, you're not very logical in your elucidation. In the beginning you said that you would accept the duty of secretary if most of the members elect you, but somebody has to do the work until then! You didn't want to be that somebody, but you are ready to criticize! Do not forget – the easiest thing is not to do anything, stay clean and – criticize! That is a characteristic of many of our people today. I wouldn't like to count you as one of them*“.¹⁵⁶

Near the end of December, 1948, Damjanović was still in the camp in Grossenbrode. We can see from his letter to Živan Knežević that he was still very dissatisfied with the way he and the other members of the Ravna Gora movement were treated by the Yugoslav National Committee: „*I only wanted to inform you about the situation that we work in. And how do we work, let me just say that nobody finds it necessary to even say one word about our work, not even to give a piece of advice. And when I feel called upon to start doing something, and I start doing something, nobody even comments on it. If at least somebody would say – general, your work is not good! I kept the people here only by staying here myself, but if I go, what then?*“¹⁵⁷

Damjanović was very persistent in his intention to move as many of his people as possible to Great Britain so that they continue their national

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from December 26, 1948.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Captain M. Urošević from December 28, 1948.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from December 29, 1948.

work in the Ravna Gora movement spirit, as it used to be in Eboli, but he knew that it was very difficult to do that. The general was very displeased with the attitude of Konstantin Fotić and the others in America because they weren't doing anything to help the people who were still in Germany: „*I would have liked it if Mr. Fotić had found the time to visit some of the Chetnik camps and stayed for a day or two, in order to see what life is really like over here. Then, I believe, he would have a different picture of what the dislocated persons are going through*“.¹⁵⁸

On December 29, Miodrag Damjanović answered Episcopo Dionisije and Episcopo Nikolaj Velimirović's letters sent to him in July, because he had only now received them. Damjanović informed Dionisije that he had taken measures to unite „all the Chetnik and combatant forces“ into a unique anti-communist front: „*I am also doing everything in my power to achieve a complete understanding and a sincere brotherly atmosphere among the Chetniks and the rest of the military emigration, which is to hold us together and make a border phalanx out of us, ready and capable to answer to the first call of the Supreme Command to realize the pledge we gave to Čiča*“.¹⁵⁹

He wished Episcopo Nikolaj a merry Orthodox Christmas and a happy Orthodox New Year: „*I kindly ask you to always be our prayer-book before the Lord and I also kindly ask you to accept the expression of my sincere respect*“.¹⁶⁰ On the very same day, Damjanović also sent his holiday greetings to Mihailo Dučić, the President of the Serbian National Defence in Chicago.

At the very end of December, 1948, Damjanović was thinking a lot about the future of his Association, especially about its magazine. He therefore wrote the following to Vjekoslav Farkaš on December 30: „*I've been thinking of our magazine, and I feel that it is necessary to publish articles about the battles which the Ravna Gora movement fought in various parts of our Fatherland in each issue, in the section –How did we fight. If you agree, you should also publish this in the section – we invite you to be our contributor*“.¹⁶¹

As far as the name of the Association was concerned, Damjanović believed that he had chosen the right name: „*If I had chosen the name 'The Ravna Gora Committee', it would have alarmed the politicians again, and it*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

would create confusion with the already existing committee. The General Assembly is authorized to change the name of the Association if it finds it needs to, since I emphasized many times that all the solutions up to now were temporary solutions until they are confirmed by the General Assembly. Until then, I cannot change the name of the Association every minute“.¹⁶²

Miodrag Damjanović was still in the camp in Grossenbrode on January 1, 1949. He issued instructions from the camp about the forming of the District management of the ACRYA „Draža Mihailović“. London was included in the district of Southern England, whose temporary secretary was Lieutenant Colonel Sima Mijušković. All the district managements were to organize their annual district assemblies before the General Assembly of the Association was held. Damjanović appointed a commission which was to draw up the statute of the Association, consisting of all the district secretaries and Petar Pavasović, Petko Laković and Nikola Nikolić.¹⁶³

Damjanović received word from Živan Knežević at the beginning of January, 1949. Knežević was still very optimistic about the end of the communist regime in Yugoslavia, he wrote about King Petar’s visit to New York and he thought that Slobodan Jovanović and the YNC (Yugoslav National Committee) should be the ones to gather round the Serbian emigration. He enclosed a letter he had sent to S. Jovanović.¹⁶⁴ The Association was slowly becoming stable, but as J. Ljubojević noticed, not quite stable enough: „Not completely unstable, but very sensitive to every concussion, which there are plenty of from all directions. We should continue on cautiously, but energetically at the same time“.¹⁶⁵

Damjanović wrote to King Petar once again on January 15, 1949. He couldn’t hide his disappointment with the fact that the Monarch, who he still acknowledged, never answered his letters in which he asked him to send any kind of help to the royal combatants: „Unfortunately, I haven’t had the honour and the luck so far to receive any kind of answer from your Majesty, to all my appeals for help. Your Majesty knows that I’m here with these men because I was ordered to do so by my immortal commandant General Mihailović, whose assistant I was; I was always with them up to now, now I’m in the Chetnik family camp as a dislocated person. For all this time I’ve been doing everything within my power to be of use to these people who were en-

¹⁶² *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to a certain Mr. Petrović from December 30, 1948.

¹⁶³ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Ž. Knežević’s letter to General Damjanović from January 8, 1949.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* J. Ljubojević’s letter to General Damjanović from January 15, 1949.

*trusted to me by General Draža. But I'm not satisfied with my work here in Germany, especially because I wasn't able to take proper care of the families of the Chetniks".*¹⁶⁶

This time he also asked for help, before all for the invalids, elderly and sick people „who are left to themselves more and more as each day goes by“. He expected King Petar to do everything he could to maintain the unity of these people in order to be able to count on them in better political circumstances: „That is why I always advised these people, who are still your Majesty's soldiers, to go to Great Britain or America, where we should do everything we can to keep them grouped together because they're always ready to fulfil Draža's pledge, and one day, with God's help, bring freedom to our Fatherland“.¹⁶⁷

Damjanović also asked Mihailo Dučić for help, the President of the Serbian National Defence from Chicago: „I am proud to say that I haven't taken a cent from anybody and that is why I can ask for help without beating about the bush, help for those who deserve it the most: the people who sacrificed themselves for the Ravna Gora ideals, who are now suffering as never before, dying in German hospitals and DP camps, left to themselves. I want to appeal to you on behalf of Draža's Chetniks, who see how generous our brothers from America are, but whose delegates, sent here to see all the poverty the Chetniks now live in, so fervently avoid them when they come to Europe“.¹⁶⁸

Damjanović wrote to Episcopo Dionisije from Libertyville the very same day, emphasizing once again that the church should be the one to take care of the ill and the enfeebled: „The healthy, the young and the ones capable to work are well taken care of by the committees of all the countries in need of cheap labour, but the invalids, the old people, the ill and the families of our combatants are not even taken notice of. That is why they feel more and more left to themselves in a cold and inhospitable Germany. Every single day more and more of Draža's sick Chetniks are being admitted to German hospitals, and the German soil is becoming the eternal home for a growing number of Chetniks. The dearest ones of those who gave their lives for their King and Fatherland are now living in complete poverty, which is pitilessly killing them. The best of the heroes, the ones Draža was so proud of, are dying one by one. I've asked our Supreme Commandant King Petar for help, and I've also asked Dučić to help. I'm therefore also asking you to

¹⁶⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to M. Dučić from January 18, 1949.

*help by doing everything that you possibly can to transport over there the ones who are not capable of any work“.*¹⁶⁹

In spite of all the difficulties, Damjanović was confident that he will succeed in the end. He wrote the following to priest Jovan Marčetić on January 18: *„I do not agree with you, my dear father, that there is no salvation for the Serbs. For some of us – perhaps, but there is a black sheep in every fold. Don’t worry so much, save yourself for a time when you will be able to become prominent and work as much as you can, so the ones who are bad, what ever their names might be, will not rise to the surface. There is a God, and he is righteous. I am convinced that the day will come when the members of the Ravna Gora movement will find justice. Their people will give them justice, the people who created the Ravna Gora movement and found Čiča to carry their cross to the very end. Everything that will stand in the way of prosperity, will be erased as if it never existed. Millions of our martyrs at home are watching us and they don’t understand that there are still some of us who find that personal interests are above common interests“.*¹⁷⁰

The problems among the Serbian emigration were of a political nature, at least among those in the USA. Damjanović was informed about that by Slavko Bjelajac, who was against the „Great-Serbia politics“ of K. Fotić, J. Djonović, M. Drašković and M. Žujović: *„They go so far as calling everybody who even slightly disagrees with them a criminal, a communist, a Serbian traitor. They of course receive very good salaries from Serbian organizations over here. They have never been hungry and they don’t know what it means to shed your blood for the freedom of the people (except for Žujović who spent some time in the mountains), their main worry is to fight for power“.*¹⁷¹

General Damjanović could only answer to Bjelajac that he hopes that „somebody will remember“ to help the people who were still in the camps: *„It would be very important and necessary for you to see the Master. I know that everybody who had the honour (I couldn’t up to now!) to meet with him, first solved their own personal problems, while issues of common interests weren’t even discussed (they probably didn’t want to antagonize him). The worst thing is that a very small number of them believe that they should work for the benefit of the people, they think the people should work for their benefit. We are forgetting that we are an insignificant minority compared*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Episcopo Dionisije from January 17, 1949.

¹⁷⁰ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

*to the number of those who are still suffering and waiting for their time to come. We are also forgetting that they are watching us closely and observing our work“.*¹⁷²

The General was very displeased because D. Jevdjević was always attacking him, but he wasn't discouraged by it. He wrote the following to Aleksandar Milošević: *„I believe that he himself doesn't know what he wants – except that he wants money. He always was a materialist, I can see him now: he is lamenting for help anywhere he can. Many people sent me the leaflet which was being handed out to the Serbian combatants. As always, that doesn't interest me the least bit. I mind my own business, I do what I consider to be my duty. Until when? Until I can and until I think as a Ravna Gora movement member. I will continue to do only what's good for them, fulfilling in that way the task given to me by Čiča when we parted“.*¹⁷³

In his letter to Ž. Knežević on January 30, Damjanović once again expressed his disappointment with the situation the Serbian emigration was in, for which he blamed the leadership. He was very troubled by the fact that more and more people were leaving for Canada and Australia, because that meant that they would be far from Europe and the national work will be weakened: *„I must emphasize once more: nobody is informing the people on what they should do or what they should decide upon. I'm doing as much as I can, but nobody is helping me, on the contrary, I'm being systematically obstructed, especially by the people from the Drina Division. We mustn't lose control of ourselves, years have gone by, I've been doing everything I can, I'm still doing everything I can to set an example how to endure the suffering, but the worry of self-preservation has taken its toll. That doesn't mean that the people have lost their spirit. No, not at all! They will once again become what they used to be – combatants of their King and Fatherland, but they don't see the determination for this to happen in the near future. Don't think that I've become a pessimist, but I don't know who to turn to any more“.*¹⁷⁴

Despite of all the misfortunes, Damjanović didn't despair, which can best be seen from a letter he sent to a friend of his on February 2: *„The easiest thing is to give up, but, my dear Nik, we must hold out! You mustn't worry so much, everything will be well in the end. As far as the poverty is concerned, it seems to me like we're all in the same situation. But we will, if*

¹⁷² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Bjelajac from January 18, 1949.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to A. Milošević from January 19, 1949.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ž. Knežević from January 30, 1949.

God gives us health, endure it all. I'm used to being in even worse situation. Don't worry".¹⁷⁵

A great encouragement for Damjanović was the response he received from Episcopo Dionisije from the USA, who promised all kinds of help in „keeping the Serbs compact, especially the Chetniks“. How much hope these words gave to Damjanović and the people in German camps, and to the Association itself, is best illustrated by the following general's words: „Your esteemed letter brought joy to all the members of 'The Association of Combatants of the RYA Draža Mihailović'. It will give them the incentive to strengthen and consolidate themselves. I kindly ask you to believe that the members of the Association are faithful to the grave to the Ravna Gora idea and firm followers of their immortal commandant General Draža Mihailović. All of us kindly ask you to mention us in your prayers".¹⁷⁶

Damjanović was still dissatisfied with the position the „Zbor“ members had in the emigration, because, contrary to the members of the Ravna Gora movement, they had a lot of influence. He wrote to Živan Knežević about that on February 16, 1949: „How did they position themselves so well in Canada? Even in 'The Voice of Canadian Serbs'. Our position is not so fine. The 'Srbobran' [Protector of Serbs] has no articles about the Ravna Gora movement members, and the 'Glas' [The Voice] is on the side of the „Zbor“ members. Our inactivity enables the Zbor members to position themselves everywhere. I've taken measures to assure that 'The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant' starts publishing documents about what was done by the Ljotić sympathizers. It is about time to start putting them in their place".¹⁷⁷

Živan Knežević replied on February 20. He was very sceptic towards the idea that the Ravna Gora movement members outside Great Britain will firmly join together and he informed Damjanović that he no longer shares the same views with Konstantin Fotić on the issue of 'the politics of Draža Mihailović during WW II', and that Fotić thinks that Momčilo Djujić is „the greatest Ravna Gora movement figure in the Serbian emigration".¹⁷⁸

How dramatic the situation was in the emigration can best be seen from Damjanović's letter to Dušan Nikolić, written on February 23: „Our superiors take very little care of us dislocated persons, especially the Ravna

¹⁷⁵ General Damjanović's Archives.

¹⁷⁶ General Damjanović's Archives. General Damjanović's letter to Episcopo Dionisije from February 4, 1949.

¹⁷⁷ General Damjanović's Archives.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Gora movement members from the forest who sacrificed everything except their honour, and there's nobody to even advise them what to do! The issue here is emigrating, only the people who are capable of work are being taken care of, while the families are nobody's worry".¹⁷⁹

In this period, General Damjanović's almost approved British visa was cancelled, but we don't know the reasons for this. Nevertheless, his Association was developing relatively well in England without him, but, as V. Farkaš reported, „*not as good as it should be. Our people have a hard life, but to some extent Djujić and Jevdjević's propaganda is helping to increase the number of members*“.¹⁸⁰ The poor interpersonal relations were still the main reason we weren't functioning as we should have: „*It is difficult for everybody, we are all more or less in the same situation, but everyone thinks that he is in a more difficult situation than anybody else, that only he is used to a better job. These are mere trifles, but they often kill the working spirit of the people and create unsettled conditions which are completely unnecessary*“.¹⁸¹

The first issue of *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* was a bit late, and Damjanović was looking forward to it with impatience. The General wrote to Slobodan Jovanović on February 23, responding to Jovanović's letter from February 20 (or the 22nd), which he unfortunately didn't keep. Only one remark about that letter has been noticed in Damjanović's correspondence with V. Farkaš from February 22: „*It is very interesting that Mr. Jovanović wrote to me, surprised that I didn't receive his letter in which he informed me that after talking to the members of the YNC, he wrote to me in connection to my Association, asking me to come to an understanding with the British authorities, because they look upon any emigrant organization with distrust if it even slightly resembles a military organization. I want to answer him that he would have known if he had made contact with me. I'll write to him*“.¹⁸²

Damjanović reported to Slobodan Jovanović with a lot of bitterness about the difficult situation the DP and emigrants were in, and once again asked for help: „*Due to my understanding of my duty and other unavoidable circumstances, I am still here today among the people, where I was sent by General Mihailović in March of 1945. Living here under the same conditions as they do, I know better than anybody else what these people need. I*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

wrote to everybody I possibly could in order to help these people, and I'm using this opportunity now, esteemed professor, to ask you for help. I turn to you because you are a man who is very respected by all the groups in the emigration, a man who I believe is ready to do everything in his power to help General Mihailović's men. You could at least advise them on what to do in order to keep their community together. By this I mean the Serbian community, since the Croats and Slovenians are much more organized and had the sense to stay together".¹⁸³

Damjanović also asked S. Jovanović to read the proclamation about the forming of the Association of combatants „Draža Mihailović“ and to influence the British authorities to approve and help the Association: „I kindly ask you to believe me that my goal was only to keep the men together, ready and capable for all the tasks which await us former and future soldiers, without whom we cannot return to our Fatherland. I ask you to forgive my extensiveness, but I'm deeply convinced that you will understand us, the same way you understood all the men when they were in the forest“.¹⁸⁴

Damjanović issued the following instructions on February 26, 1949, concerning the first issue of the *Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*: „While the bulletin 'Freedom or Death' is the newspaper of The Association of Combatants of the RYA Draža Mihailović in Great Britain, the monthly magazine 'The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant' is to be considered as the Association's magazine for the whole world, where ever there are any combatants and followers of our immortal General Draža Mihailović“.¹⁸⁵ At the same time, he cancelled the religion section of the Association after monk Justinijan Ilkić, who was in charge of running the section, informed him that this section was unnecessary because it could provoke misunderstandings with the Serbian Orthodox Church organization in Great Britain.¹⁸⁶

Damjanović received the first issue of the magazine on February 27, 1949, and he was very pleased with the contents of the *Combatant*: „Mark – excellent“!¹⁸⁷ Damjanović analyzed in detail the contents of the first issue: „The title – heading – unusually simple and wonderful! The Ravna Gora movement combatant and the mother on page two – exceptional. Draža's statement and the King's speech are in place. Anecdotes and humour – very

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from February 27, 1949.

good. I've written quite enough to you, using the little free time I have before my departure. I'm going to another camp early tomorrow morning! Who knows how many camps I'll go through while waiting for my orders. But that will not prevent me from doing what I think my duty is, to work for the benefit of these people who don't deserve to be treated this way, the way they've been treated for years. I'm only sorry that the results of my work are not as I had hoped they would be. Nevertheless, I live in hope and I have a lot of patience".¹⁸⁸

Damjanović began taking a more severe attitude towards the former members of the „Zbor“, which is more than obvious in his letter to Živan Knežević from February 27, 1949: „As far as the members of the „Zbor“ are concerned, in the first issue you will see the stand we have taken towards them. We have deluded ourselves enough with Serbian harmony! They are not Serbs, because the Serbs have never done what they have been doing. I therefore kindly ask you to send me the documents you have as soon as possible, so that they can be published in the following issues of 'The Combatant'. We will not polarize with them, we will operate with facts-documents, the same way we do with the Ustashas. As far as my physical appearance is concerned, don't worry. I've lost a bit of weight, but I feel fine and I'm always eager to work, regardless of the fact that I'm not even a bit satisfied with the results I'm achieving. I'm sorry that the most competent among us have no understanding for my work, but as I've already said: I've gotten used to patience and hope, I'm bearing and hoping for what must come, a time which the Ravna Gora movement members are righteously hoping for: the victory of Ravna Gora".¹⁸⁹

Damjanović was moved along with the rest of the men to the Eutin-Holsteijn camp at the beginning of March, 1949. He was offered a flat outside the camp, but he refused: „because I wasn't separated from my men up to now, but the commandant of the camp said that it was ordered by the higher command and that he had to execute these orders. Nevertheless, he agreed that I could sleep in the flat and spend the daytime at the camp with my men".¹⁹⁰ The bad news was that Damjanović was losing his DP status on March 19 „and I must leave the camp, and I have employment at my disposal in the German economy. You can imagine that I said nothing about this to my men, while I waited for yesterday's meeting with the commandant of the DP division, who repeated the exact same thing, offering

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Živan Knežević from March 9, 1949.

me the possibility to stay in my flat until I've made arrangements to find shelter outside of Germany. My dear Živan, I'm practically out on the street".¹⁹¹

Živan Knežević could only describe how „astounded“ he was that the DP status was taken away from Damjanović and some other individuals, and advised him to ask the YNC [Yugoslav National Committee] in London for help.¹⁹² Damjanović was then allowed to live outside the camp and to spend the whole day in the camp, with the rest of his men. The General wrote to Slobodan Jovanović once again, and he wanted to write to King Petar, „but I don't want to bother him any more, since he doesn't answer the letters I send him, which are not about me but about the good of his people“.¹⁹³

What kind of reputation Miodrag Damjanović had among his men was best shown in a proclamation made by his former combatants from the Dinara Division, who was now in Germany, expressing their enormous dissatisfaction because of Momčilo Djujić's attacks on Damjanović and his Association? These people were very exasperated by the „shameless and nameless lies“ about Damjanović: „*We know General Damjanović, we value him and respect him as the assistant to the Chief-of-Staff of the Supreme Command and our commandant's assistant from March 1945. We accepted him because he was sent to us by our Čiča. He was introduced to us in Istra by our commandants. He was described to us by Čiča at his trial in Belgrade. He proved himself with his work up to now. We have carefully observed his work and we've come to believe that his work is unselfish, useful and completely devoted to the interests of the King and the people, based on the Ravna Gora movement ideology. We are aware that 'The Association of Combatants of the RYA 'Draža Mihailović' is meant to gather all the Ravna Gora movement members and combatants for the true freedom of our Fatherland, and turn them into an impenetrable front of freedom of Ravna Gora, with the goal to bring us all together, to develop brotherly love, harmony and unity, to help the sick people, the invalids and the elderly people, who are unable to take care of themselves. Members of the Dinara Division, don't allow your bright and exalted name to be dirtied. Do not allow anyone to bespatter the honour and glory of your division. Do not allow anybody to tread upon the graves of the hundreds*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *General Damjanović's Archives.* Ž. Knežević's letter to General Damjanović from March 15, 1949.

¹⁹³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*of thousands of your brothers who have fallen on the field of honour and glory“.*¹⁹⁴

Damjanović was ever more exasperated by the situation in the Serbian emigration, especially because of the absence of help for the Chetniks who were still in the camps. It was very painful for him to see that D. Jevdjević was getting considerable means from American Serbs, although he wasn't doing anything about forming an association which could help the former combatants. He wrote to Ž. Knežević with a lot of disappointment about that on March 23, 1949: „*Do you think it makes no difference to the people when they see how much money is thrown to Jevdjević, who regularly publishes how much he received for his newspaper and from whom? It can also be heard that he receives a monthly appendage from the SNC [Serbian National Committee]. Aren't we pitiful when the Serb nation depends on one Jevdjević! While so many sick people are desperate for help. Inform yourself about Jevdjević's lifestyle in Rome. Your hosts know that very well“.*¹⁹⁵

Work on the statute of the Association began in the beginning of April, 1949, while the preparations for the first annual assembly, when the leadership will be elected, were in progress. Vjekoslav Farkaš estimated that, after the delay in January, the assembly could be held in June, but that proved to be impossible because of the volume of work which needed to be done: „*We hope that we will be able to organize the branches of the Association in the smaller countries until the general assembly, or as associations for the countries with a larger number of our people. We think that the organization of the Association in Germany shouldn't be set in motion by you, but by the people around you, as their initiative“.*¹⁹⁶

Damjanović then made a few personnel changes in the temporary management of the Association: Lieutenant Colonel Vlastimir Roždjalovski was appointed Vice-president; Petko Laković was appointed President of the Supervisory Committee, and Milan Vukmirović was appointed the secretary for Scotland: „*According to my instructions from January 7, 1949, the district assemblies were held and they elected the district managements in northern England, western England, eastern England and southern England. Therefore, these districts now have steady managements. I would like*

¹⁹⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.* – The proclamation was signed by: Milivoje Vuksanović, commandant of the 1st Lika corps and 36 former officers and combatants of the Lika corps, the Bosnia corps, the Dalmatian corps and the Kosovo corps.

¹⁹⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from April 3, 1949.

to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to the temporary officials and to congratulate them on their work up to now".¹⁹⁷

During March and April of 1949, Damjanović went visiting his men in the camps in Germany. He wrote about that to Ž. Knežević on April 21: „*I'm satisfied with what I've seen, because the tension between the Chetniks and the prisoners, which was artificially created, is weakening. If we could spend more time with our people, there would be no end to what we could do*".¹⁹⁸ He was exceptionally pleased because the *Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* was well liked by the Serbs in Germany: „*It became popular faster than any other newspaper. It does have some financial problems, but to me that am not important, because the main thing is, as I wrote to you earlier on, that the newspaper is distributed to the people and that they like it. That was achieved. I've even heard complaints that there's not enough newspapers for everybody. You must make an effort to increase the number of printed copies in order to satisfy the demand*".¹⁹⁹

General Damjanović's position remained the same during April of 1949: he still didn't have any personal documents, he couldn't travel to England, but he was content because he could spend his time with the other emigrants in the camp during the day: „*In spite of everything, I repeat, I'm not going to beg anyone. Considering the fact that Čiča gave his life for the Ravna Gora idea, I can endure what is happening to me*".²⁰⁰

However, at the beginning of May it seemed like Damjanović had lost his patience. He wrote the following to a friend: „*I am practically out on the street now, since I don't have the honour to have a DP status. I live in town so that I can be close to my people, because I'm not allowed to live in the DP camp, where a considerable number of Baltic's live, former members of Hitler's SS formations! But, never mind. This will pass, just let me be healthy*".²⁰¹

While organizing in Great Britain, at the same time organizing was on the way in Germany in the first half of May, 1949. General Damjanović began touring the camps where the Ravna Gora movement members were situated, mainly former Yugoslav prisoners, and gathering them round the

¹⁹⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's instructions from April 8, 1949.

¹⁹⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹⁹⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from April 22, 1949.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*. Part of general Damjanović's letter to Priest J. Marčetić from April 21, 1949.

²⁰¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

Association. He was satisfied with what he had achieved: „*I'm satisfied with the results of my trip, I've already received reports that many commissions have been formed. While I was on my trip, I completed the task of forming the management for Germany, which I had to do personally. I hope that everything will be all right*“.²⁰²

At this time, Damjanović was thinking about going to the USA: „*I hope it will be easier for me to do my work in far away America than it is here, I just have to get there. People have offered to pay for my trip. I haven't yet decided whether to accept this offer, I don't feel comfortable about it, because I'm not used to living from charity as I am now*“.²⁰³ Farkaš gave Damjanović his full support: „*If you have the possibility to go to America, do not hesitate, not even for a minute. It will be much better for you over there, London's maybe the centre of Europe, but it is most certainly a branch-office of Washington*“.²⁰⁴

It seemed like Damjanović's intentions were serious, because he wrote to Farkaš on May 25 that he will „try in any way possible“ to go to the USA: „*Of course, if the right conditions for that are created, because according to my experiences with my hosts here, there's no place for me here! There's something a man has called pride, but in my case I've taken very little care about that. Everything has its limits, and nobody can convince me that we can achieve anything without them. The only way we can succeed is if they help us, but as far as I'm concerned, I've told you my opinion*“.²⁰⁵

The situation, however, wasn't changing. Damjanović wrote to Jovića Ljubojević at the end of May: „*I don't know what to write about myself. The situation is still unchanged. If there's any news, I'll let you know! In the meantime, I've only sent a protest to Geneva because of the way I am treated here. But I know the result of that in advance. As far as America is concerned, everything is the same as I have already written to you, but that does not depend on me. If it does depend on me, I want to go as soon as possible, because I believe you understand the situation I'm in. You know that I can „swallow“ a lot, but I've had enough humiliation. And what's more, I've kept on doing my thing, working as much as I can under these circumstances*“.²⁰⁶

²⁰² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from May 15, 1949.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.* V. Farkaš's letter to General Damjanović from May 20, 1949.

²⁰⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to J. Ljubojević from May 29, 1949.

In his work, Damjanović ran into resistance from people he least expected it from. He wrote about that to Dr. Milan Šijački, the former doctor of the Supreme Command of the YAIF, on June 5: *„I don't understand why you, like many other people as well, ask me not to challenge the fact that the Ravna Gora movement belongs to the people, because this cannot be done by a decree or an order. And please, who's trying to do so, and why all that worry? If you are alluding to the work of the Association, and my work as well, I categorically reject that. This is coming from those who don't want the Ravna Gora movement members to be united and strong. I would like to finish this announcement by informing you that I have never paid any attention in my work to the 'well-intentioned' people who only look after their personal interests; I have never responded to any leaflets, although there are still plenty of them, and I've never polarized with those who attacked me personally. The thing I least want is to debate with people from our house“.*²⁰⁷

Ilija Pavlović was working on behalf of the Association in the Ham camp, but he didn't have any success because most of the emigrants were very sceptic towards the Yugoslav character of the Association, so a certain Captain Jančić put a stop to all the activities on that matter and emigrated to Australia. Besides that, a certain Lieutenant Colonel Petrović refused to head the Association: *„All my convincing had no success. It seems to me that he doesn't want any part of it because the Association is on a Yugoslav basis. I personally cannot set in motion any bigger actions here, as I couldn't in all the other places I have been, because I've public ally been exposed as a member of 'Dušan Silni' and that could be used by 'malicious' individuals to attack the Association“.*²⁰⁸

Nevertheless, Damjanović was satisfied with the organization of the Association in Germany. Commissions were formed in about ten camps, with almost 500 members. At the same time, Damjanović rejected all the criticism coming from the members of „Dušan Silni“, an organization which aspired to bring together most of the Serbian emigrants: *„In the era of democracy and the uncompromising fight for freedom, 'Dušan Silni' is loudly criticizing everything and everybody, so they shouldn't be so sensitive when others criticize them. Is there absolutely nothing about DS [Dušan Silni] which can be criticized? Isn't DS a democratic movement? Every well intentioned criticism must be heard*

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

out without any bitterness and shouldn't be considered as an attempt to do harm".²⁰⁹

Damjanović still had the unreserved support of Captain „Kent“ from Geneva, who was in close contact with Slobodan Drašković and Branislav Stranjaković. „Kent“ was also a great opponent of the *Dušan Silni* organization. There was no disunity among the Serbian emigrants in Switzerland as there was in other countries of Western Europe: *„The situation here is very calm. Our people are employed and they work. There are no quarrels or intrigues. The annual assembly of the Association was held in an atmosphere of unity and everything went well. Some 'Tito sympathizers' issued a few leaflets attacking mainly me and several other Chetniks, asking the members to separate themselves from us. This only made us more united*".²¹⁰

Living and working in almost impossible conditions had a lot of bad consequences for General Damjanović, which was obvious in the letters he wrote to his friends: *„The poverty is not something I cannot deal with, I've gotten used to it long ago. I cannot bear the shame I was put through by those who still don't understand us, the ones we tied ourselves to for all times. It unconsciously came to my mind, the time I spent under British 'protection'. They bothered me every day asking me whether I was satisfied with my rations, whether I have everything I should have, do I have any wishes in that respect. And when I told them one day that I would rather have a piece of bread with a bit of salt and my freedom than the rich British rations in jail, they didn't understand me. The difference today is that I don't understand them now! I cannot understand the explanation that my greatest guilt is that I was Čiča's assistant, the fact I'm proud of and willing to sacrifice even more for*".²¹¹

It was more than obvious that Damjanović was having a hard time because of his financial situation and the uncertainty of his future: *„All my efforts to get to England, even as an ordinary labourer, have remained unsuccessful, and I can't go anywhere from here because I don't have the protection of the IRO. The shame of having to ask the Germans for anything is very difficult for me, I'm used to the poverty. I'm happy to see that the people are slowly being taken care of, they're waiting for better times, and our time must come*".²¹²

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Ilija Pavlović from June 15, 1949.

²¹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to a certain Mr. Marković from June 21, 1949.

²¹² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Captain „Kent“ from June 24, 1949.

In this period, Damjanović hurt a few ribs and had to stay in bed for a while. He was very worried because lieutenant Jovan Ljubojević had resigned from the position of secretary of the Association. Ljubojević handed in his resignation in writing on Vidovdan of 1949: *„My health situation is getting worse and I cannot keep up with the pace of work in the Association, I'm physically tired and worn out. I wish to enable the Association to function properly, I don't wish to do any damage to the Association, therefore, general Sir, I feel free to hand in my resignation, expressing my deepest gratitude for the trust you had in me when you appointed me to the position of temporary secretary of the management of the Association“*.²¹³

On Vidovdan of 1949, Damjanović addressed the officials of the Association in a pretty dramatic way, mainly because of the conflict between J. Ljubojević and V. Farkaš. The motive for this was Farkaš's letter which contained a lot of acrid words about Ljubojević's work: *„Jovica says that I make more mistakes than he does. That is probably completely correct, but at the same time that proves that I work more than him. Who works, makes mistakes. Who works more, makes more mistakes, which works less, makes fewer mistakes. Jovica and I quarrel quite frequently. He doesn't want to understand my position and my capabilities. He drives me crazy sometimes, especially when he says that I can complete the magazine in two days“*.²¹⁴

Damjanović wanted everybody to work together in harmony: *„I am forced to address the highest officials of the Association today on our holiday Vidovdan, with an appeal and imploration – work together in harmony for the good of the Association. The reason I address you now is the recent misunderstanding between two of my most worthy fellow-workers since the first day the Association began to work, which worries me very much. Without mutual trust, there is no successful conjunction. This refers to the officials who were appointed by me, while the ones who were elected have a responsibility towards the people who elected them, and therefore, their responsibility is even bigger. It might be necessary to emphasize one more 'minor detail'. You are all taken care of and you are all younger than me. While, due to various circumstances, I'm left to the pleasures and displeasures of the street. And if I can do my work despite of everything, I think I have the right to request that you do your work correctly and in harmony with one another, because thousands of our members expect you to do so“*.²¹⁵

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Due to the tense situation in the Serbian emigration, a conference of the Ravna Gora Committee for Germany was held on July 1. Besides Damjanović, the following people were present: Colonel Branislav Živković, Colonel Sergije Živanović, Dr. Veljko Danilović and the Mladen Gašić. The Committee concluded that the main things which disturb the unity of the Serbian emigration are the „Ljotić sympathizers“ and the „Dušan Silni“ organization: *„Despite our peaceful politics towards the political tendencies in our emigration and our efforts to create unity and compactness within our emigration, the Ljotić sympathizers and members of 'Dušan Silni'; keep on attacking us and thus ruining all our efforts. They publish various articles, they publish books with false documents about the collaboration between the members of the Ravna Gora movement and the occupiers, using the most abusive language just like the communists do, to insult our immortal Čiča and to deny that we fought against the ruthless fascists“*.²¹⁶

In order to put a stop to that and to respond adequately, it was decided that they should start collecting documents about the co-operation of the „Ljotić sympathizers“ with the Germans and the communists; the propaganda work should be intensified in the Serbian emigration, „we should gather round the upright people and disclose the criminal activities of the Ljotić sympathizers and the members of Dušan Silni“; distribute information to all the centres of the Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ about the „malversations, scandals and other dirty activities of the Ljotić sympathizers and members of Dušan Silni, so that it can be published in the press“. It was necessary to increase the efforts in order to educate as many Ravna Gora movement members as possible, „so that each individual can become a strong bulwark“ because *„our basic task is to turn everyone who can prevent us in our future plans to dust and ashes while we're still here abroad. Let it be clear that our biggest enemies here are members of Dušan Silni and the Ljotić symphatizers“*.²¹⁷

Damjanović commented on J. Ijubojević's resignation on July 17, the day he heard about it. He was really very sad to hear that his close fellow-worker had decided to resign: *„This time I would like to say that I'm truly sorry you're doing this! Since I can see that you're firm in your decision not to be the secretary any more, I would like to suggest something which I feel you will not refuse, something which will agree with your temperament and your capabilities. I would like you to accept the duty of doing the organiza-*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

*tional part of the work in the Association. We should create an organizational section and you could run it“.*²¹⁸

The management of the Association for Great Britain held a three-day meeting (from July 30 to August 1) and adopted a statement about „the need for Ravna Gora concord“. The management of the Association for Germany agreed with that statement. „The statement of concord“ referred to the conciliation with the main Ravna Gora movement committee headed by Lieutenant Colonel Miodrag Ratković. General Damjanović stated that this was an example of „unselfish and dedicated work for the good of the King and the Fatherland“, and on August 10, 1949, he appointed a three-member delegation (Lieutenant Colonel Sima Mijušković, major Vaso Milović and Captain Mića Obradović) to organize a meeting with M. Ratković.²¹⁹

Radomir Petrović „Kent“ was doing everything he possibly could to help solve the problem of General Damjanović’s status. He made contact with Colonel S. V. Baily, former chief of the British mission to the Supreme Command of YAIF and a connoisseur of war-time and post-war conditions: „*He gladly accepted to help and assured me that he will do everything he can. I’ve convinced some Americans who work there to take interest in the matter. Baily knows a solicitor who can help very much. As far as I was able to find out, our people are more to blame for your situation than the IRO. There have been a lot of imputations from all sides. The politicians are always afraid that we might take over the leadership. At the beginning of last year I became certain that the ‘Londoners’ have a hostile attitude towards the Chetnik combatants, before all towards you. They claim that half the Chetnik commandants are collaborators while the other half are agents of OZNA [Tito’s secret police]“.*²²⁰

Damjanović’s instructions from August 10, 1949, show that he still believed that it was possible to unite the Serbian emigration: „*I want all the Ravna Gora movement members, where ever they might be, to unite and, as they once used to be, become an example of unselfish and devoted work for the good of the King and the Fatherland. I have therefore appointed a delegation, which will contact the main Ravna Gora movement committee and its representatives immediately, and examine the possibility of uniting all the members of the Ravna Gora movement and the conditions under which they could all work together in harmony. Members of the delegation: Lieu-*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.* R. Petrović’s letter to General Damjanović from August 9, 1949.

tenant Colonel Sima Mijušković, Major Vasa Milović and Captain Mića Obradović“.²²¹

Damjanović's financial situation was still making his life very difficult and it was jeopardizing his health, but he didn't despair. He wrote to J. Ljubojević about that on August 13: „*There's no need to tell you how much my trips and my mail cost me. In addition to that, I pay 100 marks for my flat, just to be here, close to my people. Besides, nobody can see in my stomach what I have eaten. And what do I eat, let me just say that I have 'lost' five kilos in the last few months. And you know how 'fat' I was! These circumstances did not stop me from doing what I think is my duty and I worked as much as I could*“.²²²

Despite all these difficulties, Damjanović was very satisfied with the organization of the Association in Germany. We can tell this from his letter to V. Farkaš from August 18, 1949: „*I came back from my trip very satisfied, because I saw that the work on educating the commissions is going the way we wanted it to*“.²²³ There were about 1600 members of the Association in Germany at the end of August, 1949. Thirty-three commissions were formed, while six more were in the organizing phase. A temporary management of the Association in Germany was also formed. The *Freedom or Death* bulletin started being published during the summer, and it represented the Association's newspaper for the whole of Germany. The bulletin continued to be published under that name until the beginning of 1950, when the name was changed to *The Ravna Gora Gazette*, and it kept on being published till the end of that year. The management of the Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ for Germany started publishing it again in 1955.

The efforts of many individuals to make peace between General Damjanović and Momčilo Djujić were not successful. Momčilo Djujić was not ready to reconcile and he kept on using complete lies in the conflict. Proof of this can be found in his letter from September 14: „*Your whole letter is imbued with your wish that General Damjanović and I settle our disputes. Unfortunately, I do not have to tell you that this will never happen, nor is it possible. There are a lot of reasons for that. Although Jevdjević and I have plenty of personal reasons for that, our fight with him is not on a personal basis. Our conflict is one of principle and about the plans of the Ravna Gora movement in General. We have undeniable proof that General Damjano-*

²²¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

*vić requested our heads and insisted that we be handed over to Tito. He did that when we were together in the same camp, while he was pretending to be our friend. He did everything he could to break up our units, to diminish our reputation and our influence on the people. We consider him the biggest enemy of the Ravna Gora movement“.*²²⁴

Damjanović was once again disappointed when Momčilo Djujić helped only the people from Kninska Krajina and people from the three-border point: „*The direct motive is the letter that Djujić sent today to father Mladen, asking him to send 500 people more (just members of the Dinara Division and Jevdjević’s men of course, because there are no other worthy Serbs!). You know very well that I never want to argue with anyone, especially not with Djujić, and I have no intention to do so now, but people are in question here – Serbs and members of the Ravna Gora movement who are not so lucky to be from the three-border point, people who nobody cares about. You can see from the lists I sent you that I didn’t care where the people were from, just what they were like and who needed help the most“.*²²⁵

Damjanović was equally disappointed with the disunion in the Serbian national emigration, especially with the attitude of some individuals, such as Dragan Sotirović: „*Enough of this factiousness of the Ravna Gora movement which is putting us in an impossible situation. Sotirović is writing me letters in a way that even Čiča wouldn’t write, so full of self-confidence in his power and his righteousness. But he has forgotten that he was my delegate to the Poles (it didn’t bother him then!) and what he said about me in his speech in the theatre in Eboli in the autumn of 1946. He gave me a copy of that speech because I didn’t want to attend that gathering. You certainly had the luck to meet Djujić personally! I’ve read the articles in ‘Srbobran’ about him and I don’t know what to say. The best thing is that professor Milutin Debrnja ‘defends’ him so nicely. What’s the point of that? You must know Debrnja? Have the Ravna Gora movement members gone so far that they need to be publicly defended by members of the Zbor? We’ve gone much too far“.*²²⁶

The last few months of 1949 were spent in organizing the first general assembly of the Association „Draža Mihailović“ in Great Britain. It was planned to be held on the 26th and 27th of November, 1949. Damja-

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* General Damjanović’s letter to the priest Jovan Marčetić from October 17, 1949.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Milan Šijački from October 18, 1949.

nović addressed all the members of the Association with a *proclamation* on October 25. He reminded all the unfortunate people of what they went through after the war, and how significant the Association is: „*I feel happy to see how our Ravna Gora community is developing and how our solid house is being built, and, with God's help, it will be finished. I also feel happy because, at the annual assembly, we will determine what we've done so far and what we still have to do, and express our unyielding loyalty and granite-like devotion to our young King and our agonized Fatherland*“.²²⁷

At the very beginning of November, 1949, a change took place in the management of the Association. Damjanović appointed Dragoljub Mirić („uncle Goran“) to the position of editor of *The Ravna Gora Movement* magazine.²²⁸ We can see from Damjanović's letter to J. Ljubojević dated November 19, that he expected a lot from the forthcoming assembly: „*You must make an effort to avoid all the ambushes concerning the assembly. You must all agree upon what needs to be done before the assembly, in order to avoid unpleasant surprises and unnecessary agitations*“.²²⁹

There were 49 delegates present at the assembly, representatives of the Association from all the regions. The following people were elected at the assembly: Vaso Milović – chairman, P. Pavasović and S. Dudaković – vice-chairmen, M. Obradović and M. Gaćeša – secretaries, S. Nedeljković – treasurer, M. Pajović – chief of the invalids section, N. Tomašević – president of the supervisory committee. That same year, the Association patron's day was celebrated for the first time.²³⁰ General Damjanović was elected president of the main management of the Association at this assembly.

Vjekoslav Farkaš was dissatisfied to a certain extent with the work of the assembly, before all with the attitude of his former close associate Jovica Ljubojević. He wrote the following about his impressions to Damjanović on December 4: „*You've already heard all about the assembly. Certainly all about the results. Personally, I'm content with the results, but not with the way the assembly was run. Thank God that the assembly is over, because now I no longer have so many obligations. Contrary to the wish of the forum, that is the district presidents, Jovica opened the assembly. That gave the impression that Jovica was the only one who had*

²²⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's instructions from November 1, 1949.

²²⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²³⁰ *Van Otadžbine*, 32.

*done something and that thanks to him the Association was formed. No wonder that Pavle Marković quit working in his district. It is not strange that Sima Mijušković is deeply offended. Not to say anything about professor Nikolić and the others who wanted to work, but their will-power was destroyed by Jovica“.*²³¹

²³¹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

V. THE EXPANSION OF THE ASSOCIATION AND THE YEARS OF CHALLENGE

General Damjanović, nevertheless, had grounds to be satisfied with the work of the Association at the end of 1949: *„I am content and happy today because I can conclude: that despite of my difficult working conditions, thousands of Ravna Gora movement members understood me, and succeeded in their efforts during this past year to make a strong foundation for our Association, aware that only if they stay together and follow the ideals of Ravna Gora with brotherly harmony, can they accomplish the goals that the people, who we left behind in our country to continue to bravely fight against the red monster are counting on, the people who are still suffering under Tito who is devastating our agonized Fatherland“*.¹

Damjanović was very pleased just by the fact that the first assembly of the Association was held. He wrote about that to D. Mirić („uncle Goran“): *„I’m glad that you also have concluded that the assembly went well. I wrote the following to everyone: the results of the assembly must be accepted as a reality, and if there were any mistakes, we’re all together obligated to correct them. We have a statute which makes that possible. We should use that“*.²

Near the end of 1949, Damjanović occupied himself with *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* magazine, and he was very pleased with its contents: *„My opinion of the ‘Combatant’ that I’ve already told you are not flattery – its reality. I’m happy that you’re making an effort to make the ‘Combatant’ even better in the new year, to reach the quality you want. I know what you’re capable of, you just need the right working conditions“*.³

Damjanović was still in Eutin in Germany at the beginning of 1950. In the first half of January, he visited the camps in the American occupying zone. The allied authorities planned to move the families to Leubeck, while Damjanović’s situation remained the same: *„You might be interested in*

¹ *General Damjanović’s Archives*. M. Damjanović’s proclamation from December 15, 1949.

² *General Damjanović’s archives*. General Damjanović’s letter to „uncle Goran“ from December 27, 1949.

³ *Ibid.*

what I've done for myself. Nothing. I cannot get anything here, as I was told in Hamburg. They won't give me a visa, because I'm a refugee! I expected this, but it will not prevent me from doing everything I can for these people I've been with for years".⁴

One of the bad news in this period was the resignation of Sima Mijušković from the work and membership in the Association. Mijušković decided on this step because of personal reasons, he was displeased with the attitude of some individuals towards him, but the essence of his dissatisfaction was that his list lost the elections at the first assembly of the Association. This was very disappointing for Damjanović, which can be seen from his letter to Mijušković on January 22: *„I kindly ask you to change your decision and temporarily take back your resignation. I know that Sima Mijušković is a Ravna Gora movement member and that as such he cannot do anything which could be of use to the adversaries of the Ravna Gora movement. Your resignation is exactly that, it is certainly of use to our opponents*".⁵

From the current business at hand, the election of the main management was the most important. Damjanović wrote to V. Farkaš about that on January 23: *„I've been thinking about the need to appoint the main management now that we have elected country managements and a statute, so on the basis of some opinions I find that it isn't necessary because we are here: the secretaries and I, with the organizational secretariat (for the overseas organization – if you like) and that is enough to keep functioning until the main management is elected. I wouldn't like to appoint myself any more*".⁶

Damjanović wanted the American Serbs, who were interested in helping the Association, to send help on a monthly basis. Besides that, he wanted to involve as many people as he could. He especially wanted Ljubomir Jovanović „Patak“ [Drake], the former commandant of the Timok corps of the YAIF, to take on more active part in the work of the Association: *„The remark about Ljuba Patak is all right. He should be forced to come out of neutrality because doing nothing is the greatest sin of all! The easiest thing is to be one who waits, but don't let those who wait forget that they are making a big mistake by doing so. Ljuba is a name that once meant a lot, he mustn't forget that today, and with his attitude of waiting allow those who are less worthy to go to the top. Give him my regards. I have nothing aga-*

⁴ *General Damjanović's archives.* Part of Damjanović's letter to S. Maravić from January 15, 1950.

⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

*inst him joining the opponents of our Association, just let him be heard, the people will pass judgement on who was on the right track“.*⁷

After leaving Italy, members of the Ravna Gora movement divided themselves into several organizations and began to work separately. This fact was burdening the thoughts of General Damjanović. As the largest and the widest-spread Ravna Gora movement organization in the western world, The Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ felt the need to try to reunite the Ravna Gora movement forces, if not into one organization then at least into a federation of Ravna Gora movement associations, so that the associations could work together and co-ordinate their future activities. In the *appeal to the Ravna Gora movement organizations and individuals for harmony* back in July of 1949, the temporary management of the Association for Great Britain announced that it „salutes every initiative for harmony and coordination in the work on the basic issues of the people’s aspirations and the organization of work“.⁸

Damjanović wanted to reconcile with the organization which was being formed around the Ravna Gora movement committees. The well-known ones were the Committee in Paris, headed by Dragan Sotirović, and the one in London, headed by former Lieutenant Colonels Miodrag Ratković and Čedomir Petrović. This Committee grew into *The Head Committee of the Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland*. This organization was headed by former officers of the YAIF, lieutenant-colonels Miodrag Ratković and Čedomir Petrović. The so-called Ravna Gora Movement Committee for England functioned under the leadership of this organization. They published *The Voice of Ravna Gora* newspaper, they co-operated closely with Slobodan Jovanović and they had the support of the British officers who were members of the British mission in General Mihailović’s headquarters during the war.⁹

General Damjanović insisted on a meeting between the representatives of the two groups („commission for harmony“) as soon as possible, but he wrote to Vasa Milović that he doesn’t want to take part in this himself, „if you feel that I stand in the way of Ravna Gora movement harmony. If I need to be scarified for this goal, I will do that gladly, aware of the fact that I am doing that for the good of the Ravna Gora movement“.¹⁰ He also tho-

⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to „uncle Goran“ from February 15, 1950.

⁸ *General Damjanović’s Archives*.

⁹ N. Popović, *S. Jovanović*, 326.

¹⁰ *General Damjanović’s Archives*. General Damjanović’s letter to V. Milović from February 19, 1950.

ught that the two Ravna Gora movement wings should have a mutual body with a limited number of members who would be elected to head certain managements: „*The mutual body should be given the task of working on unity and harmony, the Association and the committees should be enabled to work without any disturbances and they should not belittle each others deeds. We are in need of Ravna Gora movement deeds. All of us here must prepare ourselves for new accomplishments in our country. The work of this body would represent the second faze of the mutual work, which should result in forming a mutual forum, with mutual programmes which would be presented to the public. The forming of a joint forum with mutual programmes and presenting it to the public would be the start of the third faze of mutual work. This procedure, characteristic for democracy and the Ravna Gora movement, would surely achieve results, but only people who feel the need for Ravna Gora movement harmony and believe in it, should take part in it*“.¹¹

Damjanović was very sincere in his intention to achieve unity in the Serbian Ravna Gora movement emigration, so he suggested to Vasa Milović that he should set an initiative in motion to form a mutual body with the Ravna Gora Committee, which was headed by Miodrag Ratković. The next step was to create a plan for the coordination of mutual work of the Association of Combatants of the RYA and the Committee.

Damjanović outlined similar standpoints in his letter to S. Mijušković. He was quite optimistic: „*I think that you will very quickly reach an agreement to create a central Ravna Gora movement body which would represent both Ravna Gora movement organizations until you finally unite. Maybe that could be the Central Ravna Gora Movement Committee, so that the sensibility of either side wouldn't be disturbed. Naturally, all this would be a temporary solution. I kindly ask once again that you bear in mind the delicacy of the whole problem and the sensibility of the members of both organizations, and to work gradually, not too rashly, because at the very end everything depends on the will of the members which can be demonstrated only at the assembly*“.¹²

Perhaps the best recognition of Damjanović's work came from a former officer of the Serbian State Guard. That officer was an emigrant in the USA and a member of *Dušan Silni*, an organization which had been criticizing and attacking Damjanović for a long time. On February 25, 1950, that

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's letter to S. Mijušković from March 27, 1950.

officer from Milwaukee wrote to a friend about many events which shed some light upon the background of the attacks on Damjanović: *„Although I am a big supporter of the 'Dušan Silni' organization, I was his orderly-officer in his headquarters in Italy, where he had more than 800 officers at his disposal. Well, it cannot be said that he didn't have a wide choice of people for this kind and similar kinds of services in his surroundings. While I was in the transit camps Venture and Grin in Germany, on my way to the USA, I met with the general several times. He always emphasized that it was in the interest of all of us Serbs to unite and live in harmony, all of us except the members of the Zbor, who are considered to be the Serbian Ustashas. His words were: – Djujić, Jevdjević and I must settle our disputes and make peace with one another, and so does Dr. Drašković with General Živković and Tešanović, because that is in the interest of the Serbian nation. When that happens, then, and only then, can the Serbs present themselves as a whole“.*¹³

This officer also commented on Djujić's letter where Djujić accused Damjanović of wanting to hand him over to the Yugoslav authorities while they were in Italy: *„The letter consists of lies, only lies. I say this because I'm completely familiar with this matter. I was then in such a position that I was very well informed about these things. To say that Damjanović requested that Djujić and Jevdjević be handed over to Tito is so funny, not to say stupid. I personally re-wrote General Damjanović's letter to the English commandant of the camp in Eboli three times, and in this letter Damjanović informed the English commandant that it has come to his knowledge that the Government of Great Britain has decided to extradite General Mušicki and duke Jevdjević, who were in prison at the time, and he kindly asked the English commandant to use his authority to influence his higher command to prevent this from happening. Damjanović sent similar requests to King Petar in London and Paris, to Slobodan Jovanović and some other people more than once. About Damjanović doing everything to break up Djujić's and Jevdjević's units in the camp in Eboli, that is also more than stupid. On the contrary, the General was the one who kept their units together in this camp. To tell you the truth, only the word of General Damjanović had any authority there. He was an authority for all the groups which were there. And he saved a lot of difficult situations there. There absolutely isn't any written proof that Damjanović had a hostile attitude towards Djujić and Jevdjević. That is more than ridiculous. The duke has forgotten that he or-*

¹³ General Damjanović's Archives.

dered his soldiers who were in the unit that guarded Damjanović's headquarters to withdraw and return to their units, all with the intention to create disturbances and trouble within the general's headquarters. The duke has also forgotten that he was issuing orders nearly every week, especially when he left the camp, ordering his soldiers not to obey General Damjanović".¹⁴

Delegates of the Association of Combatants and The Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee held a meeting in London on the 25th and 26th of February. N. Bojović, M. Bojanić and S. Bogičević were the representatives of The Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee, while Sima Mijušković, Vaso Milović and M. Obradović represented General Damjanović's Association. The two delegations agreed on the following: 1) their ideology „outside the Fatherland is to be the same as in the Fatherland“; 2) they concluded that „they were sorry“ about all the disagreements they had up to now; 3) both organizations should be represented in a joint Ravna Gora movement body. It was suggested that the press of both organizations should work „in brotherly harmony“ on accomplishing the agreed upon goals. In order to coordinate future activities a joint body of 3–5 members is to be formed.¹⁵

Damjanović was satisfied with the outcome of this meeting: „The essence is to work together in harmony in a Ravna Gora movement way. It doesn't matter in how many groups we work. We need results, which were prevented by disharmony and envy up to now. These things must disappear“.¹⁶ Damjanović felt the need to explain his Yugoslavians once more: „As far as my Yugoslavians are concerned, please tell Mr. Sava Vrtikapa and all the rest who are interested in this that I cannot see my guilt in being a Serb and a Royal Yugoslav general. They should inform themselves a bit better about the resolutions from Ba and the views of the Ravna Gora movement on the issue of Serbianism and Yugoslavism“.¹⁷

Damjanović was still very cautious and he advised S. Mijušković to also have such an approach to the work on the forming of the joint Ravna Gora movement body: „You have full freedom in your further work, only under the condition of completeness. Please don't act rashly. I am counting on the Ravna Gora movement consciousness of all of you and I ask you to accept this task“.¹⁸ He wrote a similar letter to a friend of his on March 8:

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Milović from March 5, 1950.

¹⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Mijušković from March 5, 1950.

*„Unity of both wings is the final goal of these talks, but we must achieve this gradually! I've said this to Milović as well, because they mustn't underestimate the consequences, which could have an atomic effect on most of the members who are unprepared for this. It is not our goal to destroy what we have, as usually is the case with us Serbs, until we've previously created something better“.*¹⁹

Although he was cautious and a bit sceptical, Damjanović's wish for „unity of the Ravna Gora movement“ in emigration was sincere. With that in mind he addressed the Presidentship of the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee in London on March 27: *„I sincerely hope that the activities we've undertaken to create unity in the Ravna Gora movement will be successfully completed soon, with the forming of a central Ravna Gora movement committee, worthy of the always conscious Ravna Gora movement combatants“.*²⁰

Relations in the Serbian emigration were still very burdened by the problems which were caused by events in WW II. The old disunity problem was becoming stronger in these new circumstances, which pretty much fettered the enthusiasm of individuals who had an honest approach to the task of organizing the emigration. One of them, Aleksandar Milošević, criticized Damjanović for having such a large number of officers of the SNG in the Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“. Milošević thought that this disunity was caused by the fact that a large number of emigrants looked up to certain individuals who were in conflict among themselves, „although they worked for the common good and their goals were often the same, they attack each other using blows bellow the belt“. Besides that, the largest national and State issues are being interpreted with the use of demagogy in order to attract the emigrants: *„I must tell you what I saw in the mass of our emigrants, who are the centre of everything and who everything is addressed to and who always sacrifice the most in the end. I saw evil, at least the one that can be avoided, among the most important people up top. This evil comes from the people who have grabbed the right to speak on behalf of the masses, to instruct them, to lead and represent them. They are divided into groups and they have conveyed their disunity and hatred onto the masses. We've lost our Fatherland, and our people over there are suffering under the tyranny of the red evil monster. Through the Ravna Gora movement battles, headed by immortal Čiča, our people have marked the path they should follow in order to move forward. The democratic environment*

¹⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

*which has given us sanctuary has enabled us to work on our basic task – the fight for freedom and our return, and unique surroundings for a unanimous front. We mustn't forget that one whole nation is allowed to make decisions for it, and that we, here in emigration, do not have that right and therefore there's no need to quarrel among ourselves“.*²¹

Miodrag Damjanović responded to Milošević's letter on March 30. He emphasized that he was ready to retreat to complete isolation („where nobody will hear from me“) if he is a disturbance to the unity of the Serbian emigration, but he warned Milošević of the destructive work of M. Djujić and D. Jevdjević. In spite of everything, he was still optimistic: „*We must cure and save the things you wrote about in your letter. But how? I think that we can do that by organizing all the honest and sincere people who think in a Ravna Gora movement way. All those people who sacrifice themselves for the good of the community. I think that is possible! Most of the members of the Ravna Gora movement are already grouped into two organizations, which are on the way to complete unity. The rest of them who are still not members of any group must join the one they prefer – the two groups are united anyway. When all this is achieved, we can build on that and the results will be good“.*²²

Although it seemed like that an agreement between the two Ravna Gora movement associations was possible, General Damjanović received a letter from Miodrag Ratković at the beginning of April, where a direct ambition was shown that the national unity can only be achieved through The Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland, which only predicted new misunderstandings. Ratković wrote the following: „*I'm unusually happy that I can inform you that all the members of The Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland are very happy that all the Ravna Gora movement members will be joined together in The Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland, because only if we are together can we fulfil our pledge to our fallen combatants headed by immortal Čiča“.*²³

Although he had been in a very difficult financial situation for years, Damjanović was very angry when he heard of V. Farkaš's idea to regularly collect financial help for him from the emigration. Damjanović commented on Farkaš's intention with the following words: „*I was very unpleasantly surprised when I read your proclamation from April 15, asking for help for me. Since I am convinced that you did this with the best of intentions, I am*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.* M. Ratković's letter to General Damjanović from April 6, 1950.

*not angry with you, but I kindly ask you to revoke your suggestion as soon as possible and inform everybody that you sent your proclamation to, that I cannot under any circumstances accept something like this. Please exempt me from this newest charity. I hope that I will be able to continue my work for the common good without this charity“.*²⁴

The Association was getting bigger by the day. The first assembly of the Association in western Australia was held in the first half of May, when they elected their management. Moidrag Damjanović addressed them with the following words on June 10, 1950: *„It is my great pleasure to salute all the members of the management and all the members of the Association and to wish you all success in your work. I am convinced that our Association will be the foundation for creating a legion of fearless combatants for the freedom of our Fatherland, which is suffering under the terror of the communists, and that the members of the Association will abundantly help their fellow combatants who are in need of help“.*²⁵

The meeting which was supposed to be the turning point in achieving „Ravna Gora movement unity“ was held on the 17th and 18th of June in London. The delegations of the two associations agreed that local joint assemblies were to be held and joint Ravna Gora movement committees and commissions elected not later than July 23, 1950. Furthermore, delegates were to be elected for the general Ravna Gora movement congress which was to be held on the 6th and 7th of August: *„On this occasion we must demonstrate our Ravna Gora movement consciousness, our harmony and brotherhood, and our love towards the Ravna Gora movement struggle, ideology, and the graves of the fallen combatants of the Ravna Gora movement, and our respect for the immortal master mind, General Draža Mihailović“.*²⁶

The Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ was represented by Simo Mijušković, Milorad Obradović, Bogdan Drobac and Pavle Marković at this meeting. Damjanović was first informed about what happened at the meeting by Jovica Ljubojević on June 20. His report was quite cheerless: *„Our representatives acted as if they had some kind of dangerous fever, especially Sima, Milović and Mića – they said that we’ve made a mistake by founding our Association, they went so far as to confess to each other that they were misled, they even came close to saying that they*

²⁴ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* Damjanović’s letter to V. Farkaš from April 21, 1950.

²⁵ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

*no longer deserve to be Ravna Gora movement members because they were members of our Association. On the basis of their behaviour they were easily understood why they wanted an agreement at any cost, and what's even worse, a quick agreement, just to end everything as soon as possible and to return to their camps. Our people have lost their will for everything, convinced that they've made a mistake by working for the Association, and the other side knew how to use our weaknesses“.*²⁷

While under the impression of this and other similar information, Damjanović addressed the delegates of the Association who attended the meeting with Raković's organization on July 6. He was very dissatisfied with their work: they worked in a hurry, the period of time left for the preparations for the Ravna Gora movement congress was too short, he didn't want his Association to be taken over by Ratković's much smaller movement; he challenged some of the decisions in the agreement as being unfounded („delegates of the Association and the Committee seem to be forgetting the fact that we have an Association with thousands of members on all the continents of the world who need to be asked whether they agree with this suggestion or not“); he insisted on precise definitions of many minor details which clearly showed that he wanted to save the autonomy of his Association at any price: „*Clause number 7 is, I'm sorry to say, a medley which anything can come out of and nothing could be adopted from that, because the new management must be elected only by the votes of the delegates at the congress“.*²⁸

Damjanović insisted on a new meeting of the delegates, but that it previously must be established how many members each association has and then elect the delegates according to that number: „*The organizational committee is supposed to set the date for conducting the preparations, taking into account that the first joint congress can be held around Christmas – not before! We mustn't rush things. I'm ending this statement with an appeal to the delegates to complete the task they have started, for the benefit of the Ravna Gora movement in general and the members of the Association, without forgetting that our Association has achieved outstanding results up to now and that it represents the strongest organized Serbian community“.*²⁹

Damjanović sent a separate letter to V. Milović on the same day, where he was even clearer: „*I was, as you know, the initiator of the talks*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

*about uniting the Ravna gora movement organizations, but not at any price. Least of all in the way it was suggested in the „proposal“ which didn't take into consideration the fact that our Association has thousands of members and a statute. Are we aloud to go before our members with such a proposal? All of our members still remember why we invited them to join the Association! And now, we're supposed to tell these very same people that they should merge in this way with an organization that they never wanted to join in the first place! To tell them this now when Ravna Gora movement members are joining our Association in all the continents of the world, especially in Australia and America!“*³⁰

Miodrag Ratković was making an effort to use this confusion within the management of the Association „Draža Mihailović“, so he wrote to Damjanović, who wasn't able to control the situation from Germany, that everybody in his association was „unusually happy“ because of the achieved unity and that a new Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee Outside the Fatherland will be formed at than congress. Ratković's ambition to incorporate Damjanović's Association into his was more than obvious: „*All true Ravna Gora movement members are happy about the achieved brotherly harmony and unity, and their only wish is that it is all done as soon as possible so that they can make up for the lost time. The only people that are not happy are the adversaries of the Ravna Gora Movement Committee Outside the Fatherland, who are doing everything they possibly can to prevent this unity*“.³¹

It could be seen that the situation was more than complicated from the official circular sent to all the members of the Association by Vaso Milović on July 18, on behalf of the management for Great Britain. Milović informed all the members that the Association has suggested the forming of the Central Ravna Gora Movement Committee which would be composed of ten members from each organization: „*The task of this committee would be to integrate the work of the two organizations, to create a detailed plan of the programme of the new joint organization. This plan is to be adopted by the assembly of the Association and the assembly of the Ravna Gora Movement Committee, and when both assemblies have adopted it, a joint congress is to be held and everything confirmed by the congress. Delegates of the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee didn't agree with this suggestion*“.³²

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.* M. Ratković's letter to General Damjanović from July 8, 1950.

³² *Ibid.* V. Milović's letter to General Damjanović from July 8, 1950.

Milović was of the opinion that Ratković's organization wanted to take over the Association „Draža Mihailović“, which was unacceptable: *„The decision to stop the work of the Association can be brought only by the assembly. Therefore, the term of 'August 6' is unrealisable. The Association of Combatants will keep on trying to achieve unity, but only in a way that is approved of by the majority of the organized Ravna Gora movement members at their assemblies, and then at a joint congress. I want to assure the members of the Association that nothing will be done without their knowledge and the approval of the majority of the members“.*³³

In the meantime, Miodrag Ratković and Dragoljub Mirić met in London and talked about the possibility of reaching an agreement between the two emigrant organizations. Mirić informed Damjanović about that on July 26: *„In the talks I had with Ratković I told him about all the logicality we thought the last proposal had. I repeated that the Association wanted an agreement, but a real agreement, not some kind of emulation or surprise attack by way of fabricated procreation and artificially appointed delegates. They must understand that we are ready to reach an agreement at any price, but that price must be paid by the other side as well, not only by the Association. Milović issued a circular about the agreement, which was a necessity considering that the other side broke its promise that it wouldn't make public the last resolutions of the delegates“.*³⁴

Damjanović answered Ratković on July 27. He emphasized that he was ready to continue the talks on the issue of „harmony and unity of the Ravna Gora movement members“, but that he and the Main Management of the Association „are not willing to agree upon similar decisions to the ones which were suggested by the delegates and decided upon by the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee. According to the statute of the Association, only the general assembly of the Association has the right to make this kind of decision. The second Ravna Gora movement congress, which is planned for the 6th and 7th of August by the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee, could not in any case be the 'next joint Ravna Gora movement congress' as it was anticipated by the delegates. We will be able to hold a joint congress only after having decided upon mutual suggestions for the delegates on behalf of the authorized forums. And finally, considering that 'Ravna Gora' is a synonym of the word 'democracy', I kindly ask of you that the delegates for the joint congress be elected only by the members“.

³⁵

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

The talks and negotiations weren't stopped, but it was clear that a formal cooperation between the two Ravna Gora movement associations will not be achieved in the near future. The majority of the members of the Association were of the opinion that an agreement with Ratković's Committee was impossible. The talks were continued in the middle of August, 1950, but no concrete agreement was reached. That was very clear in Damjanović's letter to V. Milović dated October 13, 1950: *„I agree with the opinion that the talks should be continued by the same delegates, but an executive committee should be formed. Let's wait till then, there's no need to hurry anyway. I'm still for the idea of trying to do what can be done, but we must take care who we do business with after everything those gentlemen have been doing. I don't want the talks to stop, I want everything to be nice and clear“*.³⁶

At the beginning of November, Damjanović deeply believed that it will be possible for him to come to London: *„It seems that I will be able to come to the annual assembly and stay for a few days. I concluded this from the preliminary work which is in progress“*.³⁷ At this time, Lj. Jovanović „Patak“ visited Damjanović in Germany, which pleased the general very much. In the meantime, there was a secession in the Main Ravna Gora Committee outside the Fatherland. The greater part was led by Stanoje Jeremić, who was much more ready to co-operate with General Damjanović's Association than M. Ratković was.

In the second half of November, 1950, it seemed like the union between the Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ and the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee was certain. Damjanović and Stanoje Jeremić, the President of the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee Outside the Fatherland, met in Frankfurt on November 23. On that occasion they drew up the protocol of the agreement which predicted the forming of an „indistinguishable Ravna Gora movement force“; all the agreements reached up to then between the two organizations were approved and they were still thinking about a joint congress, which was supposed to be held on Orthodox Christmas day of next year.³⁸

Damjanović was very satisfied with the outcome of the talks, as can be seen from his letter to S. Jeremić dated November 27: *„I hope we will meet again soon, as we agreed to do, this time in England, where we will continue the work we began in Frankfurt, for the good of Ravna Gora move-*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Farkaš from November 13, 1950.

³⁸ *General Damjanović's archives.*

ment which we both belong to with our hearts and souls“.³⁹ Damjanović informed V. Milović about these talks: „First of all, let me tell you that the results of this meeting surpassed my expectations. My idea is to put all the Ravna Gora movement organizations under one command: The Main Management of the Ravna Gora people’s movement, which would be composed of: the Association, the Committee, the DM fund and the under cover organization (this is not for everybody to know!). I ask you to think about this and suggest what is to be done on the basis of your experience up to now“.⁴⁰

It was left to the technical committees of the two organizations to coordinate the agreement. The same as before, during these talks there were different views on the organizational aspects and the goals of the new, united organization and its future. The talks were prolonged because a compromise solution couldn’t be found. The agreement was never effectuated.

Damjanović was hoping to come to England on December 12: „That’s what I was told and I was asked to be patient“.⁴¹ He expected to get a one-month visa. He most probably received his passport on the 10th of December, but he was still waiting for a visa. On December 13, Damjanović informed Farkaš that he wasn’t coming to England: „I was counting on getting my visa on time and that I would be able to come to the assembly, which I really wanted to do, but it was not meant to be, especially when I read in your letter how long the procedure to acquire a ticket lasts“.⁴²

He informed Stanoje Jeremić the next day: „Today I can inform you that I’ve received my passport, but not a visa, so I’m sorry to say that I won’t be able to come to England for the assembly of the Association. I hope that I’ll be able to come to England after Christmas, and that we’ll meet and continue to work on what we agreed upon, after we’ve received authorized consent“.⁴³

The annual assembly of the Association in Great Britain was held in Manchester on December 16–17. According to the gathered data, the Association had 2010 registered members in Great Britain. Vaso Milović opened the meeting. Reports were presented on the work of the administrative committee and the supervisory committee. Vjekoslav Farkaš was criticized because he didn’t consult anybody from the management of the Association in connection to the ‘open letters’ that he wrote. A new management of the As-

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

sociation in Great Britain was elected by a secret vote. Bogdan Drobac was the new president, Tihomir Mihailović and Stevan Nedeljković were the new vice-presidents and Jovica Ljubojević was the secretary. Vaso Milović became the president of the supervisory committee. The assembly approved the Frankfurt agreement.⁴⁴

At the end of 1950, Miodrag Damjanović received great moral satisfaction for his work up to then. Dragan Sotirović wrote to him from Madrid, apologizing for attacking and criticizing the general: *„I feel that I need to apologize for attacking General Damjanović, the President of the Association. I'm doing this consciously without any reserves, convinced that my apology will be accepted. All the attacks were expressed by an embittered combatant who sacrificed himself and everything he had for the ideals of the Ravna Gora movement. All the insults I inflicted on General Damjanović hurt me even more now when I see how much good he's done for the Ravna Gora movement. I salute his actions on the unity and harmony as a historical act. I kindly ask General Damjanović to look upon me again as the associate that he said the following words to in 1946: – If I had a few more Sotirovićs, there'd be no end to what we could do“*.⁴⁵

Since the combatants who were under his command left Germany and went to live in Great Britain and other overseas countries, Damjanović had the wish to see them all again and personally encourage them in their struggle. That was impossible until the beginning of 1951, because he couldn't get permission to enter the countries the Ravna Gora movement members were living in after leaving Germany, Austria and Italy.

At the very beginning of 1951, Damjanović was convinced that he would soon get an English visa, he even planned to travel across France. Jovica Ljubojević wrote on January 4 that he hopes Damjanović will come to London by Serbian New Year's Eve.⁴⁶ Damjanović arrived in London on January 15. He spent three weeks in Great Britain, some time in France, so his trip unexpectedly lasted longer than two months.

Miodrag Damjanović's visit to Great Britain was a good opportunity for him to meet with many people that he hadn't seen for years. He visited almost all the places where the Ravna Gora movement members lived. Damjanović wrote to Queen Marija Karadjordjević on January 17, and asked to meet with her: *„Your Majesty, I take the liberty to inform you that I am in England, where I will stay for about three weeks. It would be a great honour*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* D. Sotirović's letter to General Damjanović from December 20, 1950.

⁴⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

*for me if your Majesty would see me, so that I could inform you about the situation our sick people are in, especially the ones who are incapable to work“.*⁴⁷

Slobodan Jovanović also wanted to meet with Damjanović. On January 18, S. Jovanović wrote to V. Roždjalovski that he will meet with Damjanović at the premises of the YNO on January 25. Damjanović wasn't in London from January 17 to January 22, he was visiting the hostels the Serbian emigrants were living in. Damjanović received an answer from the office of the „Queen Mother“ on January 23, informing him that she will see him on January 24 at 11:30.⁴⁸ Damjanović was received in audience by King Petar II and Queen Aleksandra, and Queen-Mother Marija. Damjanović also visited other distinguished members of the Serbian emigration, as well as the Polish General V. Anders.

Damjanović wanted to meet with as many people as possible who were once with him in Italy. He visited cities, hostels and mining towns throughout Great Britain where former combatants of the YAIF were living now. He visited Todmorden, Rochdale, mining towns Accrington and Smallthorn, Bicester, Bradford, where he met with Episcopo dr. Irinej Djordjević, Stainland (Serbian Hall), Norton Camp-Cuckney, Fleton Hostel (Peterborough), Hostel Debache, mining hostel Pencoed (Wales), Church Farm Hostel Marston (Beds), Didcot, Bramley and Leighton-Buzzard Hostel, where he went with Stanoje Jeremić.⁴⁹

Damjanović's meetings with close associates and combatants that he hadn't seen for nearly three years were often very moving. They once again formed a strong bond between themselves, like the one they used to have during the war and in the years after the war.

While he was in England, Damjanović wrote to Stanoje Jeremić who still believed in the unity of the Ravna Gora movement and was expecting Damjanović's arrival in France: *„I am making an effort here to form a Committee that will take care of the Yugoslav emigrants. The people are quarrelling among themselves and there's nothing we can do about it. I hope that you were well understood everywhere and that you understand our work and our struggle. Certain individuals will try to make things difficult for us, but we don't pay any attention to them. We must continue our struggle, there's no turning back“.*⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Queen Marija from January 17, 1951.

⁴⁸ *Archives General Damjanović's.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* S. Jeremić's letter to General Damjanović from January 30, 1951.

Just before Damjanović arrived in France, Jeremić was full of optimism: „I want to outline immediately that the agreement will be achieved honourably, in the way that all the true Ravna Gora national movement combatants want it to be. Certain individuals must withdraw because the majority of our people and the combatants are with us with all their strength and will-power. This is all very clear to me, so I personally assure you that I am ready to continue the struggle regardless of all the difficulties and, if my health will allow it, I will do everything in my power to protect our honourable cause“.⁵¹

In the second half of February, Damjanović and Jeremić signed a new agreement in London, which was to assure the co-operation of the two organizations. According to the agreement, the Ravna Gora movement congress was to be held as soon as possible and a new organization was to be formed. However, many members of the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee Outside the Fatherland were against this agreement, and headed by M. Ratković they issued a proclamation on February 25, requesting that Stanoje Jeremić should be relieved of his duties.

Damjanović left London full of positive impressions on March 2: „I came to Great Britain to see the people I share great memories with, the people who were left in my care a long time ago by our immortal commandant. I am extremely happy to have seen that all the followers of General Draža remained faithful to their supreme commandant and to their exalted ideals, in spite of all the difficulties they went through in the past few years“.⁵²

General Damjanović sent a telegram to Bogdan Drobac, the President of the management of the Association in Great Britain: „Now, when I'm leaving Great Britain, I wish to salute you and all the members of the Ravna Gora movement and to express my gratitude to all the people who made my visit to Great Britain possible“.⁵³

Damjanović then went to France, where he visited the emigrants together with S. Jeremić. They visited the Serbian colony in Metz on March 12. He returned to Germany on March 15. Damjanović wrote the following to S. Jeremić on March 19: „After all the trouble I went through in the last two months, here I am finally, back in my base. But my thoughts are still with our people I had the honour to meet while I was in England and France. The best of those thoughts remain with you, with whom I had the best ti-

⁵¹ *Ibid.* S. Jeremić's letter to General Damjanović from February 2, 1951.

⁵² *Freedom or Death*, no. 19–20, March 1951, 12.

⁵³ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

*me during my trip. Our mutual work up to now is not only a great memory, but the best incentive for our future efforts“.*⁵⁴

Damjanović's impressions about his trip were best described in the letter he wrote to Petar Laković when he returned: *„I cannot finish this letter without thanking you and all the others once again, for a really brotherly welcome and for all the consideration you've shown during my stay in England. The memory of those days will never die. I'm now living here half-asleep, imagining that I'm with you all, over there. I cannot come to terms with the reality I live in, which in no way resembles the days I spent in England“.*⁵⁵

There were some disagreements about the date of the joint congress. Damjanović was against the hurry shown by S. Jeremić. He felt that the best date for the congress was Vidovdan of 1951 *„because we have so much to do. Therefore, please ask Jeremić to slow down a little bit and to observe things realistically, since we weren't able to achieve the results we predicted in Frankfurt because of the attitude of the Committee“.*⁵⁶

Damjanović wrote the following letter to P. Laković on April 21, 1951: *„I want you to endure please, and to continue your work with the brothers appointed by the Association, regardless of the temporary difficulties you're having at the moment. I also want you to contact Jeremić and explain to him what the committees were like and when they were formed, because it seems to me that he's not clear on that (...) I have to mention once again how pleasant my stay was and how happy I was while I was with you all over there. My impressions are still so very alive and they give me the will and strength to keep on working. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for making my stay a pleasant one“.*⁵⁷

District assemblies of the Association in Great Britain were held during the second half of April: the district of northern England held its annual assembly in Leeds on April 19 and 20; the district of southern England held its annual assembly in Bicester on April 22 and the district of western England held its annual assembly at the Smallthorn Hostel on April 29. Damjanović was very happy when he received an Easter card from Slobodan Jovanović on April 30, 1951: *„I hope to see you again soon, here in London“.*⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from March 19, 1951.

⁵⁶ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković.

⁵⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Vjekoslav Farkaš was one of the most active members of the association. He was also the one who not only criticized the work of the association the most, but the situation in the Ravna Gora movement emigration in general. His thoughts, which he sent in the form of a proclamation to various addresses on May 23, 1951, are very interesting. He thought that the Ravna Gora movement associations should exclude politics from their activities, which was very logical for a soldier: *„Our first and most important duty is to stay together, to help each other, so that tomorrow, when the need arises, we can continue to fight with a rifle in our hands and finally liberate our Fatherland. The effort we're making in order to stay together, to help each other and the disabled ones, is really the only way that we, soldiers here in emigration, can fight against the communists. Therefore, we should prepare ourselves for the moment of judgement“*.⁵⁹

Vjekoslav Farkaš was explicitly against the forming of a joint organization with the Main Ravna Gora Committee outside the Fatherland: *„I'm deeply convinced that there's absolutely no need for such an agreement, I even think it could only bring harm to our Association. I'll give my reasons: our Association has about five thousand members. Mr. Jeremić's self-proclaimed Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee has fifty members and Mr. Ranković's organization has only two members! Our Association is a non-political organization, while both self-proclaimed Main Ravna Gora Movement Committees, who also unlawfully call themselves the National Ravna Gora movement, are quasi-political organizations. How can organizations which are so different reach an agreement? The Association does not dispute the existence of the self-proclaimed Ravna Gora Movement Committees, but it challenges their effort to monopolize the Ravna Gora movement battles and to speak on behalf of the millions of Ravna Gora movement victims. A large number of members of the Association have a proper view on the matter and they have correctly estimated the value of the Ravna Gora Movement Committees. These members are decisively against any kind of agreement or contact with these undemocratic groups. Unfortunately, the opinions of our members remain unheard“*.⁶⁰

The talks about a joint congress came to a standstill. Stanoje Jeremić had an optimistic opinion that the congress could be held on the day of King Petar's birthday, which seemed realistic to Damjanović. In the meantime, Aleksandar Milošević sent a letter from Canada supporting the idea of a united Ravna Gora movement emigration: *„I kindly ask you not to forget the*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

*three tasks our emigration has: its self-preservation, its activities in the foreign surroundings in accordance to the goals of our struggle and the most important one – to fight. It would be dangerous to occupy ourselves with the first task and disregard the other two, especially the fight“.*⁶¹

Slobodan Jovanović wrote to Damjanović on June 8: *„Please forgive me for not answering you sooner due to my bad health. I’ve already promised an article about General Mihailović to the Yugoslav Committee for their newspaper ‘Parka’ [The Message] I would like to use this opportunity to personally inform you that the Ravna Gora National Movement has elected me to be their honorary president, but I don’t want to accept the position. I hope I will soon have the pleasure of seeing you here in London, and then we will talk about everything“.*⁶²

In order to make the preparations for the joint congress, the Technical Committee held a meeting on June 16, 1951, and suggested the following organizational solutions: the Central Ravna Gora Movement Committee was to be the most important body; the united organization was to continue the work from Yugoslavia during the war, and the organization itself was to represent a continuity of the Ravna Gora movement. The most important thing for Damjanović was not to include politics in the organization’s activities: *„In our proclamation and in our resolution we must be the same as in the resolution from Ba and underline everything that was underlined in that resolution. Here, outside of our country, we mustn’t make any political experiments. Here, we must concern ourselves with the national issues, which will keep us together and help us hold out“.*⁶³

It was obvious that nothing will become of this agreement. In his letter, Petar Laković criticized the work of Stanoje Jeremić, and Damjanović commented on that with the following words: *„I don’t know what to tell you about Jeremić’s standpoint. I wouldn’t want to, for understandable reasons, say or write anything against him, but I see you’ve estimated him well. You know my opinion: everybody should be where he belongs. General discipline for each and every one. Thirst for glory and vanity are not distinctive features of a democrat“.*⁶⁴

The situation wasn’t getting any better. Even Damjanović began losing his patience – he was worried because the other side was slow in deciding, so he wrote the following to Petar Laković: *„Didn’t you agree to me-*

⁶¹ *Ibid.* A. Milošević’s letter to General Damjanović from June 7, 1951.

⁶² *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to P. Laković from June 25, 1951.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to P. Laković from July 7, 1951.

*et with them on their terms, as one of you once said? Isn't that enough for them, they don't even find it necessary to prepare the premises for the meeting and come to the meeting on time? I'm very pleased with your concord in the technical committee and that you've done your part of the work on time, so I ask you to extend my cordial gratitude to all our members of the technical committee and tell them to keep up the good work".*⁶⁵

Some kind of agreement was reached at the end of August. It was agreed upon that there was a need for the forming of a „unique Ravna Gora movement organization outside the Fatherland“ and that was to be decided upon at the joint congress, but a precise time for the congress wasn't set. At the same time, the management of the Association in Great Britain announced its third annual assembly (at the end of September or the beginning of October). Delegates had to be elected in all the districts – one representative for the assembly on every 20 members.⁶⁶

During the summer and autumn of 1951, Damjanović continued visiting the people in Germany and tirelessly wrote letters to his people in other countries, encouraging them and advising them on how to organize themselves.

The unclear situation concerning the agreement with the other Ravna Gora movement organization forced Vjekoslav Farkaš to criticize the work of his own organization. He wrote that the Association in Great Britain is not „stable and strong“ any more, that certain commissions have stopped working, that the members were leaving and that some individuals were handing in their resignations. Farkaš saw the reasons for this in the following: *„Today's management is trying to achieve centralization, to take everything into their own hands and leave the district managements and the commissions without any initiative at all. The management of the Association for Great Britain is interfering in every little thing that the commissions are trying to do and thus making it hard for the commissions and the district managements to do their work. Certain ramble-rousers wish to stand out, to have their pictures published in magazines, they want to command. Among these ramble-rousers there are a few commandants of third-grade value, who are driving away the humble members with their hot-headed and arrogant attitude. If somebody was once a commandant of a battalion, a brigade or a corps in the Fatherland, that doesn't mean that his title is equal to a di-*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from August 15, 1951.

⁶⁶ *Freedom or Death*, no. 24, August of 1951.

*ploma, that he's smart and qualified to speak on behalf of the Association“.*⁶⁷

Farkaš was still against uniting with Jeremić's committee; he was for a „close co-operation“ while both partners would remain equal: *„When two sides unite, however, one side becomes inferior. Therefore, uniting is basically the result of a non-democratic way of coming to an agreement, while concord is really a democratic way of coming to an agreement. Why should we unite and create some sort of National Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland? Why don't we work on achieving a close co-operation by way of concord? Why destroy the Association that the members can be proud of? What will happen to the Association, how will the members react if we unite and create an anti-people National Ravna Gora Movement Outside the Fatherland? The answer is clear: cleavage within the Association“.*⁶⁸

Damjanović had a completely opposite opinion, he believed that Ravna Gora movement unity was necessary in order to survive and the prerequisite of any national success. That was more than clear in his letter to P. Laković from September 22, 1951: *„That is the only possible standpoint today. Everything else would lead to ruin, which our 'friends' wish from the bottom of their hearts. We must never allow this to happen. We must bring the Ravna Gora movement members together with our standpoint, regardless of what group they belong to. And when we're all gathered together and talk things over in a brotherly fashion, I believe that we will come to the conclusion that this is the right solution. Therefore, I ask you to address this issue at the annual assembly and give the necessary explanations about the work of the technical committee, and you'll see what the people think“.*⁶⁹

The third annual assembly of the Association in Great Britain was held in Manchester on the 6th and 7th of October. Besides having to adopt the annual work report, a new management had to be elected. President Bogdan Drobac and Jovica Ljubojević, secretary of the Association, submitted reports. Apart from current issues and the work of all the funds of the Association, the discussion was mostly about the „uniting“ of the Ravna Gora movement organizations. The main topic of all the discussions was: *„During our discussions we should bear in mind one thing: how much good will this unity bring to the Ravna Gora movement? Will the new organization attract more Ravna Gora movement members than there are today in*

⁶⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.* The circular from September 1, 1951.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

the Association and in both Committees? If that won't be achieved, then it's better to leave things as they are today, but without any quarrels and attacks amongst us".⁷⁰

Vaseline Milović was re-elected to the duty of President of the Association in Great Britain, together with his list of men for all the other duties. A telegram was sent to King Petar at the end, and for the first time, it was answered by the King's secretary: „*By the highest request, it is my honour to thank you for the letter you have sent and to ask you to convey to your friends the gratitude of His Majesty the King for the warm regards, expressions of loyalty and the perseverance in the struggle for the freedom of our Fatherland*“.⁷¹

It became clear to Damjanović in the second half of October that nothing will become of the co-operation with Jeremić's association, at least not in the near future. Damjanović was indirectly accused of trying to take over Jeremić's Committee and its members, which disturbed him very much: „*Is that what they say? I'm not surprised by the distrust that members of their Committee have shown, as well as Sotirović's babbling, I can't call it any other way! That we need their firm? What nonsense! And their 'quality'! That's pushing it too far. After all, you yourself said that we won't mention any more foul talk. We will continue to work as we did up to now, for the good and the prosperity of the Ravna Gora movement and Čiča's conception*“.⁷²

Petar Laković „cancelled his obedience“ to General Damjanović in the end. Misunderstandings and conflicts which followed the organizing of the of the unique Ravna Gora movement congress forced Laković to make a move that disappointed Damjanović deeply: „*I never expected that someone, whom I've always thought of as my most sincere associate, friend and brother, will turn his back on me, now, at this very important moment in time. I still think that your letter was a reflection of your current mood. Therefore, I kindly ask you, if you still stand by your decision to resign from your position in the technical committee, to submit your resignation to your 'brothers' at a conference and explain that you don't share their views any more. I cannot think of anybody that could take your place, so I ask you to suggest somebody*“.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Freedom or Death*, no. 26, October 1951, 12.

⁷¹ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

⁷² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from October 22, 1951.

⁷³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from November 11, 1951.

When he read this letter, Laković changed his mind about his decision to resign, which was obviously brought in the heat of the moment. Damjanović was pleased to hear that, and he was also pleased with Laković's and Mijušković's attitude in the technical committee: *„I thank you very much for taking back your word, and proving once again that the common good means more to you than your personal interests. Your attitude at the congress of the committee was very good, and so was Sima's, and you acted as you were supposed to. Thank you. At least everything is out in the clear now“*.⁷⁴

On the day of Saint Nikola (December 19, 1951), Damjanović addressed all the members of the Association on the radio-station „Ravna Gora“, which was broadcasted from the USA. He explained his motives for this speech with the following words: *„Nearly six years have gone by since the Chetniks had to surrender their honourable weapons to the British authorities. We're scattered all around the world, but we are still a Ravna Gora movement family, with strong internal ties, inspired by Ravna Gora movement thoughts and led by the spiritual figure of our commandant General Draža Mihailović. My dear brothers and co-sufferers, we will stay the same, because our whole being is pervaded with the spirit of our struggle for freedom and democracy, and we're ready for every sacrifice. That Association is without any doubt our strongest national organization here in emigration, it is the most active organization and it helps our unfortunate brothers throughout Europe. To you, my dear Ravna Gora movement brothers in America, I say the following: join the Serbian organizations over there, strengthen them both morally and financially and convince our brothers that our struggle is necessary and a righteous one. Stay away from the dangers of political passion, there's too much of it already, because political activities are something that can only disunite us“*.⁷⁵

Negotiations with Stanoje Jeremić's Committee came to dead end, so at the end of 1951, Damjanović came to the conclusion that an agreement can't be reached: *„What can we do, to talk with both groups would be wrong! Especially when I see that the stumbling block between them is a person who we can't work with either. I was astonished by Jeremić's actions. That was absolutely unnecessary! At least you know my views on how a management should be elected, especially the Main management. The People will tell him, but this time at the joint congress. All of us talk about democracy all the time, but now something else is needed“*.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from December 6, 1951.

⁷⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from December 27, 1951.

After quite some time, Damjanović received a letter from Mladen Žujović at the very end of December. He warned the general not to use his visit to the USA to try to unite the Ravna Gora movement factions on the North American continent: „*Ratković and Petrović from London were here but they didn't accomplish anything in that field. When they returned to London, Paris was covered with leaflets against Petrović and they're very quiet now. Here again, Jeremić and Sotirović are not so close any more (at least that's what they tell me), and some new initiatives have appeared. Nobody pays any serious attention to that any more. I'm not saying that the uniting of all the Ravna Gora movement forces wouldn't play an important role as regulator of the political actions of the political forums, but for that you need national discipline, and how can you achieve discipline when those who say that they're ready to sacrifice their lives for their Fatherland, are not ready to sacrifice much less than that: their partiality, their exclusiveness, their grandiose appetites which destroyed what was left of their reputation and authority when they came here*“.⁷⁷

Damjanović received a letter from Slobodan Jovanović wishing him a happy New Year.⁷⁸

At the very beginning of 1952, there was a misunderstanding between Damjanović and S. Jeremić, who requested from the general to adopt the suggestions of the Main Ravna Gora Committee and bring the talks to an end. If not, Damjanović would be responsible for the failure of the talks: „*That does not scare me, because I cannot do more on my own than I did in Frankfurt, that is why I always emphasize the importance of the technical committee. I am 'on duty' as always, but although I'm a soldier, I'm not in favour of actions that could lead to serious repercussions, even worse than the ones we have today. I am ready in any case to execute the will of the people, who I've devoted so many decades of my life to. I kindly ask you to believe me when I say that I'm also ready to contribute to the well-being of the people even as an ordinary soldier*“.⁷⁹

Nothing changed in Damjanović's private life. He still lived in Eutin, under very poor living conditions. He wrote about that to Sava Dudaković on January 18: „*I'm used to this way of life that I have been living for years, and news of my people living well make my life easier. I'm also happy when I see that somebody still has an interest in me, and my living conditions. I*

⁷⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* S. Jovanović's letter to General Damjanović from December 29, 1951.

⁷⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to P. Laković from January 22, 1952.

*get some help from time to time, from various places, but it would be much better if it was a bit more organized“.*⁸⁰

At the beginning of 1952, Damjanović congratulated Dwight Eisenhower his entering the office of the President of the USA. He reminded the former army leader of WW II of his letter to General Mihailović from 1943. He also expressed his hope that Eisenhower will „do everything he can“ to liberate the European countries from communist dictatorships, and that the former Chetniks were ready to join the American soldiers in „bringing freedom to the people and to the Fatherland which is suffering under Tito’s red regime“.⁸¹

In this period of his life, Damjanović was planning to go to the USA, he even thought about staying there permanently, if possible. He wrote about that to a certain man by the name of Hobnob on February 27, 1952: „*I ask you to personally find me any kind of employment over there, so that I won’t be anybody’s burden. I’ve lived long enough on charity. Of course that this will be necessary only if I succeed in getting there, but that won’t be soon“.*⁸² Damjanović asked for a visa at the American Consulate in Hamburg.

In the meantime, Damjanović planned to go to France, where he was supposed to meet with Stanoje Jeremić. He arrived in Paris somewhere between the 20th and the 25th of March, 1952. He met with Jeremić several times in order to find a solution for the agreement between the two Ravna Gora movement associations. They couldn’t reach an agreement and Damjanović blamed Dragan Sotirović for that: „*I met with Sotirović in Paris. Jeremić and I had lunch at his place on two occasions, and I once dropped by his place just to cancel a meeting. From his enclosed letter you can see what he is capable of writing and how he lectured me, and what is typical of him, he sent a copy of his letter to the King, probably to show the King that I am an enemy. Of course, he didn’t inform me of this“.*⁸³

During April of 1952, Slobodan Jovanović set in motion an action to create a Council which would bring together all the national emigrant associations „*in order to tightly connect our emigration and get them ready for action against the monsters who were ruling our country. We’re counting on the help of all the people of good will who share our views. Therefore it’s an honour, if you agree, to ask you to issue the necessary instructions to the*

⁸⁰ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to P. Laković.

*members of your organization to co-operate on this task with the Yugoslav National Committee“.*⁸⁴

Damjanović returned to Germany at the beginning of May, 1952, and he sent his answer to Jovanović on May 10. He saluted Jovanović's efforts to achieve harmony in the Serbian emigration and announced the help of his organization, but under the condition that Jovanović's action is "within the boundaries of the statute of the Association and in accordance with the resolutions of the Saint Sava congress held in the village of Ba, which are still compulsory for all the Ravna Gora movement members".⁸⁵

Damjanović planned one more trip to England in June of 1952, („I will stay there until the end of July“) and after that to Italy. He received a British visa on the 1st of July and he immediately informed Stanoje Jeremić. He planned to see Jeremić on the day of „Čiča's remembrance“. Damjanović still believed that the members of the Ravna Gora movement have to be the core of the Serbian emigration: „*The Ravna Gora idea is what brought together the Chetniks, former prisoners of war and the internees. Our Association wants to co-operate closely with all the Ravna Gora movement organizations in order to create a unique Ravna Gora movement forum abroad. Our Association wants to be the headquarters of the non-political gatherings of the Ravna Gora movement members, while politics in the spirit of the resolutions of the Saint Sava congress should be left to the authorized bodies. We are combatants and we want to remain combatants*“.⁸⁶

Damjanović arrived in London by train on July 5. The main event of his visit was General Mihailović's remembrance, which was held in Saint Sava church on July 13. Episcopo Nikolaj Velimirović performed the requiem. The solemn commemorative observance was held after that, where Damjanović said the following: „*In spite of all the Ravna Gora movement organizations, it seems like most of the Ravna Gora movement members haven't joined any of them. It is the holy duty of all of us to convince them that their place is in an organization, it doesn't matter which one. And as I said, I deeply believe that the organizations will find a way to unite so that we can be ready for everything that still awaits us in our struggle for the freedom of our Fatherland*“.⁸⁷

Stanoje Jeremić and Božidar Purić, former President of the Yugoslav government in emigration, also held speeches at the commemorative obser-

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* S. Jovanović's letter to General Damjanović from April 28, 1952.

⁸⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

vance. In the next few days, Damjanović visited the emigrants and the members of the Association in England. A meeting of the Main management of the Association in Great Britain was held on July 30: „*I am pleased and proud of the success achieved by 'The Association of Combatants of the RYA Draža Mihailović' in these difficult circumstances, I will visit our people in France on my way back to Germany in order to tell our combatants and Čiča's faithful followers that they haven't been forgotten by their brothers*“.⁸⁸

It took same time for Damjanović to get a visa for his trip to Italy, but he planned to arrive in Italy on the 1st of September. He didn't want to meet with D. Jevdjević in spite of the fact that many individuals asked him to. Damjanović was Viola Boar's guest in Rome, where he stayed for a few days: „*I was treated really well at Boar's place, as if I were part of the family*“.⁸⁹ Damjanović used his stay in Italy to organize one more branch of the Association, meant for the people in refugee camps. Journalist Ljubomir Spasojević was appointed to the position of organizational secretary. During his stay in Italy, Ljubiša Mikić and Lj. Spasojević accompanied Damjanović. He visited the camps around Naples and Salerno (Aversa, Kapua, Paganini, Mercatelo) and the cemetery in Bitapaglia. The General's visit to Italy and his close contacts with the people contributed to a quicker organizing of the Association in this country after his departure. On his way back to Germany, Damjanović met with Ravna Gora movement members in Austria.

Damjanović made a serious attempt in Italy to create a network of commissioners who would engage in political-propaganda activities against the regime in Belgrade. He tried to get the Italians to finance a centre that he would create, which would have the task of being politically active against Yugoslavia from their territory. He planned to bring 15–20 of his men to Italy so that they could „work independently“ on penetrating politically into the FPRY (Federative Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia). An agreement was never reached. While he was in Italy, Damjanović had a meeting with Siniša Ocokoljić Pazarac in order to try to settle their disputes, but he avoided any contact with Jevdjević.

Ocokoljić's centre in Italy was very active. It had radio contact with a group of Serbian emigrants in Innsbruck (Austria). It had the help of the French and Italian intelligence service. Besides Ocokoljić, the following people were active in the centre: former Captain of the YAIF Dragomir Topalović, Marko Milunović, Boško Hranisavljević, Ivo Aksentijević and Djor-

⁸⁸ *Freedom or Death*, no. 31, July–August 1952, 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

dje Knežević. The centre succeeded several times in sending their people to Yugoslavia with a radio-station and a large quantity of propaganda material. Očokoljić had the intention of making contact with the still active anti-communist guerrilla and former commissioners from the war on the territory of eastern Serbia. He wanted to create a network of agents who would engage in intelligence and political activities in the Fatherland.

Spasojević was making an effort to organize the Association in Italy in order to organize the people for Damjanović's plan to create an anti-communist army. His main task was to elect the commissioners: „*The beginning of my work was very difficult because our national refugees in the camps in Italy were abandoned by almost all the leaders of our national emigration, so they had a very sceptic opinion about our national combatant organizations. I had to spend a lot of time to convince them that there was no reason for their distrust, that the international situation has changed and that it's necessary to bring together all the national elements, verified anti-communist combatants*“.⁹⁰

The activities of the Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee in London had two basic directions. Its leadership became very close with the YNC and it actively participated in uniting the whole Serbian emigration into this forum. Just before Vidovdan, this group decided to create the Yugoslav National Council and made an effort to make sure that Damjanović's group doesn't play an important role in it. However, although they were closely connected to the YNC, *The Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee* didn't adopt the programme from their „Message“, so the disputes and quarrels continued. After Vidovdan, the Main Committee began using the monarchist symbol. Their newspaper *The Voice of Ravna Gora* introduced its new slogan „For the King and Fatherland“ and published pictures of King Petar all the time. It was assumed that they settled their differences with the King and that he was financing them, because their newspaper was being published regularly.

The second part of their activities was directed towards trying to make peace with the dissident group and individuals, but they had no success. At the beginning of July, 1952, several members of the Main Committee formed the so-called Action Committee with the goal to organize a meeting, before the annual assembly is held, between Damjanović, Djujić, Jevdjević and other distinguished individuals „in order to unite all the Ravna Gora movement members“. This action failed at the very beginning because

⁹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives*. Spasojević's letter to General Damjanović from January 1, 1953.

the leadership of the Main Committee didn't approve of it. The Main Ravna Gora Movement Committee held its annual assembly on August 3, 1952, with only 320 people present. In the interests of co-operation, some members of the YNC and delegates from France were present. No resolutions were adopted at the assembly. The old leadership was re-elected: Lieutenant Colonel M. Ratković – president, Č. Petrović – secretary and editor of the *Ravna Gora*.

Part of Damjanović's Association formed a separate faction during 1952, and named it The Serbian Chetniks Movement – Ravna Gora. The headquarters of the organization was in Gary (Indiana) and it had committees in some west European countries, Australia and Canada. It had about 800 members, mainly from Lika, Dalmatia and Herzegovina. This organization was formed with the task to bring together the entire national, democratic forces abroad in order to give „moral, spiritual and political support to the members of the Ravna Gora movement in the Fatherland and outside the Fatherland“. Its goal was „a free and independent country, with guaranteed civil rights“.

Three important international factors were the reason why the number of Serbian emigrants in the western countries didn't significantly change during 1952. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) finished its work at the end of that year, while the High Commissariat for Refugees (UN organization) still hadn't spread its activities. The emigrates thus didn't have the International Emigrant Fund at their disposal, which made it impossible to immigrate to other countries. The emigrational policies of the countries that were accepting emigrants stayed more or less the same towards the „physical shape“, the age and the profession of the dislocated persons. That ruled out most of the emigrants who were still in the camps. The occupying forces in Germany and Austria, as well as the authorities in England and France, wanted to keep the healthier and younger part of the emigration on their territory in order to use them as cheap labour. The leaders of the emigration agreed with that, because it was the only way to keep the younger people in Europe and use them to create an army when the time comes.

According to the official data, about 94.000 Yugoslav political emigrants were living abroad at the end of 1952. Most of them were in Germany (about 14.000), Great Britain (about 6.500), Austria (about 6.000), the USA (14.000) and Canada (about 12.000).

The emigration process was very active in Italy, Austria and Greece during 1952, because of the economic situation and fear of a new conflict on the territory of Europe. Large groups of people emigrated to the USA and

South America. Most of them went to the USA according to the previously determined quotas. Among them were about 40000 Serbian emigrants, mainly former prisoners of war and internees.

The general situation of the Yugoslav political emigration changed when nearly two thirds of the emigrants went to the overseas countries. The emigrants in the overseas countries didn't have the help of the International refugee organizations. The emigrants who remained in Europe were under the jurisdiction of the authorities of the countries they were in. They were treated according to the rules of the Geneva Convention from 1950, which determined the concept and the rights of the „refugees“.

During 1952, the leadership of the emigration was making an effort to fit the emigrants into the economic and social life of the European countries, before all in Italy and Greece. They wanted the emigrants to be able to get cheap loans so they could start their own businesses, to have their own schools and an autonomous social life. The fact that the official relations between Yugoslavia and the governments of the western countries, especially England and the USA, were getting better and better, brought the whole emigration into a very difficult situation. This ruined their plans and hopes that communist Yugoslavia will be isolated, and that the western forces will help them overthrow the Yugoslav regime so that they could return to their Fatherland.

The attitude of the British authorities towards the Yugoslav political emigration began to change from the moment the Conservatives came to power again (October 25, 1951). In the summer of 1951, the Conservatives (A. Eden, July 5) opened a parliamentary debate on the position of the Yugoslav emigration and they requested that the British help to Yugoslavia be conditioned by the treatment of political prisoners in Yugoslavia.

When they came to power, the standpoint of the new British officials became more severe, and Harold Macmillan announced this at the conference devoted to the refugees from eastern and central Europe, held in London in January of 1952. Slobodan Jovanović, Juraj Krnjević, Živko Topalović and many others attended this conference. King Petar made an official visit to Winston Churchill on February 13. The inauguration of the Serbian Orthodox church in London (June 29) received a lot of publicity in the press and on the BBC. Prince Pavle Karadjordjević, who was officially invited by the British Court, and Episcopate Nikolaj Velimirović, attended the funeral of King George VI on February 13.⁹¹

⁹¹ Đorđe Borozan, *Jugoslovensko-britanski odnosi 1948–1952*, Istorija 20. veka, 2/2000, 74.

The most significant event in the life of the eastern European emigration during 1952, was their attempt to create the so-called European Emigration Army. The first idea about that appeared at the end of 1950, as an idea to create an international „Freedom Corps“. General Damjanović said the following about that in March of 1951: „*The Freedom Corps, which should, according to the Americans, be formed from members of the people whose countries are behind the „Iron Curtain“, could be of great service to the allies, but under the condition that it's forming is based on the principle of nationality. As far as we're concerned, the problem is more a political issue than a military one. But I think that I speak for all the Ravna Gora movement members when I say that they are still combatants under full alert, convinced that their stay abroad is a temporary one, and that each and every one of them is thinking of tomorrow, when they will return to their Fatherland and take their place in society with a clean conscience*“.⁹²

Putting this issue in motion once again and making it more concrete came as a result of the efforts of the interested parties to secure the safety of Western Europe from an aggression from the east. The initiative was given by the emigration military leaders, headed by the Polish General Anders, on the basis of a complaisant standpoint of certain individuals from NATO headquarters and some Republican senators. It was to be formed from emigrants from countries behind the „Iron Curtain“ by creating „national units“, who would serve in defence and counter-attack operations, but their main task would be to take power in the „liberated countries“.

The initiative of the emigration to create this military formation was adopted by NATO at the conference held in Paris on March 12–15, 1952.⁹³ The plan was created by Dwight Eisenhower, commandant of NATO, and representatives from twenty seven emigrant military formations. The army was to be the size of one division. Military representatives of all the emigrant groups from Eastern Europe were present at the conference, including General Damjanović. The realization of this plan was postponed until after the presidential elections in the USA, because the Democrats rejected this plan in order not to create more tension in the relations with the Soviet Union.

The Polish generals were very active and they were making preparations for the realization of this idea. The emigration had the help of senator

⁹² *Freedom or Death*, no. 19–20, March 1951, 13.

⁹³ Nebojša Popović, *Jugoslovenska politička emigracija u Velikoj Britaniji u prvoj deceniji posle Drugog svetskog rata*. In: *Srbija (Jugoslavija) 1945–2005. Pokreti, ideologije, praksa*, Beograd 2005, 200.

Armstrong and congressman Cersten, both of them Republicans. Damjanović made an effort to get the approval of NATO for a „Yugoslav national formation“ within the emigration army while he was visiting Paris (March and April), but without success. According to certain data, General Damjanović and General Anders had a meeting with Field Marshal Alexander on that occasion.

Intergovernmental relations between Yugoslavia and the USA had a strong influence on the American standpoint towards the Yugoslav emigration concerning this issue. As a result of these relations, the Yugoslav emigration was not allowed to publicly take part in the forming of the „emigration army“ and therefore there was no possibility of creating „Yugoslav national units“. The Yugoslav emigration was permitted to join allied military formations (sentry duty) and to form smaller military formations (companies) which could „at some given moment in time grow and form a separate national military formation“.⁹⁴

During the summer of 1952, Damjanović visited the Association in England and had talks with the Yugoslav National Committee about creating joint representative offices and the participation of Yugoslav emigrants in the European emigration army. He organized a new network of commissioners, who undertook the task of organizing intelligence work in England. During his visits to France and England, and his tours of the MSO units in Germany, Damjanović succeeded in creating the largest and most homogeneous emigrant group. The Bulgarian and Polish units were formed in the summer of 1952. It was agreed that the Yugoslavs were to join the auxiliary units of the Polish army, because Great Britain and the USA didn't want to perturb their relations with communist Yugoslavia during its conflict with the Soviet Union. However, this plan was never realized.⁹⁵

Damjanović's plan was to form a „Royal Yugoslav Army Outside the Fatherland“ from the smaller units. He sent such instructions to the Chetniks in France, England, Switzerland and Italy. In the beginning, a very small number of individuals started joining this formation. Živan Knežević took part in this action. The response to Damjanović's action was very weak, because the Serbian emigrants didn't want to join foreign military formations. Damjanović therefore went to the USA at the end of December 1952, where he tried to get permission to create a „national formation“. Ho-

⁹⁴ An elaboration by the National Security Service of Yugoslavia *Građanske političke partije*. Biblioteka Instituta za savremenu istoriju, Beograd.

⁹⁵ N. Popović, *Jugoslovenska emigracija*, 200.

wever, D. Jevdjević launched an action against Damjanović's plan, and the leadership of the SNC in America agreed with him.⁹⁶

The Poles were very active in recruiting the Chetniks for their military formations. They began re-establishing contacts with the Chetnik organizations in all the European countries. General Pelz gave instructions for the „mobilization preparations“ of the Polish emigrants, and he regularly requested the attendance of the Serbian emigrants in order to instruct them as well. While he was in Switzerland, General Pelz announced the arrival of General Anders and asked the Serbs to welcome him fully assembled. The Poles were instructed to attend all the events and gatherings organized by the Chetniks. Both these actions had the goal to create the core of the military formation of the Yugoslav emigration within the Polish units (together with the MSO).⁹⁷

General Damjanović had a strong opposition in certain parts of the emigration. The biggest critic of Damjanović's plan was Dragomir Topalović, former Captain and commandant of the Rudnik corps of the YAIF. Topalović wrote the following from Sydney in March of 1953: „*What is happening in our emigration? At the beginning of 1945, our minister of the armed forces, General Draža Mihailović, sends General Miodrag Damjanović as his delegate to our national forces in Slovenia. The war ends shortly after that. And as we all know, our King and our Government in emigration had already lost all their power and the situation in our emigration turned to chaos. General Damjanović takes advantage of the situation, ignores all our famous and distinguished military individuals and forms some kind of command on his own. He was even so bold as to take upon himself the role that belongs to the King, and suggested to our allies that he would form a division of our emigrants to send to Korea. And that's not all. He forms an association of the Yugoslav army on his own and gives it a new emblem, one that does not exist in our nation. He reaches the climax of his irresponsible activities when he says that his Association is the continuance of Draža Mihailović's struggle, and thus openly enters the political arena. The emigration was very disappointed by the insignificant and irresponsible moves of Damjanović and his people*“.⁹⁸

Damjanović responded to these accusations on June 5, 1953, while he was in Chicago: „*The letter written by Gaga Topalović, unfortunately the former commandant of the Rudnik corps who deserted Čiča in*

⁹⁶ Elaboration *Građanske političke partije*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

*March of 1945, is not worthy of a response. Leave it be, paper tolerates everything“.*⁹⁹

VISITING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Damjanović returned to Germany at the end of September 1952. A new trip, this time to the USA, was more than certain. Ratko Dojić, editor of the „Voice of Ravna Gora“ radio-station, organized this trip. Damjanović received a US visa in November of 1952. He planned to stay in Chicago, where the largest Serbian colony was, until March of 1953. He travelled to America by ship, from Hamburg to New York. He departed on December 5 and reached the east coast of America on December 17. He was welcomed in New York by Ranko Brašić, member of the main management of the Association. They continued their trip to Chicago by plane.¹⁰⁰

Damjanović had a very busy schedule in America. He addressed the Serbs with a speech on the „Voice of Ravna Gora“ from Chicago on December 20. His main goal was to harmonize and connect the old economic emigration and the new, political emigration, who came to America after WW II. Damjanović's message to the Serbian emigrants was: *„I came here to visit you, to talk to you about everything that troubles us. First of all, my dear brothers and sisters, I want to deliver the greetings sent to you by our brothers, who weren't lucky enough to be saved from the misery of living in camps and hospitals. I would like to ask our brothers who came here long ago to understand us, I want them to believe that we understand them and that we share the same feelings, but they must also understand that despite the fact that we have the same blood, there is a great difference between us here. The difference is in the way we look at our national problems and our national politics. This difference is in the character of the two emigrations. The earlier emigration is mainly of an economic character, while the new emigration has a political character. Most of the Serbs who've been here for a long time have found a new homeland in these great freedom-loving countries, America and Canada, and have no intention of returning to the Fatherland when it is liberated from the red monster. But their newly arrived brothers have found only temporary shelter here, while their thoughts and*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

wishes are directed towards returning to their liberated Fatherland as soon as possible“.¹⁰¹

A day later (December 21), a banquet was organized in Damjanović's honour in Harbor, where a lot of the „new“ Serbian emigrants lived. The Patron's day of the Association was also celebrated there. Damjanović talked about the hard times they've had since 1941, especially the time spent in Italy: „Our Association is, without any doubt, the best way for the members of the Ravna Gora movement to unite, whether they fought with a rifle in their hands or they were in prisoner of war camps or concentration camps. We therefore strongly believe that the Association is predestined to be the head-quarters of all the Ravna Gora movement members and followers of the Ravna Gora movement ideology“.¹⁰²

In the first half of January, Damjanović visited the Serbian emigrants all around Chicago, spent Serbian New Year's Eve in North Chicago, where he held a speech at a ceremonious dinner. On this occasion he once again spoke of the need for national unity among the emigrants, so that Yugoslavia could be liberated as soon as possible. It was obvious that Damjanović was still in favour of Yugoslavians, which put him in direct conflict with the part of the emigration which was led by Momčilo Djujić: „Some of us are for narrower borders, others for broader ones. For us Ravna Gora movement members there can be no doubt. For us, the word Fatherland is defined in the Ba resolution with the following words: 'to completely restore the Yugoslav state and expand it to the territories where Serbs, Croats and Slovenians live'. Only such a territory can be the Fatherland of all the Serbs, because Čiča also had those borders in mind as the goal of our struggle“.¹⁰³

While Damjanović was in America, the Association in London was in a very difficult financial situation. It was expected of Damjanović to make sure that they got some financial help from the Serbs in America, because they didn't even have the money to publish *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*. Stevan Nedeljković wrote to the general about that on March 19, 1953: „I simply don't know what to do, because all our efforts, work and good will are of no meaning if we don't have the money to publish the 'Combatant'. I have nothing more to say about that, as the president of the Supervisory Committee I've personally checked the cash-box and I don't know how we will go to the annual assembly. I kindly ask you to take this into contemplation most urgently, because if we don't receive the money and

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

keep on receiving it regularly in the future, we haven't achieved anything and we can forget about the Association".¹⁰⁴

Damjanović replied from Chicago at the end of March 1953, that he's taken certain measures to make sure that *The Combatant* keeps on being published, „but we must hold out until then“. He was disappointed that the Serbian emigration in London did not organize mass demonstrations during Tito's visit. Nevertheless, he advised them not to spoil the relations with the other organizations in Great Britain.¹⁰⁵

Damjanović left for Canada at the beginning of April. He visited his former fellow-combatants in Toronto on April 8. He told them that the existence of their own association is not in collision with the existence of the national organizations of the so-called old emigration, and that they're not disuniting the Serbian people: „*And furthermore, nothing should ruin these relations, they must be full of mutual respect, trust and brotherly feelings. As I always emphasized, all the Ravna Gora movement members must act this way, so I therefore ask all our brothers who have been in this country for a long time to act in the same way with the new-comers and to join forces in the struggle against the communist oppressor of our Fatherland*“.¹⁰⁶

THE RAVNA GORA CONGRESS

One of the most significant events during General Damjanović's visit to North America occurred on the 16th and 17th of May, 1953, when the „Ravna Gora congress“ was held in the Saint Sava monastery in Libertyville. The congress was jointly organized by the managements of the associations in the USA and Canada, and the Association of Free Citizens, headed by Mane Ivanović. General Damjanović was the President of the organizing committee, and Ranko Brašić was the main secretary. Colonel Slavko Bjelajac was elected the honorary president.

The preparations for the congress began at the end of April, and the gathering was dedicated to the forming of the resistance movement on Ravna Gora in 1941. Nineteen Serbian national organizations from North America were invited to attend the congress. Damjanović wrote to Slobodan Jovanović on May 3, inviting him to attend the congress: „*If the circumstances will not allow you to attend this event personally, we hope that you will*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

*be with us in your thoughts and in your feelings towards our commandant and his struggle, which was also your struggle Mr. President, and the struggle of the entire Serbian people“.*¹⁰⁷

The congress was attended by 1500 Ravna Gora movement members, a number of Serbian national organizations (The Serbian National Union, The Serbian Brotherly Aid, The Serbian National University – Chicago, The Serbian Community „Liberation“), senator Charles Kersten and publicist Ray Brooks. General Damjanović opened the working part of the congress, held on May 16. He first evoked the memories of the war events of May of 1941, when Dragoljub Mihailović, Colonel at the time, came to Ravna Gora with a group of officers and soldiers of the Royal Army of Yugoslavia. He then talked about the current political events and once again expressed his hope that the USA will help the triumph of democracy in Yugoslavia: „*You have most certainly noticed that our allies, before all the USA, are showing great interest in the strategic significance of our Fatherland in this cold war, and in the future 'hot' war, when the final show-down with the communists will take place. All these factors have created the need for us to organize a strong manifestation, which would show that the Ravna Gora movement members are still alive and willing to endure to the very end, till the final victory and the destruction of Tito's communist regime in our dear Fatherland“.*¹⁰⁸

Slavko Bjelajac was elected the honorary president of the congress and he submitted the introductory report (Our Present Possibilities). Fourteen vice-presidents were elected.¹⁰⁹ General Damjanović opened the second part of the congress held on the next day. Greetings were sent by telegram to King Petar and to the President of the USA, Dwight Eisenhower. Before the congress was closed by General Damjanović, a resolution was adopted expressing the standpoint of the Association on General Mihailović, Tito and communism, the national organizations in emigration, co-operation, the need to unite forces and the humanitarian activities of the Association.¹¹⁰

The congress adopted a Resolution honoring General Mihailović and all the Ravna Gora movement combatants of WW II. The regime in Yugo-

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁰⁹ Reports were submitted by: Ratko Dojić (*Young People in the Ravna Gora Movement*); Marko Čučuz (*The Forming and the Development of the Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army Draža Mihailović*); Ranko Brašić (*The Ravna Gora Movement and Politics*); Vera Milošević (*Women in the Ravna Gora Movement*) and Milutin Virijejić (*Our Propaganda*).

¹¹⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

slavia was condemned: „*The congress concluded that the regime of the communist party of Yugoslavia and Tito always were, and always will be, the sworn enemies of the western democracies and the freedom of the human race, regardless of all the formal changes they've made pretending to be democratic. The congress concluded that Tito's regime is surviving thanks to the financial help from the western forces. This help is strengthening Tito's regime and enabling him to continue to terrorize the people. The participants of the congress think that there is no difference between international communism and so-called Titoism, because they are one and the same, the enemies of freedom, religion, democracy and the Christian civilization*“.¹¹¹

TITO'S VISIT TO LONDON

In autumn of 1952, it was announced that Josip Broz Tito will visit Great Britain, which was supposed to represent the crown of the good relations between the two countries, originating from Yugoslavia's conflict with the Soviet Union. The connection process between Yugoslavia and the western countries reached its peak in 1952, when Yugoslavia received military help in the amount of over 200 million US dollars. Anthony Eden, head of the Foreign Office, visited Belgrade and he announced that the British government was ready to continue to help Yugoslavia (diplomatic, economic and military help). It was then that Tito was invited to visit Great Britain.¹¹²

According to the official British data, about 8300 Yugoslav emigrants were living in Great Britain, 8000 of which were members of the political emigration created after WW II. Belgrade still had many objections concerning the way London was treating the Yugoslav political emigration. Belgrade wasn't pleased with the fact that the emigrants had full freedom in their political activities and that they were permitted to form associations, and that no measures were taken „against these associations and the war criminals that headed them“.¹¹³ Belgrade was especially dissatisfied with the British government for allowing King Petar to come to London in 1952, when he had talks with the leaders of the emigration about creating the Regal Council and Committee which would become the legitimate representatives of Yugoslavia.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Nebojša Popović, *Poseta Josipa Broza Velikoj Britaniji marta 1953. i jugoslovenska politička emigracija*, „Istorija 20. veka“, 2/2006, 51.

¹¹³ According to: N. Popović, *Poseta J. Broza Velikoj Britaniji*, 53.

The leaders of the emigration united this time to prevent Tito's visit. The Catholic Church was strongly against the visit, provoked by the attitude of the Yugoslav regime towards the Catholic Church in Yugoslavia and the Vatican's support to Italy concerning Trieste. Belgrade was furious because of the Vatican's decision to appoint Alojzije Stepinac a Cardinal, so they broke of diplomatic relations with the Vatican on November 3, 1952. The Anglican church joined this campaign at the end of 1952, and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Fisher repeated many times that religious communities were being persecuted in Yugoslavia, especially the Catholic church and the Orthodox church. However, the leaders of the Polish emigration, which had about 150.000 members and represented a significant force in Great Britain, refused to take part in this campaign because they didn't want to ruin their relations with the British authorities.¹¹⁴

Miodrag Damjanović was of the opinion that the protests against Tito's visit to Great Britain should be conducted together with the Yugoslav National Committee and Slobodan Jovanović. He wrote the following to Stevan Nedeljković on January 15, 1953: *„As far as the protests are concerned, the idea is well thought of, but the definite decision should be made after talking to professor Jovanović. Everything must be well prepared and you must act very cautiously in order to avoid any unpleasant consequences. Now is not the right time to send a memorandum to President Eisenhower that will be done later on, don't worry“*.¹¹⁵

A meeting with Slobodan Jovanović was held on February 7, 1953, but an agreement wasn't reached: *„Our 'faithful friends' were against the idea of organizing any protests and they immediately started criticizing us, explaining that we were guests in this country and that we mustn't insult the British, and that the people would suffer the consequences. On the behalf of our delegation I defended our suggestion and I said that we cannot be silent just because the British authorities would like us to be, that we've been silent long enough and that organizing protests is not against the law. They rejected everything I said. Bogoljub Jevtić was on our side, but nobody even listened to what he had to say“*.¹¹⁶

The British authorities interrogated a large number of Yugoslav emigrants in the period from January to March of 1953. Each and every one of them was clearly warned that they mustn't take part in any activities during Tito's visit and that they will, even for the smallest incident, be exiled from

¹¹⁴ N. Popović, *Poseta J. Broza Velikoj Britaniji*, 62.

¹¹⁵ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* S. Mijušković's letter to General Damjanović from March 3, 1953.

England within 24 hours. They also warned the emigrants that anyone caught doing anything suspicious at all, would be arrested and would lose his job. The police went round to all the employers and landlords requesting them to closely watch what the emigrants were doing. The leaders of the emigration were requested to report on all the activities of the members of their organizations. All the emigrants were asked if they intend to apply for British citizenship. Even Bogoljub Jevtić was interrogated, together with his wife, which left a very bad impression on the rest of the emigrants.¹¹⁷ However, some of the leaders of the emigration went to the police voluntarily just to express their loyalty to the British authorities.

The British authorities achieved the results they wanted with these measures. There were no organized gatherings of the emigrants during Tito's stay from March 16 to March 21. Certain individuals joined the protests, which were organized by the Catholic Church. General Damjanović's Association organized a small gathering in a little town in the north of England on March 22, while the Yugoslav National Committee decided not to organize any gatherings in London and even changed the date of the 27th of March remembrance day to April 6. Tito's visit to London was the turning point in the life of the political emigration in Great Britain. This visit represented the international consolidation and full recognition of communist Yugoslavia. All this led to the gradual passivization of the political emigration, and the process of turning the political emigration into an economic emigration was on its way.¹¹⁸

Tito's visit to Great Britain led to new disunions within the Serbian emigration. A larger part decided to abandon the frontal way of „overthrowing“ Tito's regime. Their new goal was to convince the governments of the western countries that they need to put pressure on the regime in Belgrade, in order to create a democratic society and a multi-party political system in Yugoslavia. That is how the way of „compromise“ was created. General Damjanović was for the old way. He used the official report of the US Congress committee, which visited Yugoslavia at the end of March 1951, requesting the US Congress to continue helping Belgrade only „under the clear condition that the Yugoslav government must accept to make certain reasonable changes for the benefit of the Yugoslav people“.

The improvement of their living conditions led to political differences among the emigrants. Their wish to earn more money, to buy real estate and to help their families in Yugoslavia became their goals in the 1950s.

¹¹⁷ N. Popović, *Poseta J. Broza Velikoj Britaniji*, 64.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

They wanted to achieve financial security, to lead a quiet life in Great Britain and to provide an education for their children. Therefore, the political battle against the regime in Yugoslavia wasn't their primary goal any more.

OUTSIDE OF GREAT BRITAIN

General Damjanović was very pleased with the results of the Ravna Gora movement (Djurdjevdan) congress. He wrote the following to Stevan Nedeljković on June 5: „*The congress was a complete success, even more than I expected. We will talk about that in more detail. After everything that was done here, your work will be 50% easier. But please don't hurry*“.¹¹⁹

Damjanović's farewell dinner was organized in Libertyville on July 8. He left for England by plane and arrived in London on July 10, 1953. The main management of the Association and the management of the Association in Great Britain held a joint meeting the very next day. The central commemoration on the occasion of the annual Remembrance Day of the death of General Mihailović was held on July 12. Andrej Karadjordjević attended the commemoration. Damjanović held a speech in the same spirit as he did before in similar situations. He emphasized the importance of the historical role of General Mihailović: „*Time can only strengthen the public significance of General Mihailović, not weaken it. We should observe the facts from which we can see how much influence our Čiča has on us, his followers, now when he's no longer among us. In short, we must look back and see what we've accomplished in the year between the sixth and seventh annual remembrance day of his death, to effectuate the pledge he left to us, to see what we've done to achieve the final goal of our struggle – liberation of the Serbian people and Yugoslavia. I'm deeply convinced that our efforts to accomplish these ideals represent the most beautiful candle we can light for our Čiča, the best proof of our loyalty to him and all our fallen brothers and commandants, the best expression of our respect for their sacrifice*“.¹²⁰

Damjanović visited Slobodan Jovanović on July 14. During the rest of his stay in Great Britain, Damjanović visited the Serbian emigrants in Todmorden, Halifax (where he attended the annual assembly of the Association), Cuckney, the Polish hospital in Iscoyd Park, Downingtown, Coventry, as well as the hostels Shelton (Buckingham), Sibson (Windsford), Kempston (Bedford) and the hostel in Bicester. Damjanović also attended the conference of the main management of the Association in Great Britain, which

¹¹⁹ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

was held on July 31. At all the meetings, Damjanović talked about his visit to the USA and informed everybody of the results he had achieved there.

Damjanović went to Paris for a three-day visit on August 6, where he had a lot of meetings with the Ravna Gora movement members and distinguished representatives of the emigration. He visited Metz from August 21 to August 27, where he was the guest of the future president of the district management of the Association in north-east France, Dragoljub Terzić, and he also visited the Ravna Gora movement members in Moranz and Lopital.

Damjanović felt that the best solution for the men who were still in the German camps was to find employment in the mines in Alzas and Loren, where a large number of Slovenians were already working: *„My opinion is that this would be a good solution for these people and that it should be done through the Association. This should be done quickly, don't worry about the documents because the establishments where they would work will make sure they get the necessary documents and their working rights“*.¹²¹

Damjanović returned to Germany on August 27. He then visited the emigrants in Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich, where he was invited by the Serbian National Defence to hold a lecture on: *„The American public opinion and the problem of the communist regime in Yugoslavia“*. He then went to Hanover, where he talked to the men from the Guard service (MSO) about the situation in the countries he had visited. He returned to his place of residence in Eutin on September 3, nine months after he had left to go on a long and strenuous trip, the most significant one in his post war life and work.

Damjanović was very satisfied with what he had seen and experienced, and also with the significance that his trip had for the rest of the people: *„All the people that I'm in contact with were very interested in everything that had happened during my visit to the USA, England and France. I felt at ease when I returned here, but I had to stay in bed for a while because of my swollen leg. Plenty of walking in the past few months did this to me, so the doctor ordered me to rest. I'm writing to you now with the typewriter on my lap, which isn't easy“*.¹²²

Damjanović denied that he received a letter from Momčilo Djujić: *„It might be true that he wants to meet with me, but I wonder why, because he could have done so while I was in the USA, but he didn't even try to meet with me. And even if he did try, I wouldn't have met with him, because I know how much a verbal agreement with him is worth. He created this situation by writing all kinds of obscenities against the Association and me, so I*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Damjanović's letter from August 25, 1953.

¹²² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Nedeljko from September 10, 1953.

*will not meet with him until he confutes all his lies. In addition, I find his request to meet with me publicly and discuss all we have in front of other people ridiculous“.*¹²³

Damjanović congratulated Božidar Marković on his re-election to the duty of President of the Serbian National Committee in Canada on September 14: *„By re-electing you, the Serbs in Canada have given you credit for your tireless efforts, which I agree with completely, and I want to wish you all the best, good health and success in your efforts to calm the situation among the Serbs and to keep them united“.*¹²⁴ On the very same day, Damjanović wrote to Mile Radaković, the President of the Serbian National Union, thanking him for his „civility and kindness“ during his stay in the USA. Damjanović also asked him to help in bringing new Serbian emigrants to America „so that as many of our people as possible could immigrate to America“.¹²⁵

In this period in time, Damjanović was very worried about the elections in the Association in Great Britain, because Vaso Milović no longer wanted to be the president: *„He doesn't want to remain president under these conditions, he says that we are going round and round in a circle, while our main goal – struggle for liberation – we leave to the others, especially the interpreting of the resolutions of the congress held in Ba. He told me that he wrote you a letter suggesting the forming of a Ravna Gora movement political representative body, which would have the task of conducting the struggle against Tito and all of those who don't want the resolutions to be executed. He told me that you rejected this suggestion and that he doesn't see any reason why this shouldn't be done“.*¹²⁶

Considering the situation he was in, General Damjanović could only instruct the management of the Association in England to elect „their best representatives“, in order to keep the Association going in the same direction as it had been for the last five years: *„The Association of Combatants of the RYA Draža Mihailović in Great Britain is our head-quarters, which has been setting an example with its unselfish and devoted work for the good of the King and Fatherland for the past five years, holding high its flag of freedom which was hoisted at Ravna Gora by our immortal commandant General Mihailović“.*¹²⁷

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* Jovan Grujić's letter to General Damjanović from September 15, 1953.

¹²⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.* General Damjanović's letter to V. Milović from September 26, 1953.

The forth-annual assembly of the Association in Great Britain was held in London on the 3rd and 4th of October, 1953. It was concluded that the biggest political failure in their work (although it wasn't their fault), was that the negotiations about the uniting of the emigration were unsuccessful: „*In spite of that, the main management was instructed to continue in the same direction and make an additional effort to reach a successful solution, according to the decisions made at previous conferences*“.¹²⁸

Mića Obradović was elected president, while Bogdan Drobac suddenly resigned from the position of vice-president. The need for national unity in the emigration was emphasized in the *Resolution*: „*The Association of Combatants of the RYA 'Draža Mihailović' appeals to all the Ravna Gora movement organizations, as well as to the rest of the democratic emigration, to work and fight together against any kind of dictatorship, because only if we are united as a whole can we fight against the dictator Tito and effectively support the people in Yugoslavia. We appeal especially to all the Ravna Gora movement organizations in emigration to unite into one organization as soon as possible, which will express the free will of all the members of all the organizations based on one principle: the will of the majority is the supreme law for each and every one of us*“.¹²⁹

In this period, Dobrosav Jevdjević was in Italy. His old animosity towards General Damjanović appeared again, but it could be heard from certain individuals that the two of them should finally find a way to settle their differences. Damjanović's answer was as follows: „*Duke Jevdjević is in Italy now, where he continues to write as he did before, attacking the Association and me worse than ever before, so I don't know what I could possibly do in order to make peace with him?! You should read the last letter that he sent to the camps in Italy and then tell me what I should do*“.¹³⁰

Damjanović went on a trip again as soon as he was feeling a little bit better. He visited the group of generals in the Varlar castle during October of 1953, in order to inform them about his trip to the USA and Canada, and then he visited the sentinel groups in Bilefeld and Hereford, the camp for the sick and disabled in Augusdorf and the camp in Osterode. However, he had to postpone his trip to Italy because of his health problems: „*My doctor still doesn't allow me to travel far because of the problem with my leg, and I must wait for the rubber sock to be made, which I have to wear*“.¹³¹

¹²⁸ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Mijušković from October 4, 1953.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Vjekoslav Bučar from October 27, 1953.

In November of 1953, Damjanović had to explain once again, although it wasn't his fault, why he didn't meet with Momčilo Djujić, who was staying in Germany for a few days: „*Djujić was here two days ago. He didn't even find it necessary to look me up, in spite of the fact that many people had told me and written to me that he really wants to meet with me, which turned out to be an ordinary lie! He didn't even go out and visit the people; he stayed in his room the whole time. In order to make his arrival a „sensational“ one, he sent a telegram to announce that he was arriving together with General Miša Živković, who didn't even dream of doing so*“.¹³²

A few days later (November 12), Damjanović wrote to Episcopo Nikolaj, who had also asked him to reconcile with Djujić: „*Instead of an answer to your question why I didn't meet with Djujić, I want you to read the leaflet I've enclosed, a leaflet full of lies which only shows how much honour they have. Jevdjević went straight to Italy from England, only he knows why, while Djujić was in this camp a few days ago and didn't even find it necessary to look me up. I'm waiting to hear that I'm to blame for that as well. I kindly ask you, you're Illustrious Highness, not to blame me, because it is impossible to talk to individuals who say things which are written in the leaflet*“.¹³³

Damjanović replied to Episcopo Dionisije's letter on the very same day, who asked him earlier on (August 14) to make an additional effort in order to achieve „concord and unity“ among the Chetniks. Episcopo Dionisije asked Damjanović to unite with the Ravna Gora movement of Miodrag Ratković: „*They have their committees here as well, that would increase your strength, and it would make your Chetnik group the largest one. It is my opinion that a big mistake was made when you, as you personally told me, withdrew your delegates from the talks you had with them about uniting. In the name of God, that is not the way. Because of that, I cannot help the Chetniks in any way. What can I do, which group to help when Draža's movement is dear to me as a whole, it is difficult for me to watch this disunion. I don't want to separate you even more. I have to find a way to make peace between the groups, while you leaders can do as you please*“.¹³⁴

Damjanović replied emphasizing that Ratković's organization represents a small number of people and therefore, there was no need to unite with his organization: „*You were incorrectly informed about my meetings with Ratković and about my delegates at the talks. It's not his group that we*

¹³² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Nedeljko from November 5, 1953.

¹³³ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

*had talks with, but Jeremić's group, which is in France now in the Association with us. Jeremić's group didn't want to unite with Ratković's group either. Please don't blame me for this situation. I'm doing everything I can. I'm always on the move, I'm in contact with the people and informed on the situation. I kindly ask you not to disunite Draža's movement and to do everything you possibly can to help the other groups, which have more problems than we do“.*¹³⁵

In December of 1953, Damjanović went to visit the emigrants in Austria and Italy. He met in Salzburg with Dušan Bojović, one of the former close associates of General Mihailović, who was the President of the Committee for Refugees. He stayed there for two days and then went on to Rome, where he had a large number of meetings with the representatives of the emigration and the Italian authorities, in order to help the refugees from Yugoslavia. He also visited the camp in Frasketi di Alatri with the same goal. He was once again Vjekoslav Bučara's guest in Rome. In Naples he met with Ljubiša Spasojević and Lj. Mikić, who accompanied him during his visits to the camps in Aversa, Kapua, Pagani and Sant Antonio, where he celebrated Saint Nicolas day (December 19) with the Ravna Gora movement members there. He visited the American Consulate in Naples, where he had talks about sending Yugoslav emigrants from Italy to the USA. He left Rome on December 20, and he arrived in Innsbruck (Austria) two days later, where he was met by a group of Ravna Gora movement members headed by Marko Milutinović and priest Slavko Ničetin. After a short stay in Austria, Damjanović returned to Germany. He travelled via Munich, Hannover and Hamburg, where he always stayed for while, and finally arrived in Eutin.¹³⁶

The Association of Combatants of the RYA „Draža Mihailović“ carried on the traditions of the Ravna Gora movement and the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland. It ideologically relied strongly on the resolutions of the Saint Sava congress from 1944. The Association made an effort not to lose its Yugoslav character in emigration, and that's what made it different from similar associations of the Serbian and Croat political emigration. However, most of the members were Serbs, along with a small number of Slovenians and an insignificant number of Croats. The Association had one more peculiarity – a tolerant attitude towards the other emigrant organizations.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

The main goal of the Association was to maintain the „Ravna Gora movement“ spirit and moral, to carry on the traditions and to keep alive the Serbian national culture by celebrating holidays and significant anniversaries. Social-humanitarian work was also very important to the Association. The political activities of the Association were expanded by the forming of the Ravna Gora movement National-Political Committee, with the task to unite the „constructive emigrant forces“ in order to strengthen the struggle against the regime in Yugoslavia. It should be mentioned that the members of the Association thought about making contact with the resistance forces in the country, but that idea proved to be too ambitious. Nevertheless, the Committee succeeded in making the emigrants work seriously on creating institutional relations with the political organizations in the domicile countries.

In the autumn of 1949, the Association expanded to a far away country – South Africa. At the beginning of October of 1949, Damjanović began organizing the Serbian emigration on the African continent. He was of the opinion that the Ravna Gora movement members should be organized in the other parts of the world as well: *„I'm happy to see that you, so far away on the red-hot African continent, have not forgotten that you are Serbs and members of the Ravna Gora movement, so I call on you to immediately organize a commission of the Association in South Africa and in the north of Africa, to form the management of the Association in the country which will be closely tied to the main management of the Association in Great Britain, thus taking part in building our common Ravna gora movement house“*.¹³⁷

Damjanović authorized Nenad Žakula to organize the Association in the South African Republic and Mladen Dimitrijević to do the same in Morocco, for the north of the continent: *„With the wish to emphasize clearly our monarchical persuasions at the start of the forming of our Association in Africa, I'm sending this invitation to the Ravna Gora movement members on the very day of the martyr's death of the late King Aleksandar I Karađorđević. His momentous governing conceptions and his clairvoyance concerning the historical role of Yugoslavia in the Balkans, made him the first victim of WW II on this very day in 1934, which threw us into the maelstrom of events foreseen even then by our King the Unifier, events that still haven't come to an end. By forming our Association in Africa, we've shown once again our eternal gratitude to the bright memory of our immortal Čiča“*.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives*. General Damjanović's official proclamation from October 9, 1949.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

The Association was formed in Johannesburg on December 7, and the first management of the Association in South Africa was elected, with Slavko Kojić as president. He headed the Association until the day of his death in 1954. K. Vujović was elected vice-president, Nenad Žakula – secretary and Lieutenant Colonel I. Milovanović – president of the supervisory board. The South African authorities approved the functioning of this branch of the Association on February 6, 1950.¹³⁹

The branch of the Association in South Africa started publishing a bulletin named *Sloboda Ili Smrt* [Freedom or Death] at the beginning of 1950, and the magazine *Razvigor* at the beginning of January, 1951. The *Razvigor* was very popular among the members of the Association. The president of the Association, former diplomat Slavko Kojić, who died in Johannesburg on January 25, 1954, edited it. Nenad Žakula, the new President of the Association, took over the editing duties, and during 1955 he appointed Dragan Acimović, a reporter, to be the new editor of *Razvigor*.¹⁴⁰

The branch of the Association in Australia was founded on December 10, 1949. A group of Ravna Gora movement members from Perth, Western Australia, headed by Miloš Saičić, formed the management of the Association on that continent: Jovan Paraćinac – president, M. Saičić – secretary, Krsta Mandić – president of the supervisory board, M. Rajković, V. Gudović and M. Luketina – members.¹⁴¹

General Damjanović was tireless in his activities on expanding the Association. He sent a letter to the Ravna Gora movement members in the USA, Canada and Australia on March 27, 1950, asking them to organize themselves. He appointed organizational secretaries for each country: the USA – Ranko Brašić (east part of the country) and Milivoje Vuksanović (west part of the country), Canada – Major Aleksandar Milošević and Vlada Drobac, Australia – Vita Borisavljević (North Australia), Djura Uzelac (South Australia), and Miloš Saičić (Western Australia) Vojin Srdić (Sydney). The inaugural assembly for South Australia was held in Adelaide on May 14, 1950.¹⁴²

The organizing of the Association in the USA began during 1950, under very unfavourable conditions. There were already several emigrant organizations in the USA and they weren't willing to accept one more, especially not one named Draža Mihailović. Nevertheless, under the control of

¹³⁹ *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*, no. 18, June 1950, 15.

¹⁴⁰ *General Damjanović's Archives*.

¹⁴¹ *Van Otadžbine*, 32.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

General Damjanović, the Association grew thanks to the support of the Serbs who had been in the country for a long time. Damjanović suggested that the name of the Association in the USA should be: The Yugoslav Legion in the USA „Draža Mihailović“. Damjanović emphasized: „*This name will underline the veteran and non-political character of our organization and it will enable everyone in the USA to notice that immediately. Regardless of the different name of the organization, The Yugoslav Legion will be a part of our large Ravna Gora movement family, which is now scattered all over the world, but deeply convinced that the day will soon come when they will return to the Fatherland now suffering under Tito’s red regime*“.¹⁴³

General Damjanović appointed a temporary management headed by Slavko Bjelajac, former Colonel of the YAIF, and Ranko Brašić was the head secretary. Damjanović also appointed organizational secretaries for certain districts. Milivoje Vuksanović, who was working on the organizing of the Association in California, wrote the following to Damjanović on July 10: „*As far as the Association is concerned, I can say that things here are not only good, but excellent. As soon as I came to California, I went from one person to the other to get them to become members. I’ve made a list of our people who’ve been here for a long time and want to be members of our Association. I’m in close contact with all of our people. There are a lot of our people here, so I’m sure that I’ll succeed in doing what I set out to do. There are about 700 Serbian homes here in Oakland and San Francisco, and the SNC has only about 120 members*“.¹⁴⁴

The first commission of the Association in America was organized in East Chicago in July of 1950. Dragiša Branković, Ratko Dojčić, Milan Indjić, Milisav Janković and Rade Ilić had the most active part in its founding. A commission was founded in Indiana a month later. The Association received working approval from the American authorities on September 19, 1950, thanks to the solicitor Nikola Stepanović.¹⁴⁵

Miodrag Damjanović had other ambitions with the organization in America, which can be concluded from his letter to Nikola Stepanović. In other words, the general was hoping that the Yugoslav Legion would, with the help of the Americans, be capacitated for a contemporary war against the communist regime in Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁶ He expressed similar standpoints in

¹⁴³ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Van Otadžbine*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives.* General Damjanović’s letter to N. Stepanović.

his letter to Slavko Bjelajac: „I completely agree with your intentions to include all of Čiča’s friends there in the honorary committee and to officially register the Association under the name Legion. I kindly ask you to do that as soon as possible. It is understood that the character of the Legion is to be non-political and veteran of course, until the moment when the veteran Legion will turn into a real one. It seems to me like that moment is not so far and that we should therefore hurry“.¹⁴⁷

From the moment Aleksandar Milošević emigrated to Canada, Damjanović started thinking about forming a branch of the Association in that country. He therefore appointed Milošević the organizational secretary of the branch of the Association that was yet to be formed. The former commandant of the 2nd Šumadija corps of the YAIF was, as he did many times before, thinking analytically about the state of spirit of the Serbian emigrants, so Damjanović informed him of the many bad aspects of the situation in Canada: „States of quarrel due to fear, which often turn to states of bitter feuds. Our people are not up to the situation, they are disorganized and they rely on anybody or anything just to get a job or a piece of bread. And then again, if you even mention that they will join a Ravna Gora movement organization, the Serbs here and their National Defence will not have a favourable opinion of this“.¹⁴⁸

The only thing Damjanović could do was to advise them to protect the interests of the Association in their relations with the Serbian National Defence: „The Ravna Gora movement members mustn’t have any discrepancies with the National Defence, but they mustn’t unite with it either. I don’t see why they couldn’t be members of both national organizations. Why couldn’t these two organizations join hands in their national work, especially the SNC in Canada, which was never exclusive. You are there, on the spot. You have participated in the work of the Ravna Gora movement in that country from the very beginning, and you are one of the most significant participants, so I don’t feel that I have to give you any special instructions on how to do your work“.¹⁴⁹

Miloš Saičić reported on the development of the Association in Western Australia: they had problems in their relations with the Serbian National Revival: „Of course, as always, envy and personal relationships are in question. Now, instead of stabilizing our mutual relations, we have a situation of intolerance among the members of the management, where two mem-

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

bers of the management have launched a shameless campaign against me personally“.¹⁵⁰

Slavko Bjelajac reported from the USA that the Association in this country shouldn't be named Draža Mihailović because of the current political situation: „*That's the way things are in politics and the situation won't change soon. The situation with our emblem is the same. You will probably find this to be very strange, but that is the standpoint of the people here. But the situation is really like that, so I feel that we shouldn't start our work now, because it wouldn't do us any good. We feel that the founding of the Legion would be attacked by all the other Serbian organizations here, so we need the support of the pilots who were saved by Čiča during the war. That would be of great help*“.¹⁵¹

The organizing of the Association in the USA wasn't going the way it should have, or Slavko Bjelajac wasn't the right person for the job. What ever the case might be, Bjelajac wrote to Damjanović about the unfavourable situation within the Serbian emigration on November 21, 1950: „*I can see that our people are not up to it, so I've decided, if you agree of course, to stop all our activities. I don't want the Association to suffer the least bit, or that any kind of disunion should set in*“.¹⁵²

Damjanović was very disappointed by this letter, but he was unable to change anything. He still believed in the „unity of the Ravna Gora movement“, so he sent the following message to Bjelajac: „*When we unite and become a significant force that we in fact are, we will continue to work on your idea. I believe we won't have to wait long for that to happen*“.¹⁵³ The situation in Canada was somewhat better in the summer of 1952. Aleksandar Milošević informed Damjanović of this: „*The first steps towards forming the Association here can be felt now, but it cannot be said that they are the most modern or the most meaningful ones for these surroundings*“.¹⁵⁴

The organizing of the Association in Australia continued during 1951. The first assembly of the branch in Sydney, which still wasn't connected with the headquarters, was held on January 13. Pavle Mešković was elected president. At a special assembly held on March 24, 1951, the main management of the Association headed by General Damjanović was adop-

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* Miloš Saičić's letter to General Damjanović from August 12, 1950.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Slavko Bjelajec's letter to General Damjanović from August 17, 1950.

¹⁵² *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Bjelajac from December 16, 1950.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Aleksandar Milošević's letter to General Damjanović from July 24, 1952.

ted. Almost at the same time, the third commission of the Association in America was founded in South Chicago. Milan Zagorac was the first commissioner. The next step was the forming of the district management for the States of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin on July 12 of the same year. Marko Čučuz was elected president of the management. This management initiated the forming of commissions in the following places: Milwaukee, Cleveland, Arkon, and during the next few years New York and Los Angeles.¹⁵⁵

The Association continued to expand during 1952. A commission was formed in Auckland (New Zeland) on March 1. Vlado Vukčević was the main commissioner. The first commission of the Association for Canada was formed in Hamilton at the beginning of June and it was headed by R. Bakić. The first assembly of the Association in the USA was held in Chicago on June 12. The first management of the Association in the USA was elected and Živorad Mladenović was the president.

The first Main Management of the Association was elected by votes (in writing) from all the countries. The election was held in the English town of Hanley on October 5, 1952. General Miodrag Damjanović was elected president of the Main Management, vice-presidents: Sima Mijušković, Bogdan Drobac, Pavle Mešković, Slavko Kojić and Branislav Živković; main secretary: Stevan Nedeljković; head of the managements funds: Milan Pajović; president of the supervisory committee: Miodrag Jovanović. The Association of Combatants of the Royal Yugoslav Army „Draža Mihailović“ finally had a leadership.¹⁵⁶

The Association received approval to work from the Canadian authorities on August 26, 1952. The Association in Italy held an assembly on March 1. The old Ravna Gora movement members in Argentina first formed *The Main Ravna Gora Movement Headquarters for South America* on January 27, 1953, and the President was B. Radulović. This organization officially joined the Association „Draža Mihailović“ on March 14, 1954. That is when they formed the management of the Association in Argentina, and the head office was in Buenos Aires.¹⁵⁷

The Association in Australia was growing, but its basic activities (social and humanitarian work) weren't enough any more to keep it going. Besides, the other associations were doing a better job in that field, so Miloš Saičić suggested that they should work together with the Serbian Brotherly

¹⁵⁵ *Van Otadžbine*, 33.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Help organization: „*With such a move the Association would improve its reputation, because full co-operation between two Serbian social-humanitarian organizations would be made possible. The egotism, which can be noticed in all our social groups, shouldn't exist in our Association. If we join efforts with the SBH that would prevent them from forming special committees or sections on the territories where we are active*“.¹⁵⁸

The district assembly of the Association in the USA for the states of Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin was held in Chicago on October 18, 1953. fifty two delegates attended it from the local branches of the Association. The assembly was opened by Marko Ćućuz, who was satisfied with the work of the Association: „*Our Association in the USA, with God's help, is entering the fourth year of its existence. In spite of the difficult circumstances, the Association branched out so well that the ones who were against us now envy us and congratulate us on our success. Many of you have witnessed our efforts, the difficulties our Association had to face while it was expanding and all the problems it had during its organizing. Thanks only to our persistency, determination, self-sacrifice and our unselfish work did we accomplish such good results*“.¹⁵⁹

The Ravna Gora movement congress held in May of 1953, was on this occasion once again described as the most important event in the work of the Association on the North American continent. It was concluded that the work of the associations and organizations of the „old emigrants“ were not on a high level, because they disputed the existence of the Association and interfered in its work. Ćućuz pointed out the essence of the conflict: „*We once again wish to say that we will never renounce our historical Ravna Gora movement name. The Association has a national-Ravna Gora movement character and its national-political programme is based on the Resolution of the Saint Save Ravna Gora movement congress, and it remains faithful to the Ravna Gora movement ideas and standpoints towards the national issues expressed at the congress, the same views as our immortal commandant, General Draža Mihailović. The Association doesn't want to discuss about making any kind of changes in the resolution from the village of Ba, because we, here in emigration, are not authorised to do that, such a decision can be made only by a free people in a liberated Fatherland. I therefore want to emphasize that the management of the Association, headed by Draža's assistant General Miodrag Damjanović, wasn't appointed by so-*

¹⁵⁸ General Damjanović's Archives. Miloš Saičić's letter to General Damjanović from October 14, 1953.

¹⁵⁹ General Damjanović's Archives.

mebody from above, it was elected from bellow, by the free will of all the members of the Association. That is why the management has our trust, and we have theirs“.¹⁶⁰

In the autumn of 1953, a branch of the Association was formed in the northeast of France. Dragoljub Terzić organized this branch and he was more than satisfied with the initial results, especially with the work of the inaugural assembly held in Metz on October 25: „*I'm able to tell you that the assembly was far more successful than we had expected. Everything was completed in peace and order. Everybody left satisfied with the work they've done. You can rightfully deem that you have placed the foundation stone of the Association in France*“.¹⁶¹

Dragoljub Terzić was elected president at the assembly. A telegram was sent to King Petar, and to General Damjanović as well: „*We assure you that you will have our whole-hearted help in performing your presidential duties for the good of the members of the Association and all the people of Yugoslavia, because we are all equally represented in the Association, the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenians. We all equally suffered because of the dictatorship of the communist tyrants*“.¹⁶²

The situation in America became complicated at the end of 1953, when a conflict broke out between Marko Čučuz and Slavko Bjelajac. According to the letters from Bjelajac, there seemed to be some resistance towards General Damjanović as well: „*I must emphasize that Čučuz's attack on me was of no use to the Association, nor can it be. Furthermore, he showed your letter and said that you have authorised him to relieve people from their duties, which certainly didn't calm things down, on the contrary, it heightened the spirits and spread talk of disunion. It is you who must decide if this man deserves your confidence, and will he deserve it in the future. I think that his actions were not only stupid, but very damaging as well, not only to me, but to the others also*“.¹⁶³

The Association in America started publishing a bulletin called *Ravnogorac* in August of 1951. Members of the editorial board in the beginning were: M. Virijević, L. Brkić, M. Vidaković and R. Ilić. Later on, D. Sučević and J. Ljubojević edited the bulletin. Besides the official news, the *Ravnogorac* had political articles and dealt with many other interesting topics,

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* Dragoljub Terzić's letter to General Damjanović from November 1, 1953.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* The report from the inaugural assembly.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* Slavko Bjelajac's letter to General Damjanović from December 20, 1953.

so it was well liked by the members and friends of the Association. It stopped being published in 1956.

The management of the Association in Canada started publishing a bulletin periodically in 1954, its name was *The Ravna Gora Courier*. The Association in Argentina began publishing the *Lovćen* magazine in 1955. It was edited by Major B. Radulović, President of the management of the Association in Argentina.

The main goal of the Association's publishing activities was to strengthen the morale of the members and the readers. The radio was also used in America for propaganda activities. The founders of the Association in America had their own radio station *The Voice of Ravna Gora* since 1951. Ratko Dojić was the producer and Mihailo Knežević was the announcer. Later on, Milutin Virijević was the producer and Milojka Gojić was the announcer. Members of the Association co-operated closely with the *Ravna Gora* radio station in Cleveland.

The Association was very active in their social work and helping the emigrants, and their results were very good. Members and friends of the Association were helping the disabled persons, the sick and old people and the unemployed emigrants. This was done through the Association's fund „Draž Mihailović“, which was established on the same day the Association was formed.

The following people ran the fund in Great Britain: Milan Pajović, Mitar Trivunčić, Buda Teryić, Miodrag Damjanović-Koma and Božidar Todorović. Ostoja Marković and Dušan Kašić, a disabled person who lost both of his legs, ran the social-humanitarian section of the Association in Germany, where most of the emigrants were. Their unselfish devotion to their work is really worth mentioning.

A total number of 5.714 people, mainly invalids, the sick and the old, were helped by the „Draž Mihailović“ fund in the period from January 1, 1949 to June 1, 1956. One of the other social activities of the Association, which needs to be mentioned, is the so-called Relief Fund (1951–1954) of the Association in Great Britain. It was established on May 1, 1951. Its first president was Miodrag Jovanović and the secretary was Simo Tomović. When the board of the fund decided to dissolve the fund, its members donated the money they had invested in it so that the memorial-house „Draž Mihailović“ in London could be purchased.

In October of 1952, the temporary main management of the Association issued a proclamation, asking the members for donations so that a memorial-house could be bought, which would be named „Draž Mihailović“.

The house would be used as a working centre of the Ravna Gora movement in this country, and as a place of gathering for the members and friends of the Association, but there were many problems with the building of this house.

Far away from their homeland, separated from the environment they grew up and lived in until the end of the war in 1945, the Ravna Gora movement combatants and members of the Association were aware that the national spirit in a foreign country can only be maintained by organizing national-cultural and religious events. Therefore, they made an effort to form theatres and folklore ensembles wherever it was possible.

Folklore musical and theatre groups and quires were formed in Italy, Germany, Great Britain and the overseas countries, where they organized performances for the emigrants. Jovica Ljubojević initiated the forming of the first theatre-folklore group of the Association in Bradford (England) in September of 1949. Due to the fact that part of the members went to Canada, the group was re-organized and the number of members was increased. S. Nedeljković, M. Popović, T. Mardaljević and T. Vukovojac ran the cultural-educational section of the Association in Great Britain. The first conductor of the quire was K. Kuzović, while N. Andrić, M. Danić, T. Mardaljević and M. Radovanović ran the theatre section.

This section gave a large number of performances throughout England and took part in many celebrations and commemorations. The folklore group of this section won first place at an international festival held in Manchester in 1956, and experts and the organizers commended it.

The best theatre group of the Association was the one in New South Wales (Australia). The national-cultural work of the Association began in 1950, while the theatre group was formed a year later. As time went by it became a real theatre, which successfully gave performances in Sydney for years. There were two smaller theatre-folklore groups in Australia – one in South Australia (Adelaide) and the other one in Western Australia (Perth).

The national-cultural sections of the Association in the USA and Canada were also very active. Right after the forming of the managements in these countries, they began organizing performances where members of the educational-cultural group participated, especially in Chicago and Milwaukee. They performed short theatre plays, pictures and scenes, while the folklore group organized national dance and song performances. Separate folklore and theatre groups were formed later on.

The Association celebrated its patron's day Saint Nikola in all the countries, they also celebrated the King's birthday and the anniversary of the beginning of the resistance movement in Ravna Gora, and they always held a remembrance day commemoration on the day of General Mihailović's death (July 17).

THE LAST YEARS OF GENERAL DAMJANOVIĆ'S LIFE

Preparations were on the way for the assembly of the Main Management of the Association, which was supposed to be held in London at the beginning of 1954. General Damjanović planned to visit Australia, since he received an invitation from the management of the branch in Sydney in October of 1953. He sent his response to the invitation to Pavle Mešković (General Mihailović's former close associate) on January 12, 1954: „*I accept the invitation with great pleasure, but I ask you to evaluate well the financial side of my visit. The only condition I have is that I must travel by plane, because I cannot lose three months travelling by ship. I must emphasize that it is very hard for me to ask this of you because I know how expensive a plane ticket is, so before you make a decision on this matter I kindly ask you to appraise your financial possibilities once more*“.¹⁶⁴

General Damjanović was at the same time working on the organizing of the Association in Germany which had 15 commissions, which was more than any other emigrant organization had: „*I'm reviving the Association again, but most of the commissions are unable to pay the stake, because their members are either unemployed or unwilling to pay. The main thing is that the people are together and organized, and those who can pay should do so*“.¹⁶⁵ Damjanović received a British visa in February of 1954, and he wrote a letter to Sima Mijušković complaining about his status again: „*I know what it feels like to go on a trip with empty pockets*“.¹⁶⁶ Damjanović was looking forward to expanding the Association in France.

Damjanović went to visit England and France in the spring of 1954. He was accompanied by D. Kasapinović, editor of the *Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*, and Ostoja Marković, who was in charge of the social-humanitarian section of the Association in Germany. They attended the first main assembly of the Association held in London on the 17th and 18th of

¹⁶⁴ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Sima Mijušković from February 28, 1954.

April. The assembly was supposed to adopt the new rules of the Association, because it had become the largest association within the Serbian political emigration. However, because of the shortage of time the assembly came to a decision to postpone the adoption of a new statute until the next assembly, which was planned to be held at the end of 1954. Therefore, the management of the Association was elected according to the old rules, and General Damjanović remained the president. All together, ten vice-presidents and ten deputies were elected; Petar Pavasović was elected main secretary, while Arandjel Piletić and Sava Popović were elected secretaries.¹⁶⁷

Instructions about the forming of the national-political committee and the youth section had to be added to the statute of the Association. By bringing a new statute and electing a new central management, the Association was able to devote itself to its basic goals and to the strengthening of its ties with the commission, which were scattered all over the world, wherever there existed a Serbian political emigration. That was not an easy task, considering the indebtedness of the Association, different circumstances in various countries and the manifoldness of the members, which were once refugees, internees, members of the YAIF and the SSG, or just economic emigrants.

Damjanović used this opportunity to visit his people in Great Britain, together with Colonel Brana Živković, President of the management of the Association in Germany who was also in England at the time. During their six-week stay in Great Britain, they visited the people who were staying in hostels in the following places: Kempston, Bedford, Derby, Manchester, Eccles, Keighley, Bradford, Halifax, Bicester, Reading, Cuckney, Todmorden, Oxford and Cardiff (Wales), and they held meetings in most of these places in the period from April 24 to May 18. They attended the joint assembly of the Main Management of the Association and the management of the Association in Great Britain held in London, they visited Her Majesty Queen-Mother Maria Karadjordjević and professor Slobodan Jovanović, as well as the president of the parish, General Petar Aračić.

They left for France on May 23. They stayed in Paris for a week and in Metz for two days, where they attended the district assembly of the Association for the north-east of France. They returned to Germany on the last day of May. Damjanović devoted himself to the publishing of *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant* magazine. As always, the magazine had financial problems. He had planned to visit Austria during July, but he once again had problems with getting a visa.

¹⁶⁷ *General Damjanović's Archives.*

During the summer, between July 14 and July 27, General Damjanović visited his people throughout Germany. The inaugural assembly of the commission of the Association in Munich was held on July 17, and General Damjanović held a speech. He held a lecture in Stuttgart on July 19, on the current political situation in Yugoslavia and in the world, from the aspect of the struggle led by General Mihailović: „*General Mihailović was the forerunner of the nowadays general struggle against the danger of communism, which is now being led by the former allies and their enemies, in order to create a solid western front against the eastern aggressors. This fact is proof of General Mihailović's greatness*“.¹⁶⁸

Damjanović had a meeting with the representatives of the German press, which made him very happy. He also made contact with the German people who used to live in Yugoslavia before the war: „*In the talks with their most distinguished representatives I could see that they had the wish to work closely with us in liberating our country. I would like to hear your opinion and your suggestions on this matter*“.¹⁶⁹ Damjanović visited the commissions in Hanover, Wupertal-Eberfeld, the Gauting sanatorium and the emigrants in Frankfurt. He was once again in Eutin at the end of July, and he had the wish to relocate: „*I should most probably move to the south, where, I still don't know. Perhaps to Stuttgart, Frankfurt or Dusseldorf*“.¹⁷⁰

General Damjanović was still in contact with the Polish General Anders, so he sent him a letter on August 7, congratulating him on his promotion to the rank of army-general.¹⁷¹ As far as the work of the Association and the new statute were concerned, Damjanović emphasized that the Association must remain a non-political organization, „and that the struggle against communism and the liberation of the Fatherland must remain its goal“. During this period, Damjanović was very hurt and disappointed because of the campaign against him in the USA, launched by D. Jevdjević and M. Djujić, and the support they had from some of his friends: „*I am accustomed to this kind of thing. I'm only surprised when I hear about the attitude of those people I thought were my friends. I am always what I am: an honest man, and I don't have the need of proving that, regardless of where these lies about me are coming from*“.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to S. Bjelajac from July 22, 1954.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to „Brka“ from July 31, 1954.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from September 28, 1954.

The assembly of the Association in Great Britain was held in Hannover on October 17. Damjanović was satisfied with its work, and he was still waiting for the issue of his moving to the south of Germany to be solved. He met with his old friend Nikola Stepanović in Hamburg at the beginning of December. Due to the forthcoming emergency main assembly, Damjanović left for France by train from Frankfurt on December 11, 1954. He stayed in France for about a week and he visited the Serbian emigrants in Metz, Morange and Paris.

Damjanović arrived in London on Saint Nikola Day, December 19, and he celebrated the patron's day of the Association with the Ravna Gora movement members there. The emergency assembly of the Association was held in London from the 23rd to the 25th of December, 1954. Its main task was to adopt a new statute and to elect a new central management of the Association. The topics which were discussed the most were the founding of the political committee and the goals of the Association in these new conditions. Damjanović was elected president again, while Sima Mijušković was elected vice-president. A new body was also elected: the Ravna Gora movement national-political committee, with Petar Laković as president and M. Virijević as vice-president.

After the assembly, General Damjanović visited the emigrants in England and attended a lot of meetings. He met once more with Slobodan Jovanović and wrote the following about that: „*I felt that he was sort of sad because he was completely neglected lately and [the King] doesn't call him when he is in London. That must be rectified*“.¹⁷³ Damjanović returned to Eutin at the beginning of January, 1955, and continued his every day activities. He visited the commissions of the Association in Germany (Hannover, Düsseldorf and Frankfurt) at the end of January and the beginning of February. He was still in a very difficult financial situation, and so was the Association: „*I don't have any money, no matter how I try to save some. I don't know who I could ask for a loan, and I know that the cash-box of the Central management is empty. I don't know how to pay the travelling expenses of the delegates*“.¹⁷⁴

King Petar invited General Damjanović to visit him in Paris. Damjanović left for Paris on January 29: „*I don't know what he wants, but I'm glad I'm going to see him because he is coming to Paris from England*“.¹⁷⁵ They held two meetings: February 8 and 10. They talked about

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from January 15, 1955.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from January 24, 1955.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from January 28, 1955.

important emigrant issues, and Damjanović was satisfied: „I’ve returned content. The important thing is that the Association will engage itself in helping the Royal house. I informed him of the Association’s activities and its new statute, and I described to him the situation our people in Germany were in“.¹⁷⁶

General Damjanović was at long last able to move to Frankfurt in February. He didn’t move to Frankfurt in order to have a better life. He did so because he thought he could move around in all directions faster from Frankfurt than from Eutin, which was in a dead corner of northern Germany. Before he finally moved, he went on a short trip on February 13; He was in Bonn on the 15th, and then he visited the emigrants in Düsseldorf. He moved to Frankfurt at the end of February, 1955.

Miodrag Damjanović continued his work in Frankfurt: „I’m well, thank God. There’s too much work to be done, but when wasn’t there“.¹⁷⁷ He was especially pleased when he received an Easter greetings card from Slobodan Jovanović, inviting him to organize a joint commemoration for General Mihailović in London.¹⁷⁸ Damjanović replied on May 3: „News about a joint commemoration for General Mihailović this year made me very happy and I kindly ask you to do everything you possibly can to make this come true. I’m here on the south, closer to everything. I feel fine, there’s a lot of work to be done. I am content because I can see in the reports that the situation in the Association is satisfactory“.¹⁷⁹

In his letter to Milan Bandović, Damjanović wrote that he was very pleased about moving to Frankfurt: „I’m here now. Closer to the work, which is increasing from day to day. But, thank God, I’m still healthy, and the results accomplished by the Association gave me the will and strength to work, along with a sense of duty“.¹⁸⁰ The general spent Easter holidays in Frankfurt, and the good work of the Association and its development gave him the strength to continue his mission. He expected the most from the newly formed political committee, which was supposed to politically unite the Serbian emigration: „We must be careful because not everyone understands us, and unfortunately, there is a lot of envy. But – we’re moving forward“.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ *General Damjanović’s Archives.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter from April 7, 1955.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Slobodan Jovanović’s letter to General Damjanović from April 21, 1955.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Slobodan Jovanović.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter to Milan Bandović from May 3, 1955.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović’s letter from May 7, 1955.

The General was still in a bad financial situation: „I'm completely broke. I spent everything I had on a whole lot of mail I had to send“.¹⁸² He was especially pleased with Slobodan Jovanović's initiative that the JNC and the Association should organize the commemoration for General Mihailović together: „*It's interesting that the 'big gentlemen' are now starting to take care of the Association. Professor Slobodan Jovanović has written to me that our Association in London has initiated this year's commemoration for Čiča and that for once, all the organizations will be together. We're slowly starting to show everybody that we're on the right track, and that the people see that*“.¹⁸³

General Damjanović devoted his whole life after WW II to making a better life for the Serbian emigrants, while he took very little care of his health. The difficult life in emigration and the poor living conditions left a significant trace on his health. He never had any time for himself, but for others – always. He didn't even have enough time to devote to his family, which he loved so much and missed terribly, but had to leave behind in Yugoslavia. He didn't even notice when the wicked illness started eating away at him. When the first symptoms became obvious, it was already too late for any kind of medical treatment.

The first symptoms of the incurable disease appeared in June of 1955: rapid loss of weight, loss of appetite and his face began turning yellow. He was admitted into a hospital in Frankfurt at the end of the month. It was there that he got his diagnosis: pancreas cancer. News of the general's illness quickly reached the Serbian emigrants in the USA. Milan Virijević wrote the following to him on July 3: „*Dane informed me last night that you are very ill. I was very sorry to hear that, because being ill is always difficult, but it's even more difficult when you're in a foreign land*“.¹⁸⁴ Damjanović responded to Sava Repović's letter while he was in the hospital: „*Sitting and writing is making me very tired and the doctors have forbidden it! My diagnosis is jaundice, but I still don't know if they're going to operate on me. I've been here in the hospital for three weeks now, you cannot imagine how I feel*“.¹⁸⁵

The doctors decided to operate because his bile duct was stopped up. The operation was completed on July 22, 1955, and it was successful thanks to two blood transfusions. The doctors put in an artificial canal for the bile fluids, but that was just a temporary salvation. After being treated in the ho-

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to M. Virijević from May 10, 1955.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Sava Repović from July 17, 1955.

spital for 70 days, he was released. He spent the next month in the nearby Koenig spa, then a few weeks at the home of his friend P. Naslas in Frankfurt, where he recovered quite well.

In spite of his illness, Damjanović remained true to himself; he refused to accept financial help for his medical treatment, although he needed it very much. Petar Laković wrote the following to him from London on October 2: *„I understand your sensitiveness and discomfort in accepting help, but isn't that the Christian duty of all the people to help someone who is in a difficult situation? What your friends are doing for you is not charity or grace, it's a sign of their love for you and you mustn't reject it now, and you mustn't do so in the future either, if it's in the best interests of your health. If there had been a bit more luck, we should have enabled you to lead a modest but decent life, and to provide much better conditions for your work that benefited all of us, and the cause in general“*.¹⁸⁶

Damjanović moved from Frankfurt to Hannover at the beginning of November. He immediately devoted himself to his obligations and his regular correspondence with his friends and fellow-combatants in emigration, and he worked as much as his health would allow it. He was on his feet and the illness was under control until the end of February, 1956. He wrote the following words about his situation to Ljubiša Stanković on December 2, 1955: *„I have a nice flat, but everything is much too expensive because I'm on a diet all the time. Although I'm under the constant supervision of the doctors, I feel fine, but I'm still too tired to work as hard as I did before I became ill, which makes me angry and disturbs me, especially the fatigue I feel when I'm typing. I hope it will pass soon“*.¹⁸⁷

In this period, Damjanović was working together with Dragutin Kasapinović on the preparations for the new edition of *The Ravna Gora Movement Combatant*. In these difficult times, he found comfort in spending time with the Serbian emigrants, whom there were quite a lot of in Hannover: *„Things are much better for me here. I have a nice flat, and there are plenty of our people here that need help. The only thing that bothers me is that I'm still on a diet and all my food needs to be prepared on butter. Otherwise I feel fine, thank God, although typing makes me very tired. I have more and more work to do every day“*.¹⁸⁸

At the beginning of 1956, Damjanović was still very active and he was thinking about forming new commissions of the Association in Ger-

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter from December 5, 1955.

many. For all of his friends who suggested he should rest more, he had the following answer: „*You recommend that I shouldn't work so much. Thank you, but somehow I can't wait any more! It seems like there's more and more work to be done, and the work is urgent as well. My being aware of the fact that the Association is helping me from all over the world, has given me the will and strength to fight my illness. I can honestly tell you that I was close to the end. Today I can see that things have gone so far that I cannot get five pounds from the cash-box of the management in order to live and work. If I weren't receiving help from the USA, I don't know what I would do! I kindly ask you not to misunderstand me, I'm not blaming anybody, least of all the members of management, who took upon themselves a great burden, but this is a fact, isn't it?*“¹⁸⁹

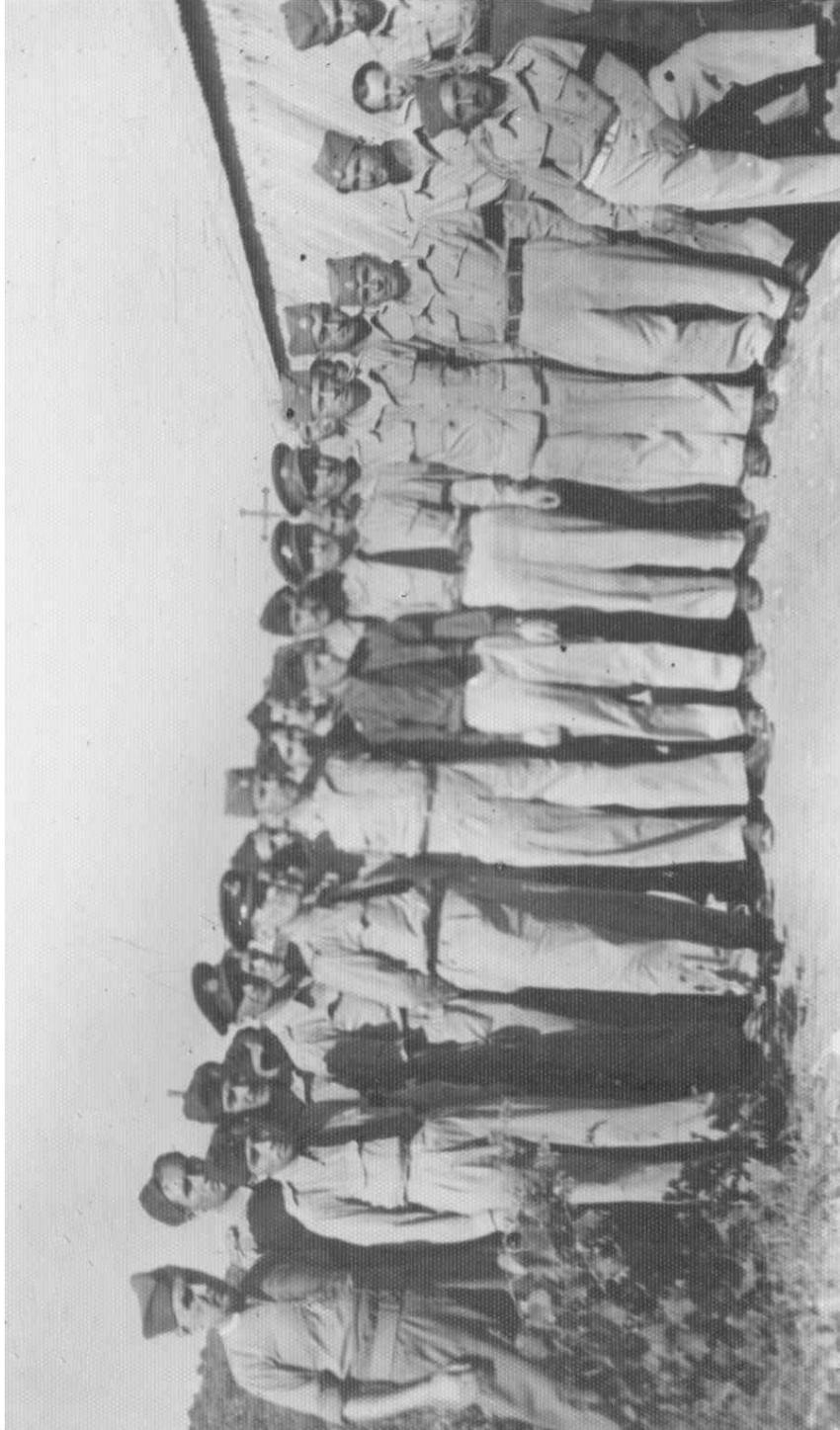
General Damjanović's health situation was getting worse and he was admitted into a private clinic in Hannover in the middle of March, where he spent the last days of his life. He was fed artificially because his digestive organs weren't functioning properly. Another operation wasn't possible. Damjanović was getting weaker and weaker, until his fatigued organism was completely exhausted. The inevitable end came at the beginning of August. After a three-day agony, General Miodrag Damjanović passed away on August 4, 1956, at the „Agnes Karl“ clinic. He was ceremoniously buried at the big Zelhorst cemetery in Hannover on August 8, 1956, with more than several hundred faithful fellow-combatants and other emigrants present, who covered his grave with flowers and wreaths. His mortal remains were taken to the cemetery in Osnabruek soon after that.

General Miodrag Damjanović belonged to a generation born at the end of the 19th century, which participated in all the major events in the history of the Serbian people in the first half of the 20th century – glorious in the beginning and tragic in the end. Miodrag Damjanović was a Serbian officer, and a Yugoslav officer, faithful to the national Karadjordjević dynasty. He originated from the part of the people who „built the edifice“ of the Serbian society of that period, he took part in the creating of the Yugoslav state and witnessed its break-down in the April war of 1941. After that he was in German captivity, so he put himself in the service of defending the national idea, first with General Milan Nedić, then

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* General Damjanović's letter to Petar Pavasović from January 14, 1956.

with General Dragoljub Mihailović. He was proclaimed a „war criminal“ in his Fatherland and he spent the rest of his life in exile, in Italy and Germany, where he shared the destiny of those who didn't want to live in a communist Yugoslavia.

General Damjanović was dedicated to the work of his Association and to improving the living conditions of the Serbian emigrants until the end of his life. He spent most of his time working on connecting and uniting the Serbian emigrant organizations. His duty towards the national idea and the fact that he didn't want to accept the new order in Yugoslavia were the ideas that guided him.



General Damjanović with English officers in Slovenia



At the camp in Cesena on September 1, 1945.



General Damjanović with a group of officers in Eboli



General Damjanović's military I.D. card



General Damjanović in Eboli, September 6, 1946.



The propaganda section of the Supreme Command in Eboli



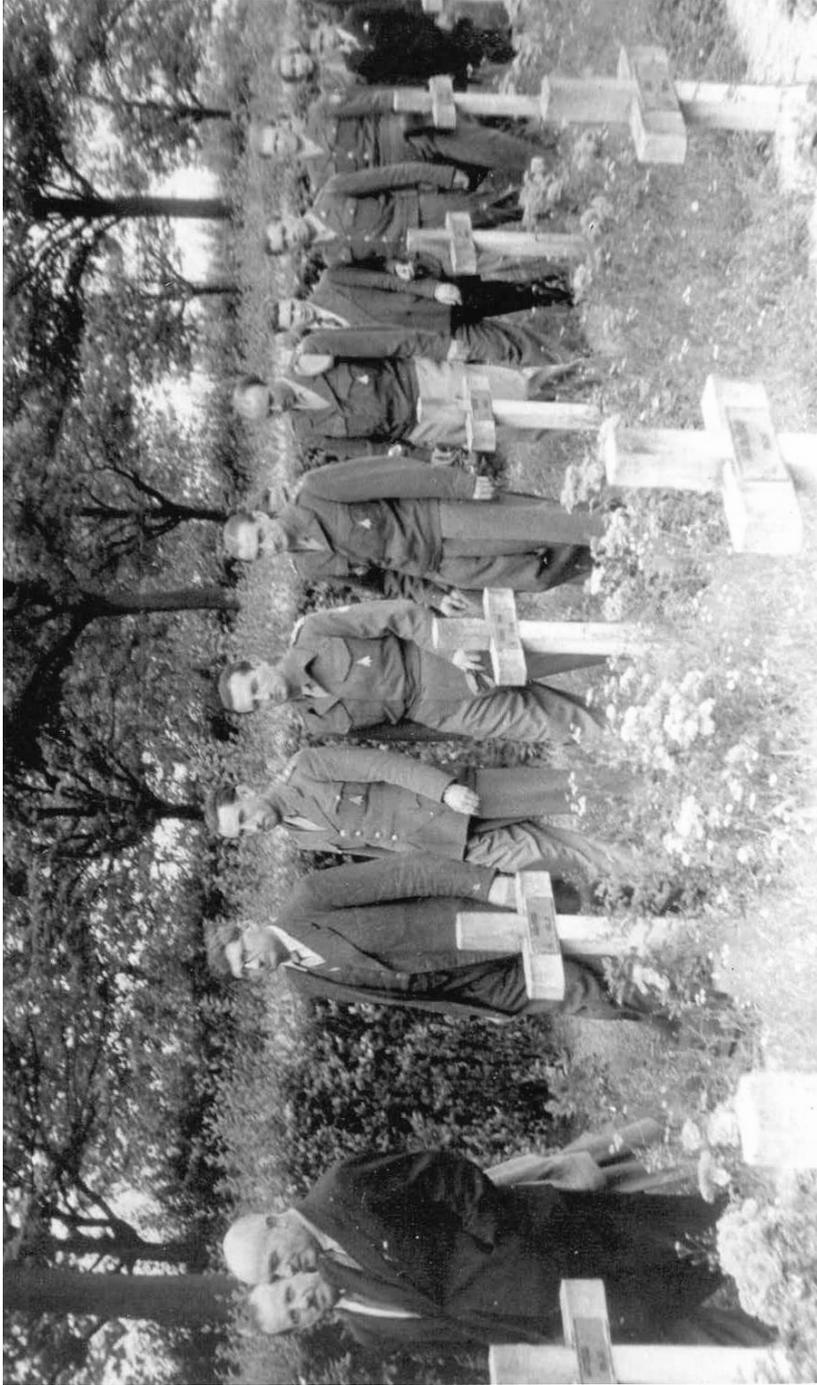
*General Mihailović's remembrance day, January 17, 1947,
six months after his death.*



At the camp in Eboli in 1947.



General Mihailović's remembrance day in Edinburgh, July 17, 1948.



At the officer's cemetery



A group of Yugoslav officers in England, May 2, 1948.



In Hanover, 1948.



General Damjanović, March 19, 1949.



General Damjanović as godfather to a family in England

Tudor Hotel
 60, Grosvenor Rd. S.W.
 10 Jan. 1971

Генерал Тодороге Петровићу,

Молим Вас за брже
 одговор на писмо и генерална
 замишљеница, да ће се
 извршити у НО^а Београда
 са славицом с Нове 25 с.м., у 4 1/2
 по подне, у згради КрК Бео
 Општине, из Egerton Garden,
 Београд.

Крам
 Слободан Јовановић

Slobodan Jovanović's letter to general Damjanović



General Damjanović in his study in Eutin

Tudor Court Hotel,
60, Cromwell Road,
London, S.W. 7
28 aprila 1952

Dragi Gospodine Generale,

Jugoslovenski narodni odbor odlučio je da pristupi obrazovanju jednog Veća, radi što čvršćeg povezivanja naše emigracije i što uspješnije akcije u borbi protiv nemani koja je pritisnula našu zemlju.

Iz priloženog nacрта videćete kako naš Odbor zamišlja rad u tom pravcu.

Mi računamo na pomoć i saradnju svih ljudi dobre volje i naših shvatanja. Dužnosti svakoga od nas utoliko su veće, što nije isključeno da ubrzo mogu nastupiti događaji koji nas ne smeju zateći razbijene i neorganizovane.

Stoga mi je čast, ako ste i sami saglasni sa tim, zamoliti Vas da izdate potrebna uputstva članstvu svoje organizacije da na tom poslu saradjuju sa Jugoslovenskim narodnim odborom.

Napominjem da smo od početka ove naše akcije u dodiru sa gg.S.Mijuškovicem i P. Lakovićem, vodećim članovima vašeg Udruženja u Velikoj Britaniji.

Sa srdačnim pozdravom

Slobodan Jovanović

Generalu
Gospodinu
Miodragu Damjanoviću,
Postfach 83,
Eutin. Nemačka

Slobodan Jovanović's letter to general Damjanović from April 28, 1952.

KANCELARIJA
NJEHOVOG VELIČANSTVA KRALJA



CHANCELLERY OF
H. M. THE KING OF YUGOSLAVIA
25, Avenue Montaigne, (8e)
Hotel Plaza Athènes

Pretsedniku UDREŽENJA BORACA
Kraljevske Jugoslovenske Vojske
"DRAŽA MIHAILOVIĆ",
BM/Borac, LONDON, W.C.1

PARIZ, 11 septembra 1952.

Gospodine Pretsedniče,

Kancelarija Njegovog Veličanstva Kralja je primila čestitku, koju ste izvoleli uputiti Nj.V.Kralju prilikom Njegovog Rodjendana u ime članova Udruženja Boraca Kraljevske Jugoslovenske Vojske "Draža Mihailović" u V.Britaniji.

Po nalogu sa Najvišeg Mesta, Kancelariji Nj.V.Kralja je čast zahvaliti Vam na poslatoj čestitci, kao i na izraženim rodoljubivim i patriotskim željama i umoliti Vas da kod članova Vašeg Udruženja budete tumač ove zahvalnosti.

Za Kancelariju Njegovog Veličanstva Kralja,

Mini star,
Vlad. Milićević
(Vlad. MILIĆEVIĆ)

*A letter to general Damjanović from the office of King Petar II Karadjordjević
from September 11, 1952.*



At the camp in Eutin in Germany



General Damjanović with his fellow-combatants in London, 1952.



In London, April 18, 1952.



General Damjanović's arrival in the USA, 1952.



General Damjanović and Ratko Dojić in the USA, 1952.



The Raona Gora movement congress in the USA, May 17, 1953.

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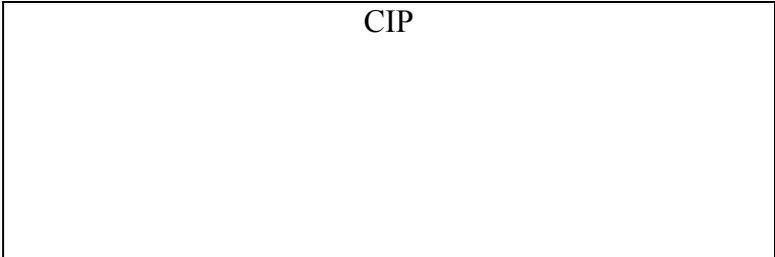
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