

French President Charles De Gaulle *on* General Draza Mihailovic

by Milos Rastovic

Kayle Scott, United States Ambassador to Serbia, visited the village of Pranjani in Serbia where Chetnik General Draza Mihailovic with his troops rescued and safely returned more than 500 American airmen in the 1944 Operation Halyard Mission.

In August 1944, American airmen were returning from a bombing mission in Eastern Europe where they were shot down in enemy-occupied territory in Serbia. Serbian villagers endangered their lives and hid American airmen from the Germans. General Mihailovich with his troops saved and returned about 600 Allied soldiers including more than 500 American airmen. Ambassador Scott said the Halyard Mission story is about Serbian and American heroism, and a sign of a friendship between the U.S. and Serbia.

Milovan Danojlic, Serbian writer and member of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, published an article about the Halyard Mission in the Pecat newspaper. Serbian Section of the American Srbobran published this article in a previous issue including the statement of Charles De Gaulle, who was President of France from 1959 to 1969 about General Mihailovic.

"The greatest recognition of General Draza Mihailovic was given by Charles De Gaulle, President of France, in July 1964. After the regular meeting of the French Government at which they mentioned Tito's role in international relations, President De Gaulle said to his Ministry Alain Peyrefitte:

'Indeed, the truthful national hero was Mihailovic. He did not fight for a certain ideology, or Soviet order. He did not go into war because

some foreign country pushed him to do that. He was simply a patriot. Liberating his country was his only goal. He knew you cannot win people by power. Merely, they betrayed him. Betrayed by the leftists, abandoned by his own people and the Allies, he was executed by the Communists. However, he caused the Wehrmacht to lose two or three months in the spring 1941. He delayed the German attack on Russia. He prevented the Germans from reaching Moscow and Leningrad before the winter. It is possible that he initiated Hitler's demise. Nobody wanted to help him; he relied only on his compatriots and his patriotism. International communism defeated his patriotism. But, one day everything will turn.'"

Translated into English by Milos Rastovic

