

*The Mulberry Tree*  
*In Lambro's Vineyard*



A Novel

By

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(Translated from Macedonian to English and  
edited by Risto Stefov)

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It was noon. The rays of the hot sun were roasting the soil. The village was silent. Its inhabitants were inside their homes. I sought salvation from the unbearable heat in the shadow of the old liliak (acacia) tree proudly standing straight in the village square right in between my uncle Risto and Sido's threshing floors. The Liliak tree was in the centre of the village and around it was a raised wall for sitting or standing. The villagers gathered here and shared their sufferings and joys. Many of the older women came with their spindles and knitting needles in hand, spinning wool or knitting socks, sweaters and other clothing for their needs.

After sunset, after returning home from cattle grazing, the children gathered together on the two threshing floors and played their favourite games "valka dupka med", "skalavakia", "shar –shar", "klendzha" "dzhamlii" and "futbal" made from rags, old towels and socks all curled into a ball. The place roared with children's voices.

The various grains grown here are harvested during the summer and threshed on the threshing floors with a couple of horses. The villagers rejoice when the yields are large meaning the year was fruitful and prosperous.

The harvest and threshing is always followed by traditional festivals with songs and dances and especially with picturesque weddings. Every year after the harvest these tired and hardworking people take the opportunity to celebrate and have fun on their way to overcoming their difficulties. A burst of satisfaction is expressed through dance and song. When the band starts playing, clarinets blaring (first and second voice), flutes (first and second voice) playing, drums beating... the entire village is filled with music... making the ground shake and the leaves on the trees tremble. These are the stunning sounds that emanate from the depths our nation's distant past. The music fills the souls of our people with happiness, vitality and a sense of pride. This lifts their spirits and elevates their happiness because from time immemorial to this day song and dance for the Macedonian people has been the epitome of life. There is hardly any other nation which expresses itself in song and dance as much as the Macedonian nation as a sign of the times and century old ordeals. The line dance danced from right to left, in 7/8 time, is a

Macedonian phenomenon and a traditional relic from our past. It is rarely seen performed by any other people.

After 60 years of absence, taken by my deep memories, I went back to my thoughts of that time when I was in my home in the village Kondorobi. I remembered sitting under the Liliak tree beside my grandmother Sofa, who kept me and my younger brother Tsile tight in her arms, while the holiday Ilinden was celebrated on my uncle Risto's threshing floor.

It was the Lord's summer in 1945. A few days earlier, perched on the wall under the liliak tree, Naum Peiovski from the village Gabresh gave a speech to the assembled villagers. I remember his words. He said: "Comrade Macedonians, the sun of freedom is shining for us. From now on we will freely live in our country. Fascism has been defeated forever."

The images of that celebration have remained burned in my memory; time has not erased them to oblivion. I can see in front of my eyes revived images of the lively people, filled with joy and fervour with their souls full of hope for a better future.

This time the music bands were brought from the villages Shishteovo, Visheni and Turie. Among them was the famous clarinet player Karatimio, from the village of Trnovo. Karatimio's name was known not only in Macedonia but also in Greece. His "clarinet" was recorded on phonograph records and distributed worldwide. Karatimio's playing was magical, especially when he played a song from Kostur, a musical masterpiece. The partisans who survived the war were saying that both sides of the warring parties stopped shooting when they heard Karatimio's music. Now Karatimio was in the middle of Risto's threshing floor masterfully playing his magical clarinet with the best musicians in the region, enchanting the entire space around us. Even the birds became humbled by the magical sounds of his music which he spread all around and was heard in the villages Setoma, Tiolishta and Shishteovo.

The culmination of the show was undoubtedly my uncle Risto who should have leaped out to dance the "Bajracheto" dance with a flag

in his hands. My uncle Risto had been a participant in the Ilinden Uprising and a flag bearer in voivoda Ivan Popov's band. He suddenly appeared with his unit's flag in his hands which, for years, he had safeguarded like his own eyes. The flag measured approximately 60 by 80 centimetres. It had a red background and in the middle was a woman warrior dressed in yellow, wearing an ancient helmet and carrying a spear ready to pierce the enemy. Written on the flag were the words "Freedom or Death". Only my father and uncle Risto knew about the existence of this flag, which was kept hidden in the wall of my uncle's vineyard near the river.

My uncle Risto leaped onto the dance floor all dressed in bright colours wearing a vest, on which hung visibly the chain of his pocket watch, and joined the dance line. His coat was unbuttoned. Grey-haired and standing upright he looked much younger than he had in previous years. All eyes were on him. They all waited impatiently excited to see him appear. After all he was a real live freedom fighter and a flag bearer carrying a genuine flag. He ordered the "Bairacheto", a Macedonian symbol of defiance. Leading the dance was my uncle Vanche, the best dancer in the village. After Risto, the surviving rebels of the Ilinden Uprising joined the dance, Tane Aleksov, Sotir Kalfov, Mane Chachev, Kuzi Shishtevarov, Dinkovitsa Shishtevarova, Tomaia Kalfova and Visha Shaldarova who were his associates and members of the Ilinden Board.

The band members themselves were aware of the significance of this dance and the unusual moments it would create so they played with great desire and excitement. After the bairacheto started, my uncle Risto, holding the flag in his right hand, began to dance. He danced with excitement and vigour and his feet seemed to glide as if they had wings flying up in the air. He seemed ageless and timeless and felt like a young hero. His feet and legs flew up in the air and his knees reached his waist. His movements were vigorous like those of a young man, turning and squatting, putting his soul into it. Filled with fervour he put emphasis on the strength of his nation and on the faith of his freedom. The excitement ran high. The faces of the women were filled with tears. The men proudly watched the dance and the dancing soul of my uncle Risto. My grandmother Sofa firmly embraced me and my little brother Tsile. Deep in my

consciousness she left the words, “Look, look my young grandchildren how your uncle dances the ‘Bairacheto’. This is not something that you see every day.”

The past years have shown that this was the last time that I would see for myself how the “Bairacheto” was truly danced. But this would not have been possible without the music and the magical sounds that enchanted our souls and made our hearts dance. Nothing can reflect the splendor of the “Bairacheto” or of the “Teshkoto” without the Macedonian drums.

In that moment of enchantment, while reflecting on my past, I failed to notice that an old woman had arrived beside me. She was dressed all in black, wearing a black headkerchief on her head, a sign of eternal mourning. This was a true image of a tortured Macedonian mother. Here I was going from one excitement to another. I stood up. She spoke first. She said: “Who are you...? Whose child were you? Are you one of those refugee children? But whoever you are... welcome!” “I am Paskal, Lambro’s son...” I replied. “Oh Paskal... we are relatives... you know!” she said. “I am Marika, Ana’s daughter. Do you remember me? There are very few of us left now. The people you see here are either newcomers, or the children of those who were imprisoned and managed to survive the Greek prison camps and the children of the spies who hid here in Kostur during the war. Thank God for bringing you back so that we can see each other again.

We hugged and cried and after composing herself she began to talk again. She said: “When we found out that they had killed my father in those cursed Greek islands I remained here looking after my sick mother. The rest of the people either left, perished or were driven out from the village like frightened birds. Many gave their lives for that cursed freedom which never happened. They uprooted us from our lands.

Everything started right here, at this liliak tree. This is where the sold souls of our village climbed on the wall, the paid informants the likes of Spiro Giamov, Vani Lalov and Ilo Lapov, who read the names of our people. The next day these people were ordered to report to the police station in Kostur. The tragedy caught Naso

Shopov, Gelio Shaldarov, Lionda Shaldarov, Kiro Shishtevarov, Panaiot Grantsarov, Ilio Angelkov, Stavre Grantsarov and Dochi Shaldarov. This is when the first black cloud emerged and covered our village. Everyone in the village was disgusted and disturbed by what happened. Everyone was asking and wondering why these people were ordered to go to Kostur? They didn't do anything wrong.

We did not know anything. They said they would tell them when they arrived there why they had been summoned. This is what Spiro Giamov told the distraught villagers. 'Yes, that's right, they would tell them there and they would throw the book at them so that they never again see the light of day,' yelled my uncle Tane. Spiro must have forgotten what our old people used to say 'it is better to be killed by a Turkish musket than to find yourself in a Greek book'.

Music was playing under Sido's awning on his threshing floor where the younger people gathered. The song was 'Shto e zhalno da go gledash, Makedonskiot narod' (It is so sad to watch the Macedonian people).

Then, just like meek lambs, the next day they left the village. First they went to the village Mavrovo and then by boat to Kostur. Almost two days later they were loaded on trucks and sent to the Greek island prison camps, without being tried. It was the beginning of our extermination and brought desolation to our village..."

As I listened to the old woman speak, telling me about our people and how they were persecuted, I remembered a story of my own, which has stayed with me all these years. I believe I am compelled to tell it.

It happened when I was employed in the "Mines and Ironworks Skopje". That day I was called for a systematic review in our clinic and accidentally sat in the waiting room beside a person who had come to seek medical assistance. I noticed that the man looked utterly exhausted so I asked in which plant he worked. He looked at me kindly and said: "Dear boy, I don't work here, I am disabled and I am in poor health". I then asked him what he was suffering from. The man was thin, all skin and bones. He shook his head and with a

desperate sounding voice began to tell me about his suffering which tormented him. He said: “When I was 18 years old I was sent into exile to the island Makronisos in Greece. There they god damned ruined my health. I did not have that much of a life, but I am sad that I was left with a legacy which I cannot fulfill and die peacefully.” “What kind of legacy?” I asked with a tone of pity in my voice. “There was an old man with us on the island, a Macedonian man with a great soul. He helped us endure to the end. When the damned fascists decided to give us amnesty we had to sign a piece of paper that claimed that we were Greeks and that we would always speak Greek. But before signing the paper we went to see Uncle Ianko, we called him Uncle Ianko, and asked for his advice. He hugged every one of us and advised us to sign the statement and to save our young lives. ‘Leave this place,’ he said, ‘spit on all this and on what you sign. Always be who you are and what you truly are. But before you go I want you to do me a favour,’ he said. ‘I want you to find people from Kostur Region and tell them that Ianko from Tiolishta never signed the paper that say he is Greek. This is my legacy to you... I will leave it with you,’ he said.”

I became extremely excited when I heard this because Bai Ianko from the village Tiolishta was my uncle. My grandmother Evdokia was his sister. I hugged the man and told him that Ianko was a close relative of mine and that he had three sons named Kosta, Kuzi and Taki, who died heroically for the ideals of their father. This accidental encounter was very important for both me and for the man who was now finally able to fulfill his commitment; tell someone the truth about Ianko from Tiolishta. It eased the man’s soul. We both could not believe how this happened but it did happen and I found out what happened to my uncle Ianko whose legacy is now embedded deeply in my consciousness.

Marika must have noticed that I was a little melancholy and asked: “Paskal, do you remember when we sat here and watched the various weddings take place? We watched Spiro Shaldarov marry Tina, Naso’s daughter, Gavril Popov marry Sultana, Toli’s daughter, Iorgi Shishtarov marry Flora Shopov, Vanche, Manio’s son marry Tanka, Shameto’s daughter, Taki Shopov marry Kleonika, Shameto’s daughter, Iani, Michovica’s son marry Dinka, Naseto’s daughter, Andrea Shopov marry Mika, Panaiot’s daughter, Tipa



Chachev marry Marigula, Manio's daughter, and Nasi, Michovitsa's son marry Liumba, Dochi's daughter? Those were beautiful days, full of happiness joy and great hope. The dances we danced! The decorated bridal gowns the young brides wore! The dowries were handed out! The dishes that were cooked and prepared! What great joy and happiness that was! Sad that it only lasted for such a short time. Then there was talk in the village about lists for sending our people to exile in the Greek prisons.

Anxiety began to rise in our people, especially when there was loud talk about a new war. It took the smiles and joy out of them. New dark clouds began to form over us. The joy of freedom was marred by the terrifying thought of what might happen in the future. People began to look back and search their memories of the past..."

The village Kondorobi is situated in picturesque Kostur Region. At that time it had 42 houses and 53 families. Although not very well-known in our historiography, bright pages have been written about it in our struggle for an independent Macedonia. Almost all of its villagers participated in the Ilinden Uprising. It even had a freedom fighting unit consisting of the brothers Vasil, Risto and Tane Aleksov, Manet Chachev, Kuzi Shishtevarov, Sotir Kalfov, Tanas Stergiev, Sido, Kole and Sotir Angelkov, Panaiot and Ianko Grancharov, Nikola Gorgiev, Slave Partsanov, Boris and Sotir Ristov, Damian Kamburov, Risto Stefov, Boris Hristov and Giorgi Dimitrov. There was also a Women's Committee headed by Dinkovitsa Shishtevarova, that included Visha Shaldarova and Tomaia Kalfova. These were the people who liberated the village and expelled the Turkish Bey Dzhafer and his family. His Sarai was burned down without any bloodshed. It was not the village's goal to harm the Turks but to simply liberate their village from them. Two days later Dzhafer paid them back by burning all thirty houses. The villagers fled to nearby villages including Tiolishta, Visheni, Chereshnitsa and Blatse.

After the Ilinden Uprising subsided Dzhafer Bey amnestied all the village inhabitants and asked them to return and rebuild their village. He even protected them from the Greek Andartes (illegal armed bands) that raged through the Macedonian villages and terrorized the people. That was in 1907 when Karavangelis's bandits, headed by

Captain Zakas, attacked the villagers working in the fields and killed five of them. Also among those killed was the civil officer Hristo Sechovardzhi. The older villagers often spoke of what Dzhafer said before fleeing to Turkey. He said: “My dear Macedonians, I do not regret that I have to leave you, but I am sorry that you are enslaved by the Greeks...”

Kondorobi fighters even participated in the Balkan wars in 1913, in the ranks of the Macedonian - Edirne volunteer detachments. Among the most prominent of those fighters were Kole Angelkov and Slave Partsanov who fought in the First Brigade of the Sixth Ohrid unit and Sotir Hristov, Kole Georgiev and his brother Kuze who fought in the Second Brigade of the Tenth Prilep unit. They were all carriers of great courage.

Dzhafer Bey’s words came true after Macedonia was invaded, occupied and partitioned between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria in 1913. The Greeks immediately began to make lists of unsuitable people and forced them out of their homeland. Several families, including my grandmother Sofa’s extended family, were forced out and ended up in Bulgaria. To avoid being killed by the Greek authorities many people, including most of the rebel fighters, fled to Macedonia. Some immigrated to America. The Greek government gave them amnesty in 1923 just when it needed more troops to fight in its war with Turkey.

With the exception of my grandfather Vasil Aleksov, all of them returned home. Before they left, Vasil Aleksov told them: “I am not returning home to be a Greek slave! I beg forgiveness from my wife, relatives and friends but I am not returning. I will only return when we raise a new uprising against Greek tyranny.”

He stayed true to his words. He returned when he was ready to die and be buried in his native village. He never again saw his wife (Sofa, my grandmother), his daughters (Hristina and Paraskeva), or his grandchildren (myself and my brother Tsile).

After the Turkish-Greek war ended, Greece evicted more people from the Kostur Region villages. The vast majority were evicted to Bulgaria. After they were evicted a wave of colonists and settlers

were brought in from Asia Minor. They were Christian Turks called Madzhiri. At about the same time the Greek authorities began to change the names of geographical locations and the people's names, giving them Greek names and taking account of them in their registers. During the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936, extreme and rigorous measures were undertaken to assimilate the Macedonian population and turn them into Greeks. Living conditions were becoming unbearable. My uncle Tane often spoke of a particularly serious but comical story involving a donkey. When a donkey loaded with watermelons ran off in the Kostur market, its owner yelled at it "stop you damn donkey" in Macedonian. As it happened there was a policeman there who heard him. Without wasting a moment the policeman verbally attacked the man and demanded to know what language the man was speaking. The policeman said: "In what barbarian language are you speaking?"

To save himself from a beating, in broken Greek my uncle said: "I in heart am Greek but I can't in language". Meaning I am a Greek in my heart but I don't know how to speak Greek.

The Macedonian soldiers in the ranks of the Greek army were the greatest contributors to the Greek victory over Italy in the 1940-1941 war on the Albanian front.

Many people from this region of Macedonia participated in that war. Included among those from my village (Kondorobi) were Lambro Kamburov, Nochi Ioanov, Andrea Shopov, Giri Tipovichin, and Petro and Ilo Prtsanov. After the Italian-Greek war they all joined the ranks of ELAS (National Liberation Army of Greece) and fought against the German occupiers. Included among the younger generation involved in the war against the occupiers were Vanchi Kamburov, Foti Chachev, Taki Shopov, Spiro Shaldarov and Zuber Angelkov. Foti Chachev was killed.

After Greece capitulated to Nazi Germany, the Bulgarian authorities appointed Nikola Georgiev governor of the province of Macedonia. Nikola Georgiev was also known as Bai Kolio. His deputy was his brother Kuze.

Bai Kolio arrived in Macedonia with a detachment of about one hundred horsemen. The first thing he did was visit his native village Kondorobi. He wore an all white Bulgarian officer's uniform. He rode his horse up and down the village yelling: "From now on Kondorobi will live free. The Greeks who settled in our country will be forced to go back where they came from..."

I remember his words. He said: "We don't want boiled beans and pickled peppers from a tub. We want a dignified life, not living hungry under the Greek yoke..."

He was as good as a mayor in Kostur. In his presentation he addressed the terrified people with the following words: "Kostur, Kostur, screw you Kostur, I am the one who decides whether to burn or save your precious Kostur." He was killed by ELAS before the war ended. His brother Kuze fled to Bulgaria and saved himself.

While I sat there thinking about the past of our village, Marika, the old woman, stood up, turned to me and invited me to go to her home. She said: "Come, Paskal, to my house. I live alone like a hermit and I can use the company and some conversation..."

When we arrived she said: "This is the house where I live. This is the last of the old houses remaining standing. Like myself, this house is a reminder of the past. The entire village has changed... That is why the damned Greeks changed the name of the village from Kondorobi to Metamorfozi (rebirth).

"Dear Paskal you are an educated and bright person, please tell me what happened to us? Tell me who did this to us and desolated our village? We didn't do anything bad to anyone. The only thing we wanted was to live free. Where is God in all of this?! How could God allow this to happen to us? Every day we crossed ourselves and prayed to him to help us. Our ancestors were among the first people in the Kostur Region villages to build churches... even under Ottoman slavery. And look what has happened to us now?! Why didn't God stop this damned Greek tyranny...?"

Marika paused for a moment, looked at me with a sad look in her eyes and continued: "How many people has this village sacrificed?"

How many tears have been shed? How many homes have been destroyed? How many mothers' hearts have been blackened...?! No family has remained victimless. Look at your family, your grandfather Manio's family. Your father and your mother joined the partisans and so did your uncle Vanchi and aunt Evgenia. Both Vanchi and Evgenia were killed. From your uncle Taki's side his only son Kuzi and his three daughters Rina, Sika and Petrula joined the partisans. Kuzi, Rina, and Sika were killed. From the Lionda Shaldarov family four young people picked up guns, the three sons Gavro, Dini and Stefo and the daughter Tsila. All three boys were killed. From the Gelio Shaldarov family sons Spiro, Giorgi and Lambro fought in the war. Spiro and Giorgi were killed. From the Naso Shopov family sons Andrea, Taki and Iani as well as daughters-in-law Kleonika and Mika picked up guns. From the Mane Chachev family sons Foti and Tipo joined the partisans. Foti was killed. From the Shori Shaldarov family son Nasi was killed. From your uncle Risto Aleksov's family Kolio, Gicha and Veika fought in the war. From your uncle Tane Aleksov's family Mahi and Gena joined the partisans. Gena was killed. From the Dimitri Partsanov family Lambro, Sotiri and Stefo fought in the war. Sotiri and Stefo were killed. From the Dochi Shaldarov family Rina, Vasil and Itso fought in the war. Itso was killed. From the Nasi Shori family Nasi and Dzhodzhi were killed. From the Andielko family Doro, Zuber, Vasil and Dinka fought in the war. Vasil was killed. From the Panaiot Grantsarov family Iancho and Magda fought in the war. From the Shameto family Lazo and Tanka fought in the war. Iani Mihov, Nochi Ioanov and Giri Lapov also joined the partisans and fought in the war.

So much bloodshed and finally not only did we not see freedom but we were driven out of our homes and our country became desolate," concluded Marika.

I looked at her and said: "With great determination the people of Kondorobi participated in the ranks of DAG (Democratic Army of Greece) en masse. Unfortunately our great longing for freedom led us to drop everything that we loved and pick up weapons in our hands. My uncle Vanchi and Iani Mihov were newlyweds before they joined the partisans... they were just married. They were aware of what might befall them and knew they would be defying death

when they entered the theater of war. But inspired by the ideals of our ancestors with the slogan ‘Freedom or Death’, they left with their heads held high.”

This reminded me of the women crying in the streets of my village for the fallen partisans. It had become a daily occurrence. One of those fallen heroes was my uncle Vanchi. He was one of the most prominent figures in our village. He was always composed, decent and tall with a good posture, industrious, full of vitality and always in a good mood. He participated in the ranks of ELAS against the German occupation and later was one of the first fighters to join DAG and fight against the fascist Greek government. He died on Mount Gramos in an attempt to save his comrades who were attacked by an enemy airplane. The bomb that was dropped blew up his body. His sister Evgenia looked for his body parts but her search was in vain. He died but there was no body to bury.

Evgenia’s fate was also tragic. She was the most beautiful woman in the village, fragile, graceful, chestnut brown hair and dark eyes. Her divine beauty was captivating. Her soul was full of joy and kindness. She charmed the audience when she danced. They remained breathless when she danced the beloved Kostur Region dance “Mori chupi kosturianski zashireteo oroto”. She did the same later, after she joined the partisans and danced the dance “Shto mi e milo em drago mlada partizanka da stanam”... She was a favourite in the DAG 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, especially in Mihail Apostolov’s battalion. Mihail was a fearless fighter from the village Krchishta. He was nicknamed “Granite”. And it was by no accident that a feeling of mutual sympathy and love was born between them. They gave each other their word that they would wed after the war. Evgenia was kind of an amulet in his battalion and in the entire brigade. It was unthinkable that they would lose her. It was unthinkable that she would not be among them.

At the end of March 1948 Granite was personally involved in exploring the peak of Mount Kleftis in the Gramos mountain range where he was driven by the Greek government forces.

At that moment an immediate order arrived. It was issued by DAG General Headquarters to the 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade, led by Major General

Ipsilanti, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade, led by Major General Pando Vaina, to immediately head to Amarbeia and Peria on the slopes of the Olympus mountain range to protect a number of young people, volunteers from Athens and Piraeus, who were sent to join the ranks of DAG and who had been brutally attacked by the Monarcho-Fascists. Both Brigades were composed exclusively of Macedonian partisans, both men and women volunteers. They hastily, without a proper tactical plan and without the necessary preparation, even without the necessary clothing and food, rushed to rescue the Greek youth. They engaged the Greek government army in a tough but anticipated battle. Upon their withdrawal into the snowy mountains, while they were exhausted, they were brutally attacked by enemy artillery. The partisans suffered many casualties. Evgenia was wounded from a grenade explosion and unable to walk. It was impossible to help her so she was left on Mount Flamburo hiding under a rock. A short time later enemy soldiers arrived, accompanied by the Mai. That's what they were called. The Mai were members of the special set of ground cleaners who were sent to kill wounded partisans.

The same grenade that wounded Evgenia also wounded young partisan Risto Keltsakov in the leg. When he heard the voices of the Greek government troops he rolled down the hill and hid in the bushes. From there he witnessed Evgenia's terrifying death. Satisfied with their spoils, the Mai then took out their knives and butchered her. One of them licked the blood from the knife blade. Another grabbed the helpless woman by the hair, twisted her head back and, with apparent pleasure, coolly slit her throat.

With undisguised excitement Granite waited for the fighters to return. He was anxious to see his beloved Evgenia return to him. As the first partisans began to arrive he noticed they were exhausted and many returned wounded but still Granite paid no attention and looked forward to seeing Evgenia return and her ever-smiling face. But instead of seeing her he learned the tragic truth... that she had been wounded and left behind. Distressed by the unexpected news, Granite called on four brave partisans to take a stretcher and bring her back. He and the four arrived at the designated location the next morning. Granite was devastated at what he saw. He could not believe what they had done to her. He took her massacred body in

his arms and squeezed it with all his might. It seemed like no force on earth could separate them. The agony lasted until the partisans dug a grave. My aunt Evgenia's life ended early and it ended in the name of our people's great ideals... for the Macedonian people to be free. She died on March 29, 1948. She still had a Martinka on her wrist. The Martinka is a symbol of spring, a bracelet woven with red and white thread. It is put on the wrist on the first day of March and thrown out on top of a bush the first moment a swallow is seen flying. It is supposed to bring happiness. Evgenia never did discard her Martinka.

While burying Evgenia's tormented body, the partisans heard a voice calling for help. It was a wounded partisan. They took the stretcher and saved his life. He was a witness to this inhumane and abhorrent act.

The next day Granite, without a formal request from Headquarters, took his battalion and attacked the enemy with unprecedented ferocity. He inflicted great losses on them and expelled them from the position they had occupied.

The enemy was defeated on Mount Kleftis. But, as fate would have it, Granite too lost his life in this heroic struggle.

Markos Vafiadis, DAG's Supreme Commander, in his memoirs wrote: "The heroic Mihail Apostolov – Granite, from the village Krchishta, Commander of the Battalion of the 18<sup>th</sup> DAG Brigade, was killed on March 31, 1948 in Gramos..."

Marika was watching me all the time I sat there quietly, calmly reflecting on my sorrowful memories. Finally she spoke. "Paskal", she said, "do you remember the time before you left with the refugee children, the time when the "Burandari" (Greek government soldiers) came to our village with a number of trucks and took people along with their possessions and brought them to Kostur? These were the families of Spiro Giamov, Vani Lapov, Ilio Lapov, Giro Simov, Pando Kamberov, Ilio Partsanov, Petro Partsanov and the Fotiniov, Dinčov and Choli families. They were all taken to Kostur. And here we thought they wanted to protect them from the partisans. We wondered why they were fleeing from the partisans



when the partisans did not do anything bad to anyone in the village. We later learned that the damned Greek fascists had aims at separating them from us so that it would be easier for the fascists to drive us out of our village. Then you know what happened? The partisans came and collected you children. Those were sad days indeed; especially for the mothers... they were driven crazy. Even though the partisans were comforting them that the separation would only be for a short time... and that our victory was near... it not easy for the mothers. It never is easy to have a child plucked out of a mother's arms... never mind all of them, like it happened to your mother when they were asking to take you and your brother Tsile. Your mother was going crazy. Finally she decided to let you go and keep Tsile with her, without your father's permission. Where was she supposed to find him? He was fighting in Gramos. I too could not leave my sick mother here to die alone so I stayed behind. My two brothers Iani and Nochi left. They all left. Only I and your brother Tsile remained behind.

A total of 47 children left the village that day. But in spite of all the promises made by the partisans that the children would soon return, not one of them has returned. The Greek authorities deprived them of that right. And do you know why? Because according to them, we are undesirable people because we are not of Greek origin. What irony is that when a country considers itself to be the cradle of world democracy but does not know the meaning of that word! The children were convinced to leave so that they would never again return.”

Here is a list of refugee children from Kondorobi:

- Taki, Rina, Foni, Gieli, Mika, Sofa and Spirinka Shaldarov
- Kocho, Paskali, Vasil and Done Shopov
- Kuzi, Sotiri, Sterio and Dota Ioanev
- Dita and Lambro Moskov
- Eli, Taki and Risto Shishtevarov
- Nochi and Iani Chechev
- Paskali, Stavroula Gligor and Marianti Kamburov
- Giri and Lenka Mihov
- Hrisanti, Dine, Sofia and Dorka Angelkov
- Rina and Risto Shamov

- Dini and Lazo Kalfov
- Taki, Sotiri, Giorgi and Iana Grancharov
- Pavle and Ilektra Ioanov
- Sotir, Giri and Lena Shlupkov
- Veika and Tanas Papadinov

The refugee children were accompanied by designated guardians, called “mothers”, to look after them. The designated mothers from Kondorobi were Gena Ioanu, Tina Shaldarova and Kaliopi Angelkova.

I remember that day well. The whole village was in panic and everyone was overwhelmed by sadness and despair. My grandfather Manio (Damian), naturally wanting to spare me from the oppressive situation, asked me to go with him and do some pruning work at my father’s vineyard. On the way there he told me things about some of the countries in which people lived free and the children were in school. When he mentioned Poland he said the entire country was a flat plain. Wondering I asked: “If that is so, grandfather, if there are no mountains, then from where does the sun rise and set? I asked that question because our village was surrounded on all sides by mountains and everyone knew that the sun rose and set from a certain place behind the mountain peaks.

As fate would have it I spent my next 20 years in Poland.

We arrived at the vineyard in a very short time. Our vineyard, like all the other vineyards in the area, was located at a place called Zholtina stretching from the slopes of Mount Orlov Kamen all the way down to the river. Our vineyard was located between my uncle Pandi’s vineyard on the north side, Giri Machov’s vineyard on the south side, Nasi Shopov’s vineyard on the west side and Stavre and Panaiot Grancharov’s vineyard on the east side.

As my grandfather pruned the vines, I followed him collecting the trimmed branches. Then suddenly I saw a seedling popping up from the cracked ground with its first two leaf tabs open. I called my grandfather over. He looked at it, thought about it for a moment and then told me to carefully unearth it and transplant it in the corner of our vineyard where it meets Nasi Shopov and Giri Machov’s

vineyards. I did as my grandfather asked. I loosened the soil all around it and carefully lifted it. I then made a hole in the corner of our vineyard and planted it squarely at the border.

It was March 29, 1948 when my aunt Evgenia was brutally massacred. Dear reader, I swear by everything I hold dearest that what I am writing here is not some kind of literary metaphor, but the truth.

We returned home late in the afternoon. It was sad to see my mother, who all her life had not seen her father, cry because now she was about to be separated from her child. My grandmothers Sofa and Kia (Evdokia) kept cursing the damned fate that befell our family. Darkness had not yet fallen when the column of persecuted children left the village and moved toward an unknown destination. Later we would sing the song: “Where are the Macedonians, where are you, where did you go, Macedonia is crying for you.” But they were banished forever and were forbidden from returning to their homes.

All that was left in the village were old men and women and two children; Marika and my brother Tsile. Those who remained behind suffered a lot... and not just from missing their loved ones. Soon it was summer time. The meadows needed to be mowed, the grains reaped, the fields watered and the produce collected. All these things had to be done with great caution because the enemy troops were in Kostur, barely 8 km away from the village. The harvested grain and hay had to be delivered immediately to the partisans, and this was to be done during the night to avoid being bombed by the artillery mounted on the hill above Kostur, from where the nearby villages were attacked on a daily basis.

In my absence, my brother Tsile did most of the chores looking after the livestock and helping our grandmothers. The oldest people kept an eye on the roads making sure the enemy did not sneak up on the village. The women, including my mother and brother, spent the nights outside the village. They hid in the localities Orlov Kamen, Kipov Trap, Peshterata above the village, and Tsrvena Plocha. All the people believed that soon the partisans would win the war. But instead of getting good news, DAG political activists showed up in

the village and told the people that the enemy was about to start an offensive to seize Vicho and that they had to evacuate the village as soon as possible. There was nothing worse that could have happened. Instead of being freed, they now had to leave their homes. It was sad to see innocent people treated like this. They were forced to flee their village and seek salvation elsewhere. There was wailing and crying everywhere. Many tears were shed. Upset and distressed they left the village and took the road (Drvarskiot Pat) which led them to the villages Chereshnitsa and Blatse in the mountains. The next day they climbed the legendary Mount Vicho. The mountain was dotted with the graves of many fallen partisans.

The partisans greeted the fleeing villagers with songs and dance to ease their despair. But was it even possible to cheer them? But in spite of what had happened to them, they were moved by the power of the song:

“Shto mie milo em drago, mlada parizanka da stanam (I am so happy and glad to be a young partisan);  
Mlada partizanka da stanam na taa Vicho Planina (To become a young Partisan at Vicho Mountain).”

The partisans did their best to comfort the tide of people who arrived from the evacuated villages and assured them that the enemy would never take Vicho or Gramos and that those two legendary mountains would become graves for the hated fascists.

The next day the fleeing villagers passed through the villages Bapchor and Kolomnati and arrived in the village Oshchima where Greek commissars organized them into various brigades. The older girls and younger women were armed and immediately sent to fight in Gramos. The older women were assigned stretchers and dispatched to the battlefields to extract the wounded partisans. The oldest men and women were assigned kitchen, oven and laundry duty. Even little Tsile became involved with the partisans. They dressed him up in a partisan uniform that included a beret which practically covered his eyes and ears, clothes and shoes that were far too large for him, which made him look comical. Then, when mother and the other women left the camp and went to rescue wounded partisans after the Mali-Madi battle in Shishevka Buka

and after that damned battle for Lerin, Tsile walked among the wounded partisans and listened to their sad stories. He felt happy and useful when they asked him to bring them water but always left and hid when the nurses came to change bloody bandages and expose wounds. Finally mother was persuaded to accept her separation from him and find salvation for him in democratic Yugoslavia. I am sure my letters, sent to her from Poland, persuaded her that it was better to send him to safety. I wrote her a lot of letters reassuring her that I was okay and in school.

The only people left in the village after the evacuation were the very old and frail and little Marika.

The dogs roamed the streets looking for their owners but to no avail. There was no one to fetch water from the spring or from the well located in the Kalfov house. There was no one to feed the livestock. But this situation did not last too long because a few days later the Greek army arrived armed to the teeth, and following it were the Mai, the bloody murderers...

After spending some time reminiscing about the past I turned to Marika and said: "Marika! Can I ask you to tell me exactly what happened in the village after the people left? We, who left and were away, heard that many things happened but you know exactly what happened because you were here."

"My dear Paskali, what can I tell you... What happened to us I would never wish on anyone. It is difficult to speak of the torment we experienced. First the Greek military arrived and soon afterwards it left. After them came the damn Mai. They proved themselves to be ferocious beasts. They immediately began the slaughter. They hung old Sido Angelkov, the wisest man in our village. Then they hung Nochetov's mother and Soteto's poor wife. After that they looted the village and burned the houses of partisan families. They also burned your house. Your grandmother Kia had died earlier. The poor woman was unable to cope with the loss of Ivan and Gena. Your grandmother Sofa at the time was in the old Chachev house where your father kept the cattle. When the damn Mai came to the house they found your grandmother alone. She was looking after your cow Rusa, your donkey with this newborn baby and your goat

with its two babies. I was hiding in our basement cellar and watching from the tiny window. After the Mai saw the baby goats in the Chachev yard they began to rub their hands with satisfaction and ran inside. They caught the goats and slaughtered them in front of your grandmother. She began to scream, shout and curse yelling “be damned!”, “May God curse you all!”, “May you burn in hell!”...

Your dog Kaneli heard your grandmother yelling. The poor dog was at the Drvarski Pat road waiting for you to return. Kaneli was a strange dog. He was always with you when you were playing your favourite games. Do you remember him carrying your school bag when you were returning home from school? No one in the village had a dog like him... or in any other village that I know of. Your grandfather Manio’s dog Fula gave birth to him. They say he was the son of a line of dogs extending to the dogs of Shar Planina. Fula always looked after the sheep, especially in Partsan on Mount Mali-Madi, during the summers. She also guarded the entire village. No wolf dared approach the village when she was on guard. One time when your grandfather Manio lost a sheep he sent Kaneli to find it... and he did and brought it back home. Do you remember what he did to Sia Shaldarova when the women were doing their laundry? I was there too and so was your grandmother Sofa with a full basket of clothing and, of course, she was accompanied by Kaneli. He would not allow your grandmother to go alone anywhere. So jokingly, Sia Shaldarova grabbed your grandmother’s laundry basket and began to run away. Kaneli ran after her, grabbed her by the dress and tore it off, leaving poor Sia naked from the waist down. The women who witnessed this died laughing... Poor Sia felt embarrassed... especially when she was returning to the village with a torn dress.

When you left, the poor dog was not only locked up in the barn, but also tied down. Your grandmother Sofa had to do the same when Tsile and your mother left. There was no force that could prevent him from following you. Ever since then that dog has been going to Drvarski Pat to await your return. So when he heard your grandmother’s desperate voice he rushed back as fast as he could to save her, without thinking of the consequences for itself. With lightning speed the dog jumped on one of the culprits and knocked him to the ground, but before the dog could tear out his throat, another of the culprits stabbed it with his rifle sword. The poor dog

fell down. After that they all shot it in the head. Your poor grandmother could not stand it any more so she grabbed a hoe and almost hit one of them on the head, but another one struck her with the butt of his rifle and she fell to the ground.

After that the culprits took the skinned baby goats and rushed off to plunder more houses and seek other victims.

I saw this tragic event play out with my own eyes. I was terrified and so was the cow, the donkey and the cat hiding on a beam under the eaves. The first to come to your grandmother's aid was the little donkey which started to lick her face. The cat jumped down and ran towards Kaneli but when it saw that he was dead it went to your grandmother and it too began to lick her face. Moments later the poor woman opened her eyes then braced herself on the little donkey and rose to her feet. I too then rushed to her to help her. The two of us dug a grave for Kaneli and buried him behind the barn. Your grandmother asked me to untie the cow and the donkey and to let them move around freely while she, with her last ounce of strength, went inside the house, lay down on the rogozna (mattress made of braided hay) and died. My dear Paskali I feel sorry for you to have to hear all these horrible things... but what can we do? This is how God wanted things. He cursed us, but I don't know why he did that. Why has he allowed such injustices to be perpetrated against innocent people? I don't know what to tell you. Perhaps he did this to expose and unmask the real face of the infidels... to prove that the world is run by the pawns of the devil.

The cries of the frail elderly could be heard from afar. Many were forcibly loaded on a truck and taken to the village Visheni where they were unloaded and told to go to the partisans on their own. Included among the elderly were Risto and Tane and their wives as well as the wives of the men who had previously been interned in the Greek island prison camps. Included among the wives were Liondevitsa, Shamevitsa, Stavrevitsa, Nasevitsa, Gielevitsa, Kirovitsa, Ilievitsa Panaiotka, Sotiritsa and Dochevitsa.

In the coming days the entire village became desolate. After that the families that had been evacuated to Kostur earlier were returned. They came back as the victors of this struggle. They were also

armed with rifles to defend the village from the partisans. The moment they arrived they began to search the houses of those who left the village and rob them of everything. After that they divided up the fields of those who had left and started a new life for themselves. A little later they changed the Greek name of the village from “Kondoropi” to “Metamorfofi” meaning supposed “transformation”. (In the 1920’s the Greeks changed the name of the village from “Kondorobi” to “Kondoropi”) Then everything began to change. Macedonian boys began to marry Madzhir girls and Macedonian girls married boys, who knows from where. They brought a teacher and a priest from Kostur. The new villagers were not happy with one of the two existing churches, left over from an earlier era, one belonging to the Patriarchy and the other to the Exarchy. They brought the bishop from Kostur to swing the first pick against the Exarchist church and after that it was destroyed. But a miracle happened. Upon returning to Kostur the same bishop fell off the donkey that was taking him back and died on the spot. Along with the church they also destroyed the school in the upper neighbourhood because they saw it as Bulgarian.

It was forbidden to speak Macedonian in the village. It was particularly forbidden to speak Macedonian to children. If a child spoke even a single word in Macedonian in the school, the authorities immediately contacted the parents and threatened them with expelling their child from the school. Later they opened nurseries for preschool children so that they could teach them Greek at an earlier age and to prevent them from learning Macedonian from their grandparents. They have changed our language dear Paskali, they have changed our language... Do you know what that means? Now, except for me, no one speaks Macedonian in the village... I don’t know if anyone even knows the Macedonian language. These damned people have changed everything but they can’t change our souls... no one can change that. I don’t know how long this will last but for the moment, time is on their side. Now they say they want to rename the localities inside our village. They don’t want to call them “Divata Topola”, “Orlov Kamen”, “Milivi Nivie”, “Zholtna”, “Kirov Trap”, “Tsrvenata Plocha”, “Pirov Kamen”, “Belite Kamenia”, “Dolnata Goritsa”, “Gornata Goritsa”, “Koriata”, “Batakot”, “Dabcheto”, “Dontava Livada”, “Aivazova Livada”, “Papadinova Livada”, “Vishenskata Livada”, “Vanchova



Livada”, or “Gemova Livada”. The children who were born after the war (Greek Civil War) don’t know what “Kolenda babo” means. Even the sounds of folk music have subsided. Nowadays they play mostly synthetic music even at weddings. They don’t wear “martinki” in the spring. Young boys and girls no longer adorn themselves with martinki and neither do they adorn the spring lambs with them. They consider these pagan rituals that should be forgotten. They no longer sing Macedonian songs. They changed the face of the village and destroyed everything that was Macedonian. Even the eagles at Orlov Kamen left their nests and went who knows where. And do you know how our village got its name? It got it from the condor, one of those largest birds of prey that could lift an entire lamb and carry it off. Down there, under Orlov Kamen, at Zholtna is where all the village vineyards are located. Kondorobi was widely known not only for its watermelons, but also for its grapes and wines. Our village was known for its healing water that runs in the grove near the river. People from the surrounding villages and even from Greece and Bulgaria have come here to bathe in our water. Lately they have been talking about our little church Sotir. They say that this is oldest surviving landmark from the past, not only here in Macedonia but all over Greece. Now they call it “Sotir the Saviour”.

They have also forsaken the valley. You no longer see the golden stalks of wheat we used to plant or the green grass in the meadows full of beautiful flowers. There are no longer the songs of the workers harvesting the wheat with their sickles or cutting the grass with their scythes. Now the entire valley is planted with fruit trees, mostly apples. Every year agronomists come from Kostur and spray the trees with toxins at least 12 to 14 times a year. They ruined the fields with those damn poisons. Now you don’t see any turtles, lizards, small birds, partridges, rabbits, or snakes... not even an ant or a grasshopper. The lake too has become devoid of life. You no longer see the tall reeds that looked like a forest. They destroyed everything in the lake. The ducks and geese are gone and so are the cormorants and herons and all the other flocks of birds. Remember how clean the lake water was? You and your friends constantly swam in it and sometimes brought back clams. I remember one time you brought a clam and gave it to your grandfather. He opened it and ate it raw.

The poisons were transferred to the people when they brought water to the village. The water was taken from Dontova Livada, located in the middle of the valley where fertilizers and other chemicals were heavily used. On top of that, polluted lake water was brought through the ditches to the meadows in the valley and used to water the grass. Do you remember, Paskali, you were the best at catching the small fish in the trenches even before they arrived in the meadows. But my brother Nochi caught the biggest one in the grass when it followed the water on to the meadow. He struggled with it a while before catching it. Kostur was famous for its fish. There was demand for them everywhere. Your father knew that because he was a fisherman.

Listen Paskali! I will tell you one more thing that I know which you will probably not believe. But this you will see for yourself because it is in your vineyard. I am talking about a mulberry tree which we came to know as the “the mulberry tree in Lambro’s vineyard”. Meaning your father’s vineyard. The tree became fear and terror for the villagers. It was like nothing mattered to that tree; not even the changes that were taking place in the village. Immediately after you left it began to grow and in a few years it covered the vineyards that were closest to it. At first the villagers marveled at it and often wondered whether this was good or bad. The tree did not bear mulberries but provided shelter for the birds which began to chirp early in the morning and sang their beautiful songs all day long, songs which could be heard all the way to the village.

Anxiety in the villagers reached a peak when they decided to end the tree and save themselves from it. First they decided to burn it down by burning straw around its trunk, but the tree refused to burn. Then they took an axe to cut it down but because of superstitions no one wanted to touch it. Later the villagers contemplated hiring woodcutters from Kostur to do the job but a disease appeared in the village and killed several people. The villagers panicked and some even decided to send their children away... as far as Australia. And since then, Paskali, the mulberry tree has remained intact. Everyone is afraid of it. They wouldn’t even go near it. Iani Shopov, whose vineyard was covered the most by the tree’s branches, stopped cultivating the space near it. What else can I tell you...? If you are

not afraid you can go and see it for yourself,” concluded Marika with a smile on her face.

“Oh Marika, Marika, I came back here for exactly that reason but I had no idea that I would find someone from the older generation. I didn’t come here to see our old burned-down house. I came here to light a candle for our dead relatives and visit my mulberry tree. It is mine because I planted it...” replied Paskal.

“Not so loud, Paskali, we don’t want anyone to hear you because we don’t know what they will do. So tell me, Paskali, how and when did you plant that tree?” Marika asked.

“Well, it happened the day before I left the village. My grandfather asked me to go with him to prune the vineyard. Do you remember that day? It was March 29, 1948 when my aunt Evgenia was killed by those damned fascists. That little stalk appeared to me in front of my feet and I planted it in my father’s vineyard at a place close to the border of Nasi Shopov and Giri Machov’s vineyards. It was a gift from God. That is why the mulberry tree survived and could not be touched by anyone. It proudly persisted because it was a symbol of our people’s endurance. It is a reminder to all those who changed the village that the memory of it will never be forgotten,” replied Paskal.

“If I had known that, my dear Paskali, every day I would have placed fresh flowers under it. Let the enemy go to hell. I noticed that every time I passed by the tree it seemed to me that the tree was watching me without a frown like it watched others, but with a smile. Thank you very much for telling me the truth about this wonderful mulberry tree. Now I know that I am not alone in the village,” said Marika.

I said my goodbyes to my good-natured cousin Marika and set off in a hurry to have my long awaited meeting.

Just as I climbed on top of Goritsa, I saw my majestic mulberry tree. I walked slowly towards it and when I came closer my excitement began to rise like crazy. Finally I got to the vineyard and stood on the opposite corner. There was a terrifying silence. The rustling of

leaves and branches stopped. It felt like a thousand eyes were fixed on me. Then, in a loving voice, I said: “I am Paskal, the person who planted you exactly 60 years ago. Forgive me for I could not come to see you any earlier. I bring you greetings and I am proud of you!”

At that moment it seemed to me like every leaf became bright like it was illuminated by the rays of a bright sun. I took some steps towards it. At that moment all the leaves began to dance, greeting me with their quiver. The closer I went the louder the quiver became. Then the branches began to wave. The whole mulberry tree shook as I walked round it touching its branches and they touched me. Finally I approached its trunk and grabbed it in an embrace and gave it my infinite love... showering the soil below with my watery eyes. In the great excitement my knees gave away and I knelt down beside its trunk. I felt the mulberry tree shake and I heard its voice spring from its depths. It was a rebellious voice, a voice of pride and dignity. I looked down as I tried to stand up. I noticed a young mulberry stalk taking root near its aging mother. I was impressed and happy to see such a beautiful sight. I crossed myself and gently and lovingly caressed the young fledgling. I stood up and took a long breath. I felt overwhelmed, happy to have seen what I wanted to see... but this was not everything about the mulberry tree in Lambro's vineyard.

#### A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

I wrote this book for the sole purpose of preserving the memory of the wonderful people who lived in the village Kondorobi. These people wrote the brightest pages of our nation's existence. They were full of vitality, pride and were very much conscious of their own noble values.

Through their fate I tried to show my people's defiance and determination to fight for freedom, and the tragic end of all their wishes and hopes. They were victims of inhuman treatment, pushed to leave, to be destroyed, to be expelled from their homeland and scattered worldwide. I wanted to pay my tribute to the many fighters who gave their lives in the name of freedom and human dignity.

I tried to provide authenticity in all developments in the book. The people's names used are real names. Most of the script in the Macedonian version of this book is written in the dialect the people spoke. All events presented in the book are factual.

I want to express my gratitude to my brother Vasko (Tsile) for his assistance in reviving the memories of our village, especially the stories that were told to us by our grandfathers, uncles and our father who gave us our dearest memories he himself had preserved.

As a complement to the book I have also introduced a vocabulary of about 550 words from the original dialect spoken in Kondorobi. These words are part of my memory and I remember them to this day (you can find them in the Macedonian version of this book).

March 2012

## BOOK REVIEW

By writing the book “The mulberry tree in Lambro’s vineyard” author Paskal Kamburovski has left us with a record of his memories and important historical events significant to the Macedonian people. Paskal has proficiently and productively researched old Macedonian events and has uncovered historical facts which reflect on one of the many shocking testimonies of suffering, horror and repression the Macedonian people have experienced in the hands of the Greeks. With their omnipotent low malevolent experiments, procedures and organized acts in continuity, the Greeks with the same intensity in all periods, have a single aim: to assimilate and destroy everything that is Macedonian, with the pronounced sustainability of Greek Phanariot dramatism, egoistic-racist attacks on everything that is not Greek. The Greeks employ Machiavellian aggressive aspirations towards everything foreign like it is automatically and deservedly theirs. For generations the persistent Greek gene has been coded with trends for counterfeiting, lying, stealing, hypocrisy and pretense. One time, the famous first century Roman, Juvenal said that deceptive Greece is capable of forging its own history.

Unfortunately Kondorobi, the village of Eagles and Condors, one of the more famous villages in Kostur Region, and its population have not been spared from the characteristic Greek mentality, about which the author gives us a real picture. He tells as about the suffering the innocent, honest and industrious people of Kondorobi had to endure in the hands of the Greeks.

Kondorobi is a typical Macedonian village located on the breast of Macedonia with well-developed and nurtured Macedonian folk traditions and culture. The gentle people of Kondorobi lived through and survived occupations, wars, hunger, poverty, arson, looting, torture, violence, murder, rape, arrests, persecution, genocide, mutilation, internments, deportations, terror, molesting, sadism, isolation, banning, humiliations, insults, displacement, denials, beatings, divisions, discords, assimilation, guardianship, intimidation, pain, sorrow and many other misdeeds inappropriate for humanity and for humans.

The script can be read in a single breath because its theme is inspiring and factual, styled with a unique and easy to understand style and with an approachable expression for anyone who values objectivity and fairness, honest views and care for the feelings of those who have suffered in Kondorobi, Kostur Region and for those who went through the Macedonian hell.

Every word, every line, every thought that you read in this book clearly expresses the content of events, further gaining importance as the author successfully includes the original use of the local Macedonian Kondorobi dialect and expressions used in this region, which Paskal himself apparently understands and speaks. He is a speaker and expert in this dialect of his village and shows it with pride like a Macedonian.

By reading “The mulberry tree in Lambro’s vineyard” the readers are given an opportunity to authentically broaden their knowledge, not only about Kondorobi and its people but also about their temperament for their village in the past.

The picturesque view of the village square gatherings, festive gatherings, the source of joy in song and dance, the freshness of

hopes and common sufferings in the villagers, their living and deep patriotic roots, their persistence for survival through torture and a meager life, interwoven with quenched impulses for survival and the future is the precious heritage of civilization rooted in the gene of generational continuity, of time and space, encouragement created and nurtured in the Macedonians by birth and a good attitude to everything surrounding the natural cosmic identity, phenomenon and legality.

This book has the power to inspire and nourish the will and ideas of tomorrow's Macedonians. It has the ability to instill pride in the generations to come to remain consistent successors to our ancestors who were wed with glory and honour that indebted the world with two great empires (Macedonian and Byzantine), with the Justinian legal system and with progressive social struggles.

The last part of the book has very conveniently extracted and highlighted the symbolism of the mulberry tree with its allegorical manifestations and sign references, growing and mixed with human emotions and imagination, with signals of messages that the tree manifests toward good and evil, its targeted response to those who approached closer to it and around it, from birth to old age, from sprout to create offspring - mother and daughter mulberry trees, as the epitome of the natural flow of a biological world and the people in it, regardless of the fates that befall and the unpredictability from all varieties and areas of persistence.

Those messages have an educational sense. They most concisely and clearly describe the situation with inspiringly prompted written testimony. They most importantly prompt determination to carefully and originally collect, resolve and rescue from oblivion, from forgetting a Macedonian time, place and history, marked with every day darkness and trauma. The trauma of Kondorobi and its people nestled in the natural splendor of Kostur Region, home of his father and mother and home of his childhood and lost dreams.

Vladimir Ivanovski  
Macedonian language Professor