



The inner struggle begins. A combination of feelings which make it difficult to define love in one consistent way.

Eurobiographia 2

Stories of European Inhabitants, Yesterday and Today

Stories of Rights and Democracy

Stories of Belonging to Europe



EUROPEAN MEMORIES



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

THE DARKNESS WAS GONE

(video-narration)

Nikolay Tsonev, Bulgaria

See the video on the Project CD-Rom, or on the European Memories digital archive:

<http://www.europeanmemories.eu/Stories/Videonarrations>

My name is Nikola Dzhambazov. I was born in Razpopovtsi. Now I live in Veliko Tarnovo but I have close ties with the quarter as my birthplace.



After graduating from high school I immediately went to Konstantin as a regular teacher.

After finishing the school year they made me clerk in the village. One afternoon while we were coming back home from work an amateur photographer took a picture of us on the bridge with which he documented the laying of the electrical system. In the photo you

can see – the two boys who laid the electrical wires, me, Stefan Zahariev, Nikifor Popov and Hristo Koev.

After the Second World War the situation was very serious.

The war had caused a lot of hardship for the Bulgarian population - including the village of Razpopovtsi. There were gas lamps, there was no light and therefore on the initiative of the leading people in the community preparation for the laying of the electrical system began. In order to do this we had to collect copper vessels and bring them to the factory. There, copper wire was manufactured from them which we received to put in the houses. Enthusiasm was very high, all the vessels were collected and delivered to the factory, after that we received the necessary wires that were to be put in the homes. The amount of wire available was small and that's why we were forced to lay only two bulbs and two contacts in every house. There were two young men from the Electrification, who began to put the wire in the houses.

These young people had to work in every house, the people fed them and put them up for the night and thus after some time the entire neighbourhood was electrified. Enthusiasm was very high – the reason was that for the first time the gas lamp was to be replaced by the light bulb. The date on which the electricity was turned on was established – it was at the beginning of the year. All the people attended the ceremony in the community centre. In every house the bulbs were left on. The greatest excitement was when in the entire neighbourhood the lights were switched on and for the first time the entire quarter was illuminated. The gas lamp was gone and the darkness was gone too.

Jury motivation

The video narrative is based on a photograph from the personal archive of a man who as a young civil servant was charged with the task of organizing the electrification of his village a few years after the end of World War II. This is an emotional story that illustrates how the individual and the community are connected in a joint effort to replace the dim glow of the gas lamp with the bright light of the electric bulb in a small Bulgarian mountain village. The merits of the video narrative can be seen from several different viewpoints and on various levels.

Firstly, the story is historical evidence of a breakthrough event in the customs and technology of the Bulgarian village: the advent of electrical power, which greatly changed the life of the people. Often, the younger generations do not realize the importance of such innovations. Life in the contemporary world is directly connected with the use of electricity. Thus the need to produce energy is one of the fundamental engines driving the economies of the so-called “developed” countries.

We think that being reminded of this – the value of such technological supports to everyday life – is important, especially nowadays, when global warming requires the development of alternative ways of producing energy. Thus, it is important to keep past experiences in mind in order to find a new balance between human needs and the need to avoid disturbing the natural environment of which we are a part.

Secondly, the story traces the way in which the people in the village community unite their efforts and work together in order to make a great technological change a reality.

This is a very important message to today’s citizens in a united Europe confirming the merits of working together towards a common goal. It reminds us that many of the achievements of modern civilization which we take for granted are the result of

the common efforts of men and women, who worked together to improve the environment we live in today.

Last but not least, it is important to note that the story is told by a young man who devotes his artistic talent to creating an exciting and memorable story, thus passing on a heritage of knowledge preserved in the memory of community elders. In this sense, this video narrative is a good example of inter-generational relations and dialogue in Europe.

General information on the story

The Darkness Was Gone

Thematic area:	Another Europe is Possible - Stories of Social Change and Commitment
Time of the narrated events:	1949
Geographical places where the events narrated took place:	Bulgaria, Razpopovtsi, district Elena
Time the work was produced:	2009

Read or download this story and others from the digital archive:
<http://www.europeanmemories.eu/eng/Stories>

Other information on the context

The electrification of a country is the foundation on which its material and spiritual culture is developed. Electrification of the settlements in Bulgaria played an important part in the construction of modern statehood immediately after the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1878. The Europeanization of the cities – reflected in the architecture of public buildings and buildings – went hand in hand with technical progress, which changed the lifestyle of the people and their everyday lives.

By the 1930s, the electric light was enjoyed mainly by the inhabitants of cities.

The villages, where nearly 85% of the Bulgarian population lived at the time, remained without electricity for decades. According to the statistical yearbooks of the League of Nations (UN) for 1937-1940, and of the Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1939 on indicators for the development of material culture of European countries, Bulgaria was ranked last but one.

The slow pace of electrification affected its overall decline on the socio-economic plane by the middle of the last century. After World War II, Bulgaria started to build socialism of the Soviet type in an entirely new political and economic way. Transformations in the economy were connected with forced industrialization and cooperative farming of the land. This was a way that differed from the changes going on at that time in Western Europe, leading to the separation of the country from European markets. Electrification was brought in as a priority of the Bulgarian economy.

Enormous resources were allocated to the modernization project. For several decades the entire working population of Bulgaria – young and old – were included in the construction of the country's economic base, a developed modern agricultural sector and new social conquests.

Exchanging the paraffin lamp with the light bulb became a symbol of revolutionary changes in the life of Bulgarian peasants. This is the context of this autobiographical narrative which describes the emotions of the entire community when in 1949 electricity was brought to the small mountain village of Razpopovtsi, which today is a quarter in the city of Elena.

The organisation of the work was entrusted to a young clerk in the municipality - Nikola Dzhambazov. After electric light was brought to the village, he went on to continue his education at the University of Burgas. Then he worked as a teacher in Veliko Tarnovo for many years. Many of his students still go to see him and talk about him with great affection.

And his grandson Nikolay motivates his vision for the video narrative in the following way: "And somehow the comparison came of itself: between the electricity that has come to the village and the light that my grandfather inspired in the hearts of his students".

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