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My competition entry was about...

...Bulgaria during the time of communism: The military imposed severe movement restrictions on areas near the borders, people were forced to leave their homes and had to move to different parts of the country. In order to enter other regions they needed a special document issued by the police.



* 1998

Topic of history competition:
Boundaries in History – History without boundaries

Year of participation:
2016

Title of your competition entry:

» Closed areas in border regions under socialism «



How did you decide on your topic ?

I knew about the severe movement restrictions in border regions during the communist era. However, there was very little public information about it. So I got inspired to do my own research. Living in today's Europe with free movement, I was stunned to discover how political regimes can draw borders between states and within its population.



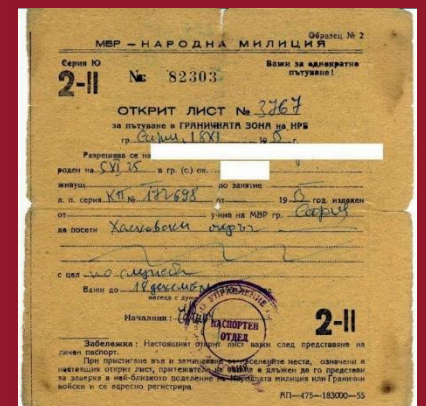
How did you react when you came upon surprising points during your research?

It was fascinating to see the different thoughts on travel and movement limitations of two generations – those born in 1940s and their children. It was one of the challenges I faced – to analyze personal testimonies in the light of their social context. Since the research topic is still painful to some and has the potential to divide, it took special efforts to be as objective as possible and to avoid the danger of a simple explanation of experiences and present problems.



Did the research affect you personally?

Very much! Like many peers, I also used to be critical about the senior citizens for being inactive, distrustful and even grumpy. Having a glimpse at what they have been through made me less judgmental. Also, since the history textbooks' information is mainly a series of facts, it was eye-opening to understand that not everything is linear, how changes occur in society and how human interpretations matter.



I based my research

- ...on source material
- ...on interviews
- ...on family history
- ...on literature
- ...on the internet

» All people are living histories. «

