

## **RG-50.030.0053**

### **Summary**

Ion Cioaba, born on January 15, 1935 in Băilești, Dolj county.

Family: Great grandfather was Bulibașa. Father also Bulibașa, [elected], was the representative of the Romanian Romani; they used to live in carts and tents and traveled from place to place, sometimes to Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Russia. Ion Cioaba describes their way of life and the role of Bulibașa.

He shares the origin of the Romani, their history, and their relation with Romanian people. In 1941 there were rumors that the Romani had to leave. They checked with authorities and stayed (without permission). They were in approx. 400 to 500 carts next to Craiova, at Valea Sarpelui. His father bribed the Prefect Trifan and they continued to live there. In 1942 the Germans enter Romania and asks to clean the country of Romani, by Băilești sending them to Russia.

Prefect Trifan assured the Bulibașa that they would have houses and conditions for living there. Romani Father convened the Bulibasas from Romania, informed them of the situation, and decided to go to Russia [Ukraine].

They left Craiova with around 400 carts and went to Pitesti, stopped at Balș next to Slatina, for a day. From Balș to Pitești they encountered a German convoy that shot and killed approx. 20-30 Romani. From Pitesti they traveled to Targoviște, where they stayed for one week. There arrived other Romani from all over. From Targoviște to Focșani they encountered another German convoy that shot at them and ran them over them with tanks killing 600-700 Romani. He complained to the authorities and was informed that the Jews have the same fate.

From Focsani they traveled to a small place next to Suceava and stayed there for two weeks, and repair the carts. They were advised to travel by night and on country roads. They arrived at the Dniester River at Salciu (possibly Salcia, Moldova), with approx. 6000-7000 carts. At that point they had already 3000 dead. Before crossing the Dniester, they were asked for the gold they had. His father taught them to swallow part of their gold; the ones that were found with hidden gold over the bridge were killed. From there they arrived at Tiraspol and stayed for a week.

They continued their travel to Treidouble [?] in Ukraine where they met with other groups of Romani approx. 30000-40000 carts. They stayed there for three months. Commandant Părvu, put them to work in the fields, and then called his father to Trevisor, and they ordered him to bring all the carts with the horses the next days. 16000 to 20000 Romani arrived with their carts and horses, were closed in a shed, and promised that they would get housing and work at the collective farms. They were let free, but without their carts and horses. Fights started amongst the Romani. More than 1000 Romani were killed by the German troops. It was around November 20, and people were not used to the cold, having inadequate clothing. The Russian

sent approximately 40 big carts with horses to transport them to Borilovka, which took two days on the roads. They arrived and saw some earth mounds, which was their new lodging, and was not enough for all the people. The first night approximately 10000 people froze to death. He describes the huts of mud, some wood and the measures his father took to house all survivors.

The camp was far away from the villages of Transniaska, Trevizor, Berilovka, and 30-40 km far from potatoes and corn fields. Major Velea was the camp manager, assisted by second lieutenant Cocora. They were guarded from far away (20-30 km) by the gendarmerie.

Water came from the river Bug. The spring rains and snow melt killed more of the population, [approximately 2000-3000], because the huts collapsed, burying people. They lived there for one and a half years. In time they improved their life condition by cutting wood from the forest, building better lodging, starting to work in their professions, and stealing crops from the fields [if caught they were shot.]

In February 1944 there were rumors that the Romanian troops were in retreat and the Americans were coming.

His father went to Volta and obtained from the commander 10 carts with horses. He organized the Romani to return home.

He describes an incident when the Germans were ready to shoot his father, but he was spared. But a German tank intentionally passed over his uncle's [Zdrelea] cart, killing all 24 people in it. He tells the story of his uncle Ilie who saved his father's life.

They lost their carts and were on foot on the way to Tiraspol, avoiding Germans who are also on retreat but would kill each Romani they encountered. They were hungry, dirty and full of vermin, had typhus. Some people abandoned their children. After two weeks they arrived in Moldova, where they found abandoned houses with lots of food.

They arrived in Larga on Easter, and the local population fed them. They stayed there for three months. At this point they had lost 35000 Romani. At Larga, his mother got sick with typhus, and stayed there longer. From Larga with some gold they cross the Dniester and arrived at Berești [Moldova]. His mother was hospitalized for two weeks, while his father worked and made some money. He saw Germans dead on the side of the roads killed by Russians.

From Berești they traveled to Slatina by train. They arrived at Tâlculești where his father had some friends.

His father got sick with typhus, and stayed one month in the hospital. The Romanian population was very friendly and helped the Romani.

In the last part of the interview, he expresses some grievances related to not having monuments and recognitions for their suffering and no compensations from Germany.

Presents some pictures:

Picture of mother, age 88, in national dress of Romani with copper pipe.

His uncle, lives next to Sibiu, Tălmaci.

Girls from Sebeș, Sibiu in national Romani dress.

Daughter, Gabi with her daughter, young boy working metal cauldron.

Uncle and his wife at their house, shows some very old ceramic plates.

Better picture of mother, better view of her dress and pipe.