

Ölyvös

(today, Vil'khivka, Sub-Carpathia, Ukraine)

by Joel WEISS, Israel

Courtesy of Daniel WEISZ, France

My grand-parents who lived in Ölyvös were David Mendel Weiss and his wife, Ella (née Friedman). When they got married, Ölyvös was in the Habsburg Empire.

What I know about Ölyvös, the region and my family until 1918, when they moved to Budapest is as follows:

Before 1918 region of Ölyvös was part of the Habsburg Empire. Ölyvös was located in the Ugocsa County in the region known as Subcarpatha-Ruthenia. Ugocsa was one of the eight counties on the left bank of the Tisza river.

The Jewish population in this province increased dramatically in the years between 1835 and 1910: 30,000 in 1835, 120,000 in 1880 and 200,000 in 1910. Most of this growth took place in such cities as Nagyvarad, which increased its Jewish population ten fold to over 15,000. Such numbers however did not occur in Ugocsa where the Jewish population also increasing greatly percentage wise, only increased in terms of numbers from 1,419 in 1835 to 7,835 in 1880 and to 11,850 in 1910.

No great cities were located there and many of the Jews remained in small villages and towns. However, in the two largest towns in the county, Tisza-Újlak (today, Vylok) and Nagyszöllös (today, Vynohradiv) where the Jewish inhabitants made up 30% and 21.4% of the population, respectively

Ölyvös was one of these small villages, however, because of its proximity to the Ugocsa border with Bereg county, did not fall into the Jewish sphere of the major towns of Ugocsa, but into that of Munkács (today, Mukacheve), the main city of Bereg county. Munkács was where the Jews made up some 44% of the population, was a strong center of Judaism led by Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira.

Ölyvös itself was a small community and therefore had no rabbi of its own. Instead, all questions of Jewish law were sent to chief rabbi.

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In 1911, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, who was the leader of the community of Ilosva (today, Irshava) filled this role. He was the brother of Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Teitelbaum who was the latest (1904-1926) in a long dynasty of Teitelbaum as the Rabbi of Sziget.

There was one synagogue in Ölyvös, orthodox, as most all were in villages this size. On Shabbat morning, there would be between thirty and forty people attendance. David Weiss (better known as Weiss Mendel), my grand father, a salesman for flourmill parts, was the man who prepared the synagogue and made sure that all ran smoothly there.

The third key figure in the Jewish community of Ölyvös was the Shochet (ritual slaughter and butcher). The village did not have its own. Instead there was one Shochet who served all the villages in the area, stopping in each one once a week and the Jews would have all the meat slaughtered and prepared for the week ahead. But the truth is that Ölyvös was not a rich town and the Jews rarely ate meat other than on Shabbat.

Ever since 1868, compulsory education existed in Hungary. In areas such as Ugucsá, there was no such thing as secular public schools. Instead there were schools run by the churches in which students not of that church's faith were protected by law and therefore exempt from the religious classes of the church. Such was the case in Ölyvös.

Most of the people were part of the Ukrainian church, which was Eastern Orthodox. Street language was Ukrainian, the language of instruction in school was Hungarian. The Jewish children of Ölyvös attended the school between the ages of 8 and 12 where they received secular education. For their Jewish education at age 4, they started in the Cheder, which they attended early in the morning before continuing on to the church school.

When world war 1 broke out most Ruthenians welcomed the invading Russian armies (for several reasons), such was not the case with the Jews of the region, they all served in the Hungarian army, including the 3 oldest sons of David Mendel Weiss: Alexander, Herman and Moritz.

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In 1918 this region was given to the newly created state of Czechoslovakia and Ölyvös changed its name into Vlachovo. David Mendel Weiss (born in Ölyvös in 1864) and his wife Ella Friedman (born in Ölyvös in 1865) had 9 children born in Ölyvös, 6 boys and 3 girls.

The Weiss family had decided earlier in 1918 that nationalistic tensions in their area were becoming dangerous, therefore they sold everything and the entire family moved to Budapest.

In 1940, the three sons of David Mendel Weiss (Moritz, Herman and Marton) were drafted into the Hungarian Labor Brigade, and by chance and luck, they came back and even survived the war.

Daniel WEISZ
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