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The Landau Family of Częstochowa

My family's story begins in Przyrów, a small town which, for five hundred years, held city-status. My great-grandparents' surnames, just like other Jewish surnames, derive from the locations or regions where my ancestors lived. Landau was a tiny town in Bavaria, in south-east Germany. A large number of Jews had lived there from the 13th Century. The surname "Landau" was quite widespread, and adding the suffix "er", gave it some grandeur. A diverse range of people carried the surname "Landau" and, here as example, I will highlight two: Lew Dawidowicz Landau, a Russian physicist who won a Nobel Prize and Mayer Hirsh Landauer, a great philosopher and writer from the years 1908-1941.

My great-grandfather, Dawid Hirsh Zwi Landau, was born in Przyrów and lived there all his life. His wife, Dobra Jentel Krymołowska, came from Łódź. The family led a very religious life. They had a cutlery factory (spoons, knives and forks). Dawid Hirsh was also involved in trade.

Of all the children born from this union, only eight reached adulthood. In the 1920's, as the sons grew up, they gradually left Przyrów for Częstochowa. In 1930, the last Landau's left that small town and the majority moved to Częstochowa, to where they also moved the factory. They soon extended their product range. Dobra and Dawid Hirsh's, firstborn son, Jakow Shimon, was already helping his father, from a young age, to run and develop the business. After the death of his father, the responsibility of running the whole factory fell to him. That had already occurred in Przyrów.



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Jakow Shimon married young, became a widower young and was left with three children, which made his life quite difficult. His second marriage solved his problems. Jakow led a religious way of life, just like his parents. He was chassid, a follower of Rabbi Aleksander. Regarding important matters or before making serious decisions, he would consult with the Rabbi and ask for his blessing.

The second son was Pinhas – Pinkus (my grandfather). As a young man, shortly after his marriage to Gela Fiszman, he left for Częstochowa, in order to ascertain the possibility of building a factory there. The reconnaissance was satisfactory, so the decision to move was made quickly. They lived in a tenement on Krakowska Street, where there was a large block of land upon which Pinhas built the factory. The whole family, comprising Pinkus, Gela, three daughters and one son, were able to live there.

The home possessed a warm atmosphere. Gela, as well as running the home and caring for the children, was active in various charities. The oldest daughter, Estera, looked after her younger siblings. When Estera went to the Jewish high school, they hired a nanny for the children. A handsome factory worker was assigned to escort Estera to and from school. He later became her husband. Pinkus was also a chassidic follower of Rabbi Aleksander and, twice yearly, he would travel to him for advice on important matters. Grandma Gela often had problems with her health so that, often, my grandparents would travel to Karłowice. Grandma went there for her health, but grandfather visited industrial plants and observed their production methods. He ordered machines and imported them into Poland to his factory and to the BRA-LAND factory, in which, for a certain time, he was a shareholder. He convinced the partners to manufacture meat-mincing machines bearing the name BRA-LAND. The BRA-LAND company, established in Przyrów in 1927, was shortly thereafter moved to 5 Kawia Street in Częstochowa. The factory expanded rapidly, occupying the land on Kawia up to Krótka Street. To this day, my home contains a machine bearing the BRA-LAND name. I am very sentimental about it as it is the only family article which has survived until today.

When the War broke out, Pinkus's son, Szaja was already married and had a two year old daughter.

In 1942, the Gestapo took the whole family – some to be shot and the rest to camps. In the beginning, Szaja was put to work in the Hasag munitions factory and, later, was moved from camp to camp. Despite being tragically weak, he survived until liberation. On a transport with other survivors, he managed to get to Palestine. Szaja's sister, Ester, also survived. She was in hiding for the duration of the War in the suburbs of Częstochowa in the care of her husband. They lived near a barracks in Zacisz, in Katarzyna Bilaska's a small house. She was a very brave person. The whole district knew of the fact, but no one denounced them. It was a district of remarkably brave and honest people. Before searches with dogs, my parents were warned. The police constable would also give warnings of extraordinary operations searching for Jews.

Dobra and Dawid Hirsh's middle daughter was Tuba Landau. She spent her childhood and youth in Przyrów. After her marriage to Altman, they lived in Częstochowa, near Pinhas's older brother. Tauba was exceptionally talented. She was well-versed in literature as well as poetry, fragments of which she could easily recite. Despite the fact that she did not complete her studies, she was considered an educated and progressive person. It was said that she occupied herself with writing, but there is no evidence of this. If there was any, it was destroyed during the War. The couple had two sons whom Tauba wanted to begin to educate early and in whom their father instilled religious instruction. During the War, the entire family perished – Tauba, her husband and both sons. The husband of Tauba's sister, on his wife's grave, added an inscription in memory of all Tauba's murdered family.

The youngest of Dobra and Dawid Landau's children was Hil. He grew up in a religious family which held a significant place amongst Aleksander Hassidim. He had immense religious knowledge which he gained through his own efforts and which helped him pass an examination during the War.

Early on, he began to work in the family business. He participated in establishing the "BRA-LAND" factory (the Landau brothers) which, in the beginning, produced templates for cutting ice, which had replaced iceboxes, then cutlery and later meat-mincing machines. The "BRA-LAND" company was established in Przyrów in 1927. After a time, it was moved to Częstochowa, on Kawia Street. The factory expanded rapidly and soon occupied the land stretching from Kawia to Krótka Streets. It was still a family business producing cutlery and padlocks, which, after significant growth, took on the name "ISHABE", created from the initials of the first names of the brother-shareholders. The factory had an attic and (as in those times) a huge chimney which, during the War, served as a hiding place for many people.

Hil Landau, despite finding himself in good material circumstances, lived very modestly. A beautiful aspect of his character was his desire to anonymously help others. During the War, he worked in Hasag in Częstochowa where arms were produced. There too, thanks to his affluence, he helped those close to him and others as much as possible. He saved the lives of many people. He was assigned to the group of 1,000 Jews for whom the Germans organised a death march in the direction of Germany. However, he managed to survive, but his wife and two sons perished. After the War, he returned to Częstochowa and linked up with the few members of his family who had survived. He immediately began preparing to leave for Palestines (later Israel). Hil established another family, marrying Lea Berliner.

Hil's youngest sister, Bracha – Bronia Landau with her husband Kozak – was active in family life. At the age of seventeen, she began working in the family business. After the death of Jakow Schimon, her oldest brother, she took on the responsibility of running the factory. She hired specialists and various experts, since the factory was systemically

developing. She had to supervise production and sales of the articles produced. Almost everyone was older than her but, despite that, she enjoyed their respect. She had good relations with them both professionally and privately which made running the company easier. Her nephew, Rachmil, son of the partner Jakow Shimon, helped her with her responsibilities.

At the beginning of World War II, when the Germans threw Jews out of their homes, a significant part of the family came to Częstochowa and sought shelter in the home of Bronia and her husband Dawid. Everyone was taken in. When the time of the ghetto liquidation began, her two brothers left for Warsaw, on Aryan papers, where for a time they found shelter with a Polish family.

Bronia survived the War, cared for by a Polish family. Bronia's husband perished during the War, but both their daughters survived and currently live overseas. After the War, Bronia returned to Częstochowa and tried again to work in a factory. Troubled by the Finance Department, she could not see any real possibility for the running of a factory which required huge renovation and financial outlay. The city authorities hindered every step. They wanted to buy the Landau property for pennies, at the same time giving notice of expropriation proceedings. Owners, who did not give their consent to the sale, were however forced into it through the high taxes associated with giving consent to leasing the premises. In a short time, various institutions began to use the premises for various purposes, in the beginning as a warehouse and then later, a large part of it was taken by the Częstochowa Musical Instrument Factory, as well as a bakery plant. Bronia Landau-Kozak left for overseas.

Rojza Landau (Róża) was the next older daughter of Dobra and Hirsh Landau. Very well-read, she was considered to be an educated person. She had the ability to quickly learn foreign languages. She wrote and spoke fluent German, which was useful during the War. When the Russian army entered, she very quickly picked up Russian which was also useful.

After her marriage, Róża and her family moved to Częstochowa. Her husband found work in the family company. During the War, she spent the most time in Częstochowa. She perished in unclear circumstances - according to my mother, in a train which was overrun near Kielce right after the War. According to other information, she died while crossing the border, on the way to Austria.

Haja Ester Landau was also a daughter of Dobra and Hirsh Landau and mother of the famous haematologist, Prof. Luba Judkiewicz. Haja Ester, after high school, was sent to Łódź for further education. There she married Abraham Judkiewicz and stayed in Łódź until the outbreak of the War.

Sheindel Landau was the eighth child of Dobra and Hirsh Landau. She lived with her parents until she got married. She developed and shaped her love of the arts. She was quite aesthetic. She preferred classic outfits. As best as she could afford, she was always

elegantly and fashionably dressed. After her marriage, the couple left for Germany which they left after the rise of fascism. They returned once to Poland in order to say goodbye to the family and then left for Palestine.

Two representatives of the Landau family currently live in Częstochowa – a great-grandniece and great-grandnephew of Dobra and Hirsh Landau.

