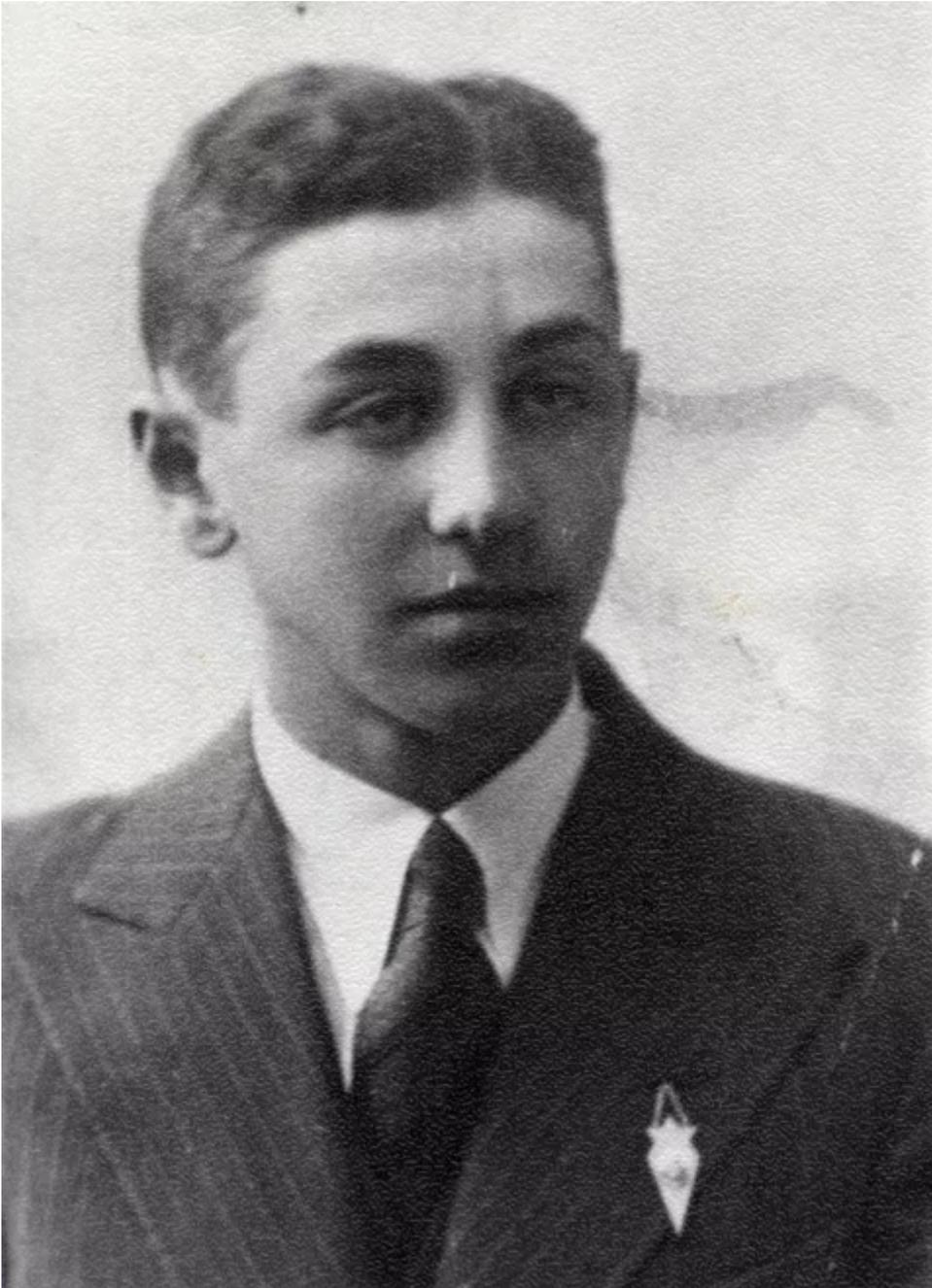


Leo Ginovker



This picture was taken on my 17th birthday; I was in the last grade of the Tallinn Jewish Gymnasium. My jacket shows the badge of a graduate of 1931. In 1920 I entered the 1st grade of the Jewish elementary school in Tallinn. Ours was a large class of about 25 students. We were taught in Russian, but studied Yiddish, Hebrew, and Estonian from the 1st grade onwards. In 1924 the new building of the Tallinn Jewish Gymnasium was opened, and we began studying there. The school belonged to the Jewish community. Perhaps, the state also supported it - I don't know for sure. We had to pay for tuition, but the community paid for the poor. When I was in the 8th grade, I attended a Zionist group called 'Emuna'. We were not right wing as the Betar Zionist movement, or left wing as the Zionists of Hashomer Hatzair. We were in the middle. We read books on Palestine, prepared reports on Zionism, and dreamed of going to Palestine and building a Jewish state. While in school, I enjoyed going to sports clubs. Gymnastics was at an especially good level. The

instructor was Utekhin, formerly an officer in the Czarist army. I played football, did gymnastics, track-and-field, and I was a member of the Maccabi sports club, but I didn't have any exceptional achievements. I did well in all school subjects. Languages came especially easy to me. When I graduated, I knew Russian, Estonian, German, Yiddish and Hebrew well. I also took private English lessons; my English teacher came to our house. I graduated from school in 1931. My mother urged me then, 'Keep on studying, son! Go wherever you want, just keep on studying!' But I didn't go anywhere. For some time I just took life easy and had fun with friends, but then my father started introducing me into the affairs of his company. It was then named 'Ginovker & Co' . I was responsible for export. I liked the job.