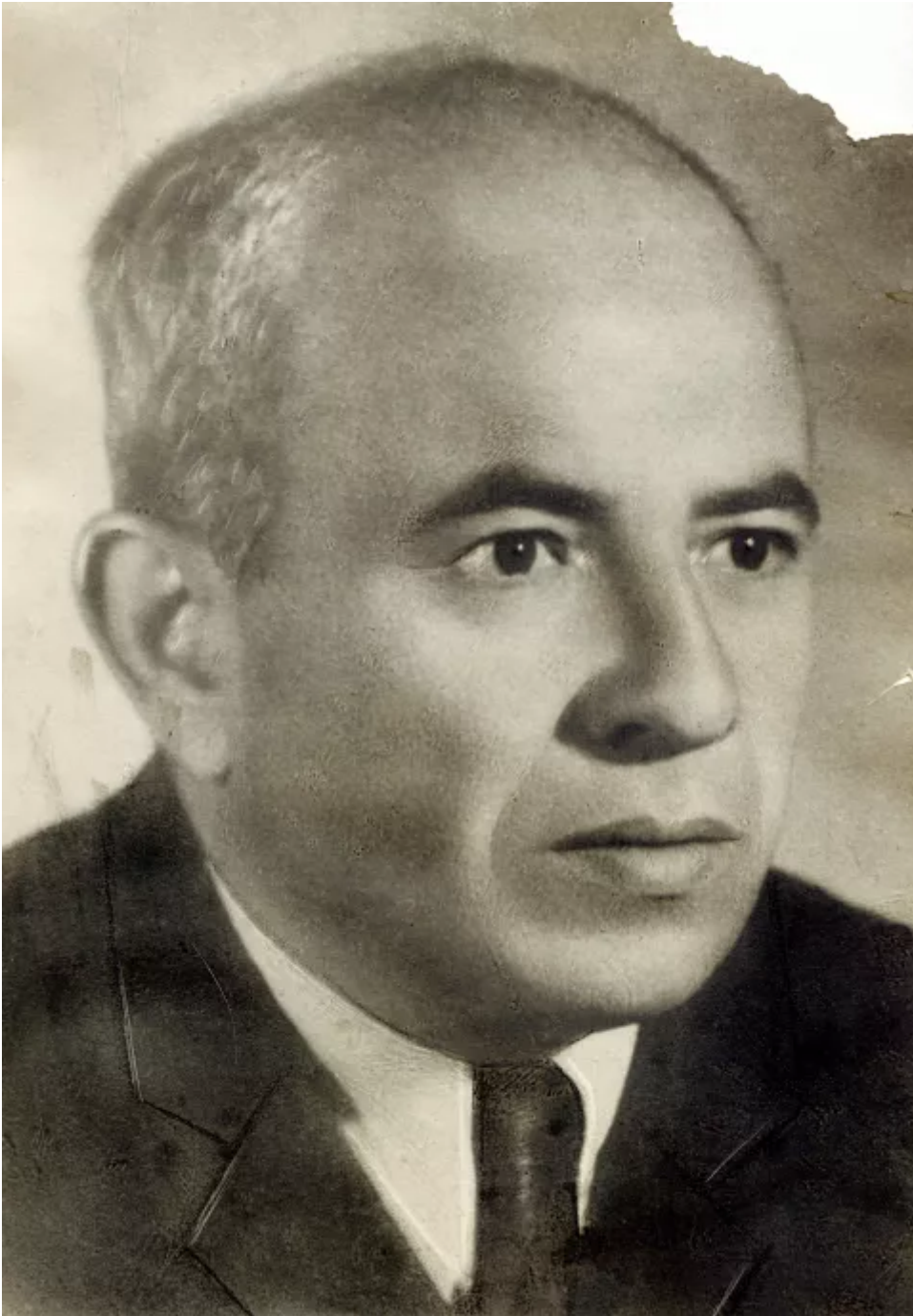


## Dawid Birencwajg



This is my, Halina Leszczynska's father, Dawid Birencwajg. This photo was taken in the 1960s, in Warsaw.

My father died in 1966. I can tell you a bit about his character. He was a great formalist and a bit of a political fanatic. He whole-heartedly believed in socialism. He wouldn't read any other newspaper than 'Trybuna Ludu'. He wouldn't listen to any other radio station but Channel One. He surely didn't listen to forbidden radio stations like Wolna Europa or foreign stations. And when someone said that something was not right, that is, when someone criticized the socialist system, he was his enemy for life. And we used to say that it was good that Dad didn't live to see all that, I mean the

events of 1968 and 1989, because he wouldn't have survived it. He was very happy, for example when they opened the WZ route, he walked along it.

And he believed that if you manage to produce a specific amount of crude iron, that it's a great achievement. That if you manage to excavate a specific amount of coal? He would sit in front of the TV and watch children from Silesia perform and sing. Some band from Katowice or from Dabrowa Gornicza. Because he knew what conditions miners' children used to live in before the war, what kind of poverty, dirt and stench there was. And he was so glad. He was so happy with each achievement. He didn't stop to consider that someone up at the top could be stealing, could be dishonest.

At the end of his life, he was working at 'Stolica,' a building corporation, as a warehouse worker. I remember that when he died, and he wasn't any great figure, many people came to say good-bye, workers and the director made a speech and said that he always 'protected public money.' I remember that. He used to say that himself. He was very honest, even too much. He was a minimalist, he didn't need much himself.

He always held it against me that I tutored students to earn additional money. 'You'll manage somehow. You'll live from what you earn, at this level.' It was very hard. Yes, very hard. Because when mother said something, he'd reply, 'If you talk so much, I'll get a job that pays even less than this one.' He took however much they paid him and we had to live from that. It was not important for him that someone had more. That's how he always was. He wasn't an educated man, but he read a lot. He used to read fiction, the classics. He was enlightened, though not educated.