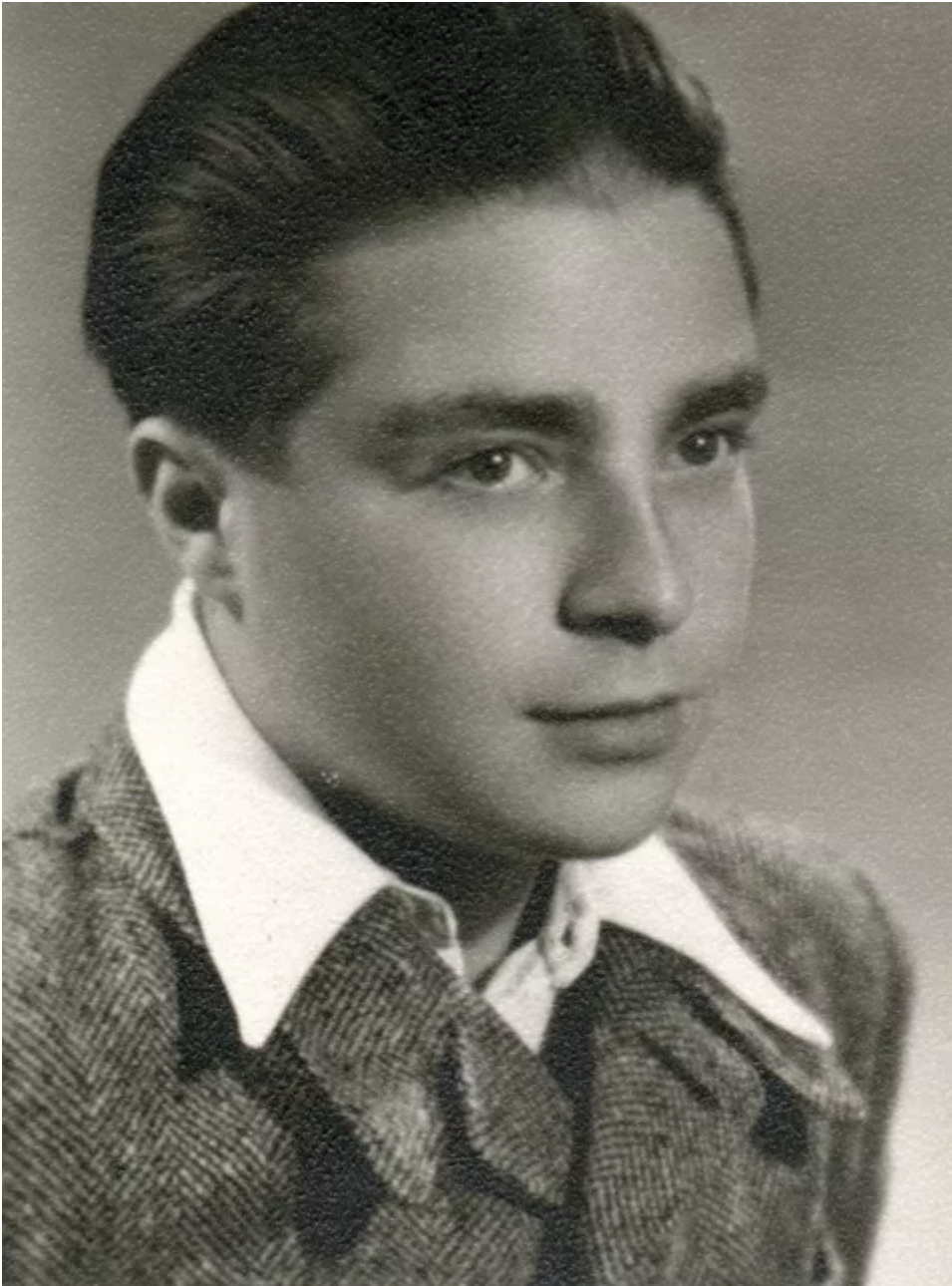


Otto Simko



This is me as a student. The photo was taken in Nitra in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. Despite the fact that we had never hidden our Jewish origins, by our name and the way we looked people mostly didn't recognize it. In Nitra our whole family also attended synagogue, yet we didn't belong to that part of the population against whom others would have some sort of objections to. Somehow they considered our family to be good Slovaks and one of them. So in the pre-war period we never felt any anti-Semitism. We also had friends and acquaintances from mixed society, both Jews and non-Jews. So it was actually this kind of assimilation, in the good sense of the word. Certain religious customs were preserved, the Jewish identity remained. But it never came across as repellent for the surrounding population. So they accepted our family without any problems. I can say that this time was without any expressions of anti-Semitism whatsoever. The breaking point didn't come until later, at school. The principal of the people's school was Feher. An exceptionally intelligent man, who kept the school at a very high standard. Unfortunately that

school building is also a sad symbol for me, because Jews were concentrated in this school in Parovce before transports from in and around Nitra. From there and the through the train station began the road to the gas. So that school actually has two faces for me. One in the fact that I attended it and had very good adventures and experiences. A few years later it was a collection point for Jews.