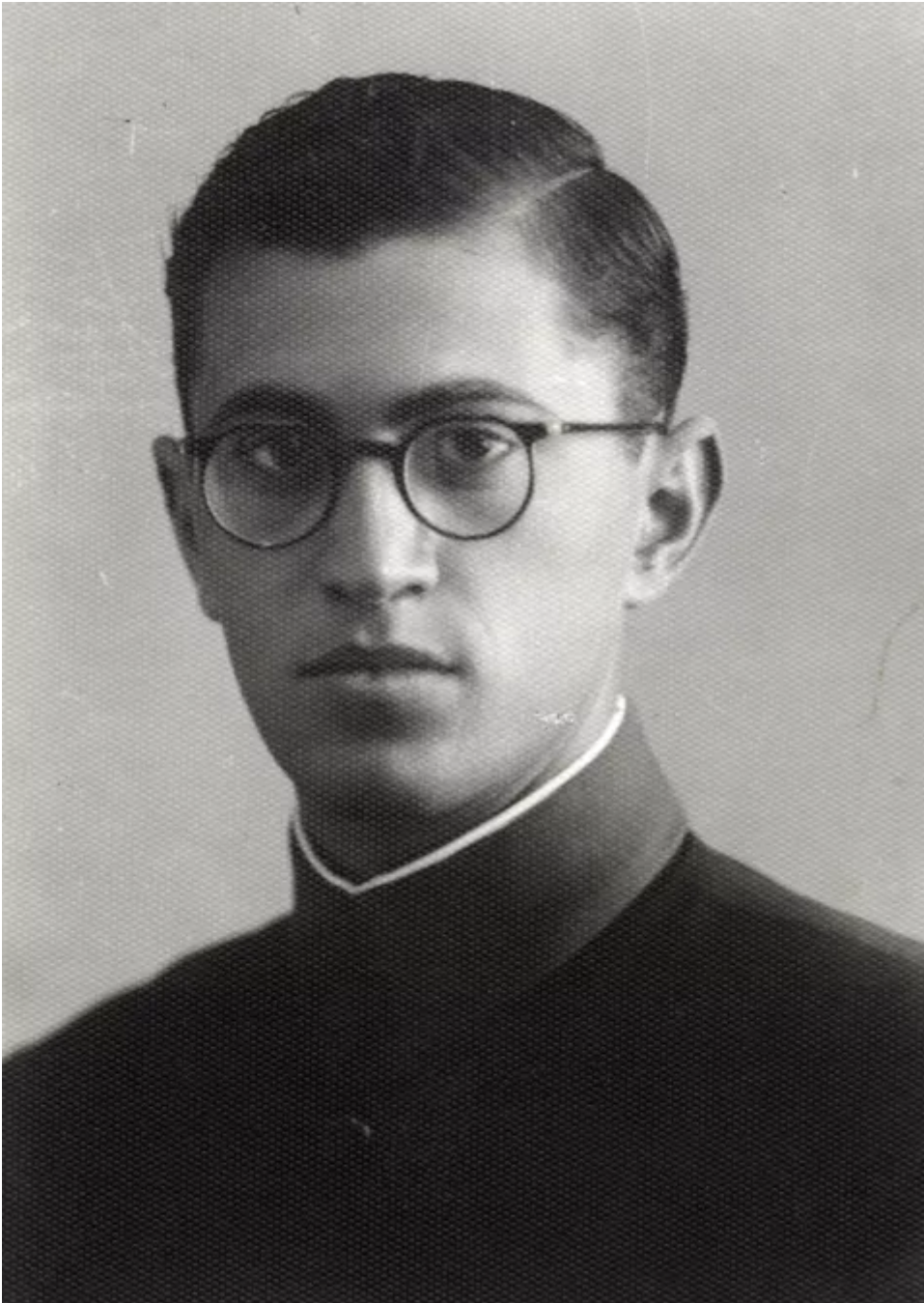


Leon Avram Kalaora As A Schoolboy



This is me as a schoolboy. The photo was taken in 1935 in Varna. I was born in 1919 in the Bulgarian seaside town of Varna. Unfortunately, I felt anti-Semitic attitudes as early as high school. The concrete story related to anti-Semitism in high school that I remember took place on the holiday of Slavic script and culture – 24th May 1936. At that time Hitler was already in power. The cruelties against the Jews in Europe had already started. The school building was decorated in green, with green twigs along the windows outside and inside. It was a real holiday, not like nowadays. All the students and teachers gathered in the school yard. There were loudspeakers and the teacher of literature was standing in front of a microphone. I hated him because of the following reason. Once I had to be absent from school for ten months. I was down with some severe illness. There were not such good medicines at that time, which could cure you in five days. When I came back to school, the teacher in literature decided to test me. He asked me to analyze a poem

by Yavorov. I said, 'Mr. Karagyzov, this is my first day at school, I haven't been to school for ten months.' 'I'm giving you a poor mark,' said he. That is why I hated him. So, on this day, 24th May 1936 he had a report to read. He had a beard, he looked dignified. And he said, 'In our country and in the countries of the Slavic people, we, the Slavs, will never become compost for the Aryan! What the West is speaking and dreaming about now!' He did not mention Germany, but everybody knew that only Hitler spoke and thought like that. Everybody cheered. Only the students from 'Otets Paisii' did not. And he continued, 'No, we should not cheer, but act. Every one of us, Slavs, must act! We should stand up to prove that we, the Slavs, are people!' And from this moment on he became my idol.