

Sebastian Sebastian With Relatives



The photo was taken in Paris, in 1968. From the left this is my mother, Estera Wechsler, my brother, Sebastian Sebastian (changed from Wechsler) with his mother in law (Gottfried) and me, Aristide Streja (changed from Wechsler). My mother and me were visiting my brother, who lived in Paris. My parents had three children: Stefania, Sebastian and me, Aristide Wechsler. Sebastian Sebastien, my brother, was born in 1915, in Bucharest. [He changed his name from Wechsler to Sebastian after World War I.] He first went to the Faculty of Law and Philosophy, and then he attended the Faculty of Architecture, which he graduated in 1945. He chose architecture despite his having already graduated in Law and Philosophy because the Jews were disbarred in 1940, so it was obvious that Law wouldn't make a good career. He was kicked out from the Faculty of Architecture [because of the Jewish Statutum], but he continued his studies after the war and became an architect ahead of me. My brother and my sister-in-law emigrated to France around 1960 and settled in Paris. I, Aristide Streja [Ed. note: He changed his name from Wechsler to Streja after World War II.], was born in Bucharest on 19th December 1922. I was well looked after and educated by my parents. I had a sister who was 7 years older than me and a brother who was 6 years older. I became an architect and was hired in 1947. I fell in love and got married to Cheli Weisbuch. We have one child and a beautiful marriage. Our son was born in Bucharest. For 22 years, he has been living a decent life abroad. We have two granddaughters. I went to Paris in 1968. That was the year when the Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia. [Ed. note: Mr. Streja refers to the period after the Prague Spring.] My brother said 'There's going to be a war.' Ceausescu immediately held a meeting and stated he was against the entrance of the Soviet troops on the Romanian territory. My brother told me to stay in Paris. He offered to help me get a legal status, as a refugee from the Communist Romania. I could have done that. 'And leave my wife and child in Romania? Well, I can't abandon my family, I have to go back.' I came back, as my visa was for a limited period. I traveled in a sleeping-car and I remember it was totally empty. I was the only one in it. In fact, the whole train was rather empty - no one dared return to Romania for fear of the war. I came back and didn't feel sorry about it. When we left Romania, the baggage check was very thorough and very unpleasant. They would unpack everything we carried - they wanted to

prevent us from taking paintings, art objects, jewels or money across the border. We were only allowed to have \$10 on us. The exchange rate was 6 lei for \$1. What could anyone do with that money?