

EDITH SILBIGER

Edith Silbiger was born in Novy Bohumin, Czechoslovakia, on 25 November 1920 as the daughter of Arnold Silbiger (born on 23 October 1890 in Kenty, Czechoslovakia) and Ernestine Kirschner (born on 24 February 1896 in Vitkovice, Czechoslovakia). In February 1940, Edith and her parents arrived in Belgium, fleeing for the German troops that had invaded their country of origin. Edith registered herself as a student while the family rented an apartment at Isabellalei 9 in Antwerp. They received a Belgian residence permit which was valid for three months, until the end of May 1940. However, Nazi-Germany invaded Belgium on 10 May 1940, before the Silbiger family could find refuge elsewhere.

During the first years of the war the Silbiger-Kirschner family obeyed the anti-Jewish decrees. They also moved several times. In February 1941 Edith and her parents left Antwerp and settled at Avenue des Hortensias 151 in Schaerbeek, Brussels. In September 1941 they relocated to Quai du Commerce 23 in Brussels to finally settle at Avenue Albert 32 in Forest, Brussels, as of June 1942. Edith had found a job as a shorthand typist.

On 22 July 1942 Edith Silbiger was arrested during an ID check at the Antwerp train station. Together with at least 163 other Jewish men and women she was transferred to the Fortress of Breendonk where they were all held for five days. On 27 July 1942, the day of the opening of the SS-Sammellager Mecheln, the transit camp located at the Dossin barracks in Mechelen, Edith was sent there. She and a dozen other young women were then selected as secretaries for the camp administration. All of them had experience with administrative work, all spoke German and knew steno. Edith was chosen as the personal secretary of camp commander Philipp Schmitt.

However, Edith Silbiger was no longer relatively safe when Schmitt's successor, Johannes Frank, discovered the corruption scam organized by the Jewish camp doctor Fritz Basch. Basch was taking money from rich Jewish inmates, promising them he could bribe Frank to release them. Basch himself and all those suspected of working with him – including Edith Silbiger who was possibly romantically involved with Basch or one of his co-conspirators – were sent to the prison of Saint-Gilles on 21 August 1943 before being brought back to the Dossin barracks on 31 August 1943 where they were registered to be deported via Transport XXII A to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 20 September 1943. Edith Silbiger did not survive. Her parents were never arrested or deported and survived the war in Brussels.

Source: Kazerne Dossin

<https://beeldbank.kazernedossin.eu/index.php/collection/watch/cbe8f4481bcc4521b0c570229aaf3aab0c5e7b0699a94317bb981597db807813d8f838b9f56e4d4e80beccac54ff0395>