

Sissel Green

Title: *The Deprivation of Cili Duman*

Author: Sissel Green and Stan Christie

Publisher: Self-Published

Place of Publication: Frenchs Forest, NSW.

Year of Publication: 1994

Location of Book: Lamm Jewish Library, University of Melbourne, Melbourne Holocaust Museum, Sydney Jewish Museum and other public libraries.

Cities/towns/camps: Poland: Warsaw; Ukraine: Rivne (Rovno), Kiev, Kharkiv; Russia: Rostov, Stalingrad, Astrakhan;

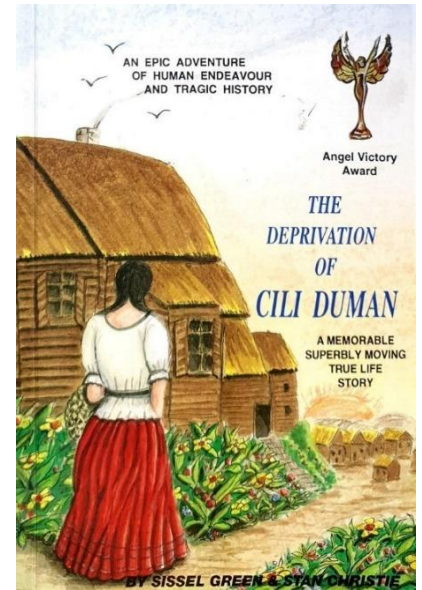
Kazakhstan: Guryev (Atyrau); Uzbekistan: Tashkent; Tajikistan:

Leninabad (Khujand); Germany: Bergen-Belsen, Hess-Lichtenau and Fritzlar DP camps; Israel: Haifa; Australia: Sunshine Coast.

Note: those cities/towns/camps underlined are those which are most central to the narrative.

Genre: Memoir

Key events/experiences: Jewish refugee; Soviet occupation; child survivor.



The Deprivation of Cili Duman is the 268-page memoir of Polish child survivor, Sissel Green, which chronicles the life of her mother (Cili Duman) from her early years as an orphan to her family's fight from the Nazis. The memoir also documents the author's own experiences as a Jewish refugee in the Soviet Union and Central Asia.

Pages 1-76 focus on Cili's childhood. When her family fled pogroms in Poland for Scotland in 1890, six-month-old Cili was denied entry due to an eye infection and was returned to Poland in the care of her grandmother. Orphaned by the age of seven, she lived on the streets until aged fifteen, when she was taken in by a wealthy merchant and musician, Yosl Duman. Pages 77-150 recount Cili and Yosl's marriage, the birth of their children, and the author's childhood. Pages 151-184 describe the family's escape from Warsaw to Rovno after the outbreak of war in 1939. Pages 185-218 follow their arduous journey through the Soviet Union to Tajikistan following the Nazi invasion in 1941. Pages 219-268 describe their postwar experiences in Poland and German DP camps, as well as her family's voyage aboard the *Exodus* 1947 and eventual arrival in Israel.

Sissel Green was born circa 1930 in the city of Rovno (Rivne) in western Ukraine, then Polish territory, the third-child of parents Lola (Cili) and Yosl Duman. She had three sisters (Chaya, Perl and Rifka) and two brothers (Faivl and Rubin). Her father was a jewellery merchant and music conductor. When Sissel was an infant, the family relocated to Warsaw.

In 1939, when Sissel was nine, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. During the initial bombardment of Warsaw she was separated from her family and took refuge in a

church, which was subsequently bombed, killing nearly all inside. Miraculously, she survived and was rescued from the rubble by her father. The Duman family hid in a bomb shelter for several days before emerging into a city under German occupation, where antisemitic restrictions were quickly imposed. They were forced to wear the Star of David and her father was twice arrested but released. After three weeks, the family fled Warsaw under cover of darkness. Over the following weeks, they continued toward Rovno, relying on shelter and sustenance from friends and sympathetic locals. The journey was arduous, involving treacherous crossings of frozen rivers and nights spent in forests to evade German patrols. Twice, they were arrested but miraculously released.

They reached Rovno in the spring of 1940 where they enjoyed nine months of peace. However, in June 1941, following the Nazi invasion of Soviet territories, the city came under bombardment. The Duman family again joined an exodus of refugees as they journeyed for days towards Kiev, enduring the constant threat from German bombers which strafed the roads, leaving thousands dead. After reaching the devastated city of Kiev, they continued with great difficulty toward Kharkiv, covering nearly 400 kilometres over several weeks.

Unable to escape the swiftly advancing German army, the Duman family rested for several days in Kharkiv before continuing to Rostov, wandering from village to village. Before long, Rostov fell under bombardment and they travelled in the direction of Stalingrad, seeking shelter in village farms where Sissel's father and mother obtained work as farmhands. Sissel's brother Faivl tragically drowned in the local lake.

In Stalingrad they boarded a train to Astrakhan, travelling through to Gurjev (now Atyrau) and onward to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Overcrowded with refugees, Tashkent offered little respite, so they relocated to Leninabad (now Khujand), Tajikistan. There, Sissel's mother obtained work picking silk whilst her father supported the family through paid musical engagements. After eight months, tragedy struck when her father died from a head injury. His death left the family in financial distress, forcing Sissel into black-market trading for survival. They remained in Leninabad for two years. After the war ended they set out on the long journey home.

Learning of the atrocities committed against Jews in Poland, the family relocated to the Bergen-Belsen DP camp in the hope of emigrating to Palestine. Aided by the UNRRA, they later transferred to the Hessisch Lichtenau DP camp, where they remained for six months before moving to the Fritzlar DP camp. In 1947, Sissel's mother and siblings attempted to reach British Mandate Palestine aboard the *Exodus 1947*, a freight ship carrying 4,500 Holocaust survivors. However, the British intercepted the vessel and redirected it back to Germany where the family reunited with Sissel.

In 1949, her family successfully emigrated to Israel. Sissel, then aged 19, reunited with them a year later in Haifa.

Sissel began writing her memoir in 1952. In 1959, she migrated to Australia with her two children. She obtained support from her maternal aunt Flora to complete her memoir. She ultimately settled on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland.

The Deprivation of Cili Duman is a work of creative nonfiction that seeks to reconstruct the life and struggles of the author's mother, tracing her journey from childhood as an orphan to her experiences as a Holocaust survivor and Jewish refugee. The memoir is written in the first person with artistic license, attempting to confer the thoughts of its actors in a novelistic style. More than half of the memoir covers the author's mother's pre-war experiences

The narrative also serves as an account of Sissel's own experiences as a child survivor and Jewish refugee. However, significant details of Sissel's life – such as her marriage, children and emigration to Israel and Australia – are not covered. In 2004, the memoir was republished by Trafford Publishing under the title *Sissel's Story* (see entry), with minor editorial revisions.