



**SONIA MEYER** is the author of the forthcoming novel, "Dosha, flight of the Russian Gypsies" to be released in the summer of 2010 by Wilderness House Press.

Sonia fled the Nazis with her parents when she was 2 years old to live in the woods of Germany and Poland with partisans and Gypsies. There her father taught her to throw hand grenades using a wooden darning egg. They lived in the woods, in abandoned houses, in isolated excursion inns, in fields and barns, always dodging the German and later Soviet armies who hunted them relentlessly. Shortly after the war Sonia and her family returned to Cologne, Germany where she foraged for food with a band of Gypsies camped nearby.

Sonia is available for media interviews (but not limited to) on the following topics:

- Gypsies in your community
- Gypsies and the German Holocaust
- The plight of modern European Gypsies
- History of the Gypsies/Roma in Russia
- Experiences with Gypsies here and abroad

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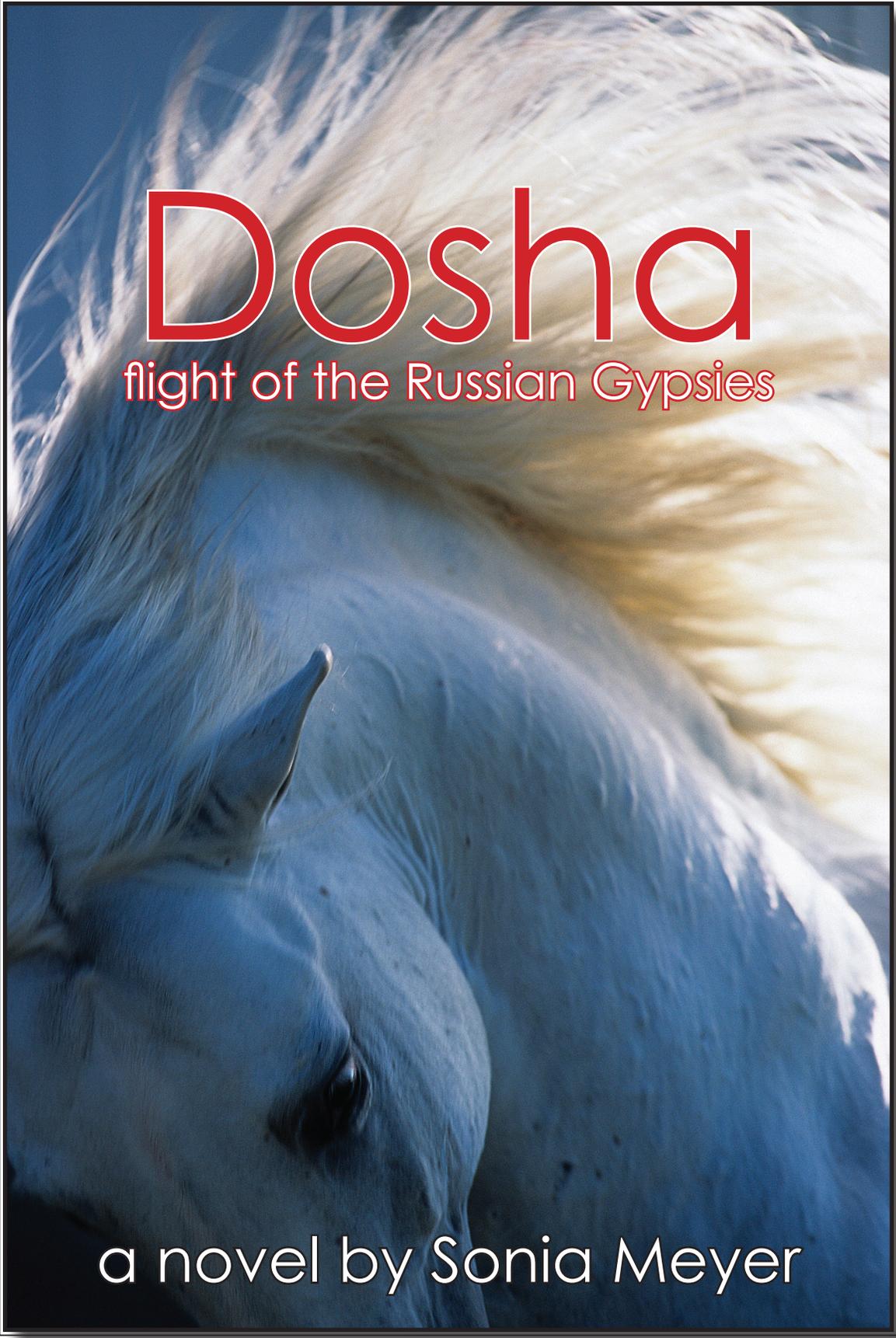
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# Dosha

flight of the Russian Gypsies

a novel by Sonia Meyer

The novel begins and ends with Nikita Khrushchev's state visit to Helsinki on June 6, 1957. It begins with security and propaganda preparations for the State Visit and the uneasy wait for his arrival. The end unfolds during the arrival of the Soviet delegation and the motorcade that takes them from the train station to the Soviet Embassy. Within this frame the novel tells the story of the Gypsy girl Dosha; from her childhood spent with Russian partisans in Polish forests to her defection during Khrushchev's visit.

In 1956, three years after Stalin's death, Khrushchev rises to the top of the Communist empire by denouncing the terror behind the rule of the still venerated dictator and institutes a Cultural Thaw. This first sign of hope for freedom unleashes uprisings in the Satellite States. In the second Satellite State to rebel, Hungary, they are countered with brute force and the immediate return of Soviet suppression. It leaves tiny Finland, the only country still independent of Soviet rule along the Baltic coast, to wonder – are the Finns facing a state visit or are they about to lose their hard-earned freedom.

So far only a propaganda blitz has been bombarding their capital Helsinki, including performances by top Soviet dancers, singers, and athletes. Among these, Dosha, the star rider of the newly formed Soviet international dressage team, is planning to defect during Khrushchev's arrival ceremonies, when security is focused on the new red czar. Tall and blond as a Russian, known to Soviet authorities as Ana Dalova, she is in reality Dosha of the Khantchisti, granddaughter of a powerful Lovara Gypsy king who is the most hunted Gypsy in all of Russia.

The novel now turns to the main storyline: 1941 when Russian nomadic Gypsies answer Stalin's call to sabotage areas already occupied by the advancing German army. They move into Poland where they join Russian partisans and fight for the country that for centuries has shown the Gypsy people love and acceptance. After the war they return to Russia to resume their traditional nomadic life, only to find increased hostility toward traveling Gypsy people. Finally in 1956, during the short-lived Cultural Thaw, while releasing millions of innocent victims of purges still languishing in gulags of Siberia and Russia's High North, Khrushchev secretly clamps down on the freedom of the last Gypsy tribes still roaming free.

Steeped in legend and ancient taboos, the Gypsies follow the cult of the horse. Among the many Gypsy tribes, divided by trade, the Lovara, dealers of horses, are considered



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the aristocrats of all Gypsies. In the ensuing mass round-up of Russian Gypsies, the queen of the Lovara, Patrina, is captured as she lies in her death tent by an isolated road, where she expects to die. Unlike most Gypsies who are forcibly settled into state-run collective farms or sent to starvation camps, Patrina is given medical treatment, and she and her entourage are confined to a derelict section of Leningrad where they struggle to survive. Patrina understands she is being kept alive merely as bait for the capture of her brother Khantchi, King of thousands of traveling Lovara. Khantchi is on the KGB's most wanted list as a smuggler and racketeer and suspected spy for the West.

The KGB is unaware that the true bait to capture the King of the Lovara is already in the state's custody. Earlier that year, during a drive to round up suitable horses for the re-assembly of an International Russian Dressage Team, a girl who calls herself Ana Dalova and her talented circus horse are drafted off a make-shift breeding farm near Russia's Kola Peninsula, where she and her stallion are training to qualify for the state circus of Murmansk. In the eyes of her tribe, Dosha is predestined by legend and soothsaying to be the next pathfinder of the tribe. She is the only known surviving grandchild of the Gypsy King Khantchi and his wife Sanija, a powerful Gypsy sorceress. At the last czar's court Sanija was celebrated as a singer and sought after as a fortuneteller. When Sanija tragically dies giving birth to Azra, a daughter, her death casts a spell of misfortune and infertility on the ruling family of the Lovara. The spell will not be broken until Azra's death, but is temporally lifted while Azra gives birth to a daughter, Dosha. Three days after Dosha's birth the Ursitory, decider of Romani fate, declares her born to be the future pathfinder to lead her fellow Lovara out of dark times of entrapment back to the freedom of new Romani trails.

The beautiful teen-aged Dosha and her powerful stallion Rus are taken for training to the Hermitage in Leningrad. There they catch the eye of the Minister of Culture, Galina Popov, who recognizes the potential for Olympic glory and positions Dosha as star rider of the new Soviet Dressage Team. Dosha keeps her real identity a secret, as well as that of her stallion. The horse promoted as representing the best in Russian breeding, is in a reality war booty confiscated from Germans during the war. Throughout all this, Dosha's central focus remains on helping her entrapped tribe with their flight to freedom and to preserve for herself the purity of Gypsy life.

But Dosha does not cross the "unclean" world of the non-Gypsy unscathed. When she is sent by Galina Popov to the Kirov Ballet to study choreography for use in a free-style program for the International Dressage

Team, a dangerous attraction develops between Dosha and the rising star of the Kirov, Yuri Kutunoff. For Dosha, love with a non-Gypsy is forbidden by Romani law. The young and impulsive dancer, son of an exiled poet and a Trotzkyite father who fled Russia, is himself viewed as suspect by the new regime. Yet he is already in an unwise involvement with the prima ballerina of the Kirov, Valentina Krugloff, an aging icon of Russian ballet and a known informer and “bride” of the KGB.

All are headed for Finland, where they will find their destiny intertwined in a city under siege.



Sonia Meyer with Gypsy/Roma children in Macedonia



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