

Darya Shut

The Price of Freedom. My Father, Me, and the Dictator

Frihetens pris - min far, jeg og diktatoren

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Darya Shut grew up in a small town in the Soviet Union, but before she had started second grade, her country was called Belarus.

For a long time her life revolved around the small, green wooden house of her grandmother and grandfather. The extended family gathered there, where all important decisions were made. In the lush garden, her grandmother grew most of what she needed, for, as she used to say, "You can never fully trust the state." All of Darya's grandparents were marked by World War II and Stalin's persecutions.

When Darya's father ran as a parliamentary candidate in Belarus's first free election in 1990, he quickly found himself in opposition to a fellow candidate, Aliaksandr Lukashenko. After a dramatic election four years later, Lukashenko became president and tightened his grip on power, dashing hopes for democracy.

Darya grew up in a new dictatorship and noticed that teachers, neighbours, and friends began to view her and her family differently.

The Price of Freedom masterfully weaves together the story of the Shut family with the dramatic recent history of Belarus.

"When my father died, we asked the hospital director if we could borrow the hospital's assembly hall so that those who wanted to say goodbye to him could do so there. My father had worked at the hospital for nearly 40 years. The hospital director had little regard for my father, but he granted us permission to use the hall. He led me through the long corridors and opened the door to the room. In the middle of the wall hung a large portrait of the country's long-time dictator – Aliaksandr Lukashenko. Without saying a word, the hospital director walked over to the wall and took down the president's portrait."

(from the book)



Photo: Leikny Haavik Skjærseth

Darya Shut (b. 1984) grew up in the small town of Lahojsk, near Minsk in Belarus. In 2005, she moved to Norway to study political science and has interned at NUPI and the UN. She now works as a senior adviser at IMDI (The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity). In 2020, she helped found the Belarusian Association in Norway – Razam. This is her first book.

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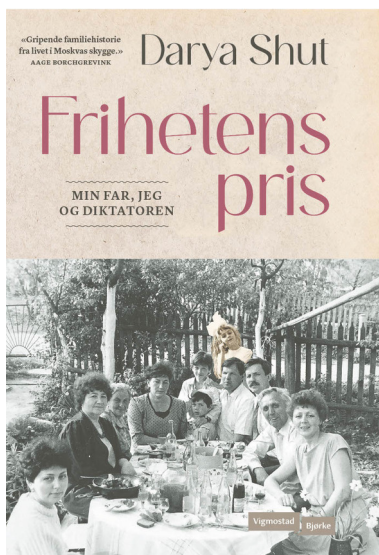
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Interview

[Read our interview with the author here](#)



'Gripping family story from life in Moscow's shadow.'

Aage Borchgrevink