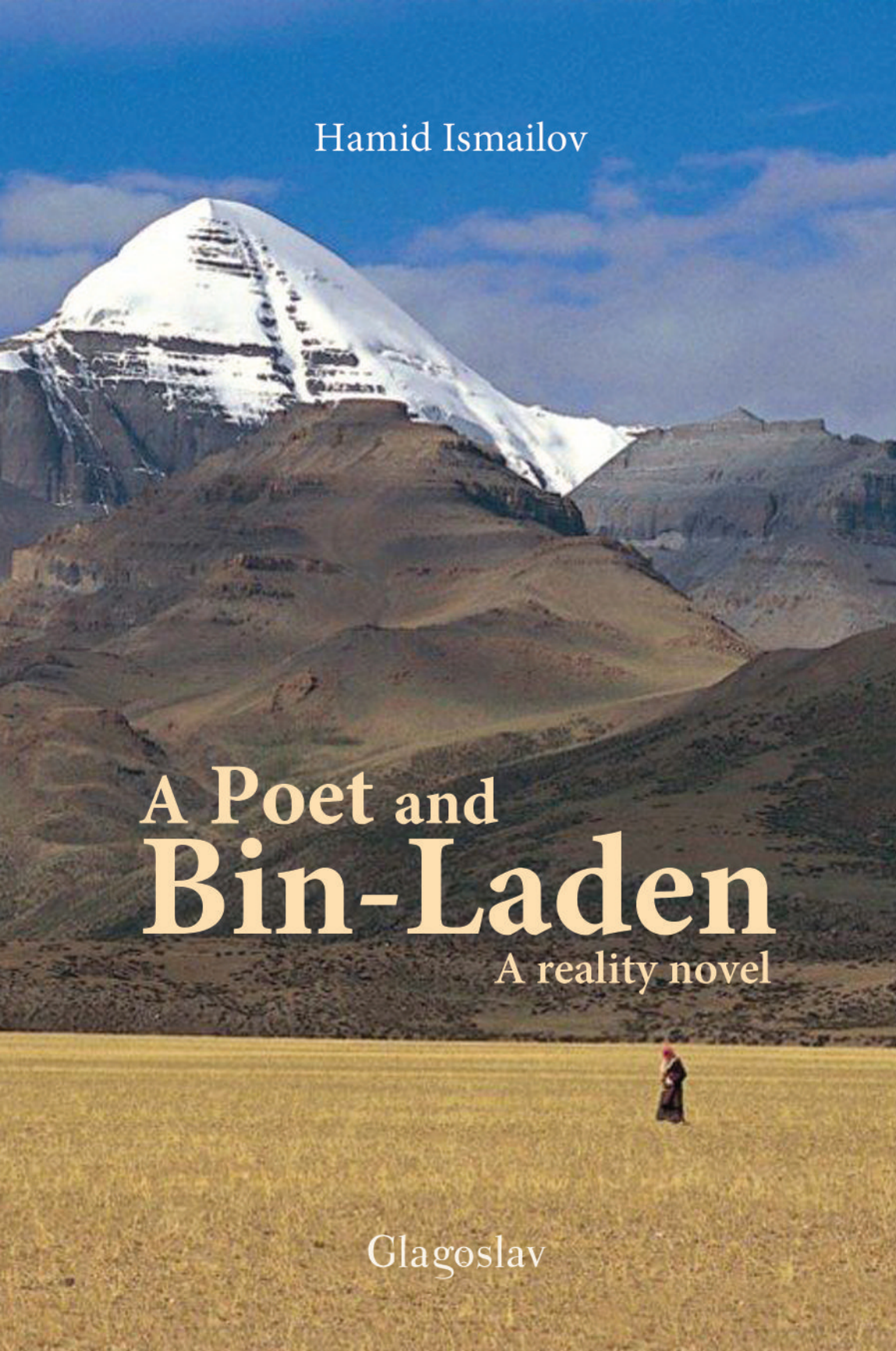
Hamid Ismailov



A Poet and Bin-Laden

A reality novel

Glagoslav

Hamid Ismailov

A Poet and Bin-Laden

A reality novel

Glagoslav Publications

Hamid Ismailov

A Poet and Bin-Laden

A reality novel

A Poet and Bin-Laden
By Hamid Ismailov

Supported by English PEN
and
Arts Council England

First published in Russian as "Дорога к смерти больше,
чем смерть" in 2005 by Black Quadrat

Translated from Russian by Andrew Bromfield
Poems translated by Richard MacKane
Edited by Camilla Stein

Glagoslav Publications Ltd
88-90 Hatton Garden
EC1N 8PN London
United Kingdom

www.glagoslav.com

ISBN: 978-1-909156-33-3

Contents

To Christopher MacLehose who inspired me to write this book.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to all those who helped me with this book and first of all to my wife Razia Sultanova and children Rano and Daniar Ismailov, to Andrew Bromfield who beautifully translated the novel and Richard McKane who translated the poems, as well as to Hugh Barnes who wrote a Preface. Monica Whitlock, John Spurling, Jill Shoolman and David Halpern kindly agreed to be the critical readers, checking the draft and making useful suggestions along the way. Their input is invaluable, and I am very grateful to them for their support. I am also indebted to late Anne-Marie Schimmel, Resat Niyazi and Shousha Guppy along with my friends Robert Chandler, Philippa Vaughan, Gwyneth Williams, Sian Glaessner and Zia Shakib for their encouragement and help with this book. Many thanks are due also to Lena Chibor, who bravely brought out the Russian version of the book, my agent Marc Koralnik, Liepman Ag, English PEN, Arts Council England, the Publisher Maxim Hodak for his passion and determination in making this book happen, to the Editor Camilla Stein, to the Marketing Manager Yana Kovalskaya and my friends mentioned in the novel.

In Place of a Preface

A Poet and Bin-Laden is a novel set in Central Asia at the turn of the 21st century against a swirling backdrop of Islamic fundamentalism in the Ferghana Valley and beyond. It tells the story of the poet Belgi, who may be a grown-up version of "the boy" in Hamid Ismailov's book *The Railway*. The new novel is equally rich in descriptive passages and teems with vivid personalities but, whereas the mood of *The Railway* was nostalgic and its setting a provincial backwater in Uzbekistan during the Soviet years, *A Poet and Bin-Laden* tackles the most urgent and topical subject of today's world – the "war on terror" – and the novel's scope is correspondingly international, with the action straddling the borders of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. However, in *A Poet and Bin-Laden* documentary elements, instead of folklore, are used to propel the narrative. Real events and characters, including Osama bin Laden, who has a walk-on role, bulk large and give the novel its unique quality.

The hero of *A Poet and Bin-Laden* is Belgi, whose presumed death in 2001, while fighting on the side of the Taliban, prompts the narrator to ask, *Citizen Kane*-style: how did a Sufi recluse living in harmony with nature come to die with other Islamic militants on the hilltops of Afghanistan? To answer this question, he retraces the story of Belgi's life in the setting of some of the key events of Central Asia's post-Soviet history: the purging of the democratic opposition, the rise of Hizb-ut-Tahrir ("Party of Freedom") and the emergence of Islamic militancy, the cross-border wars of the 1990s, including the 1999 terror attacks in Tashkent, and the Batken insurgency of the following year. The novel also includes flashforwards to fighting in Vaziristan and the May 2005 massacre of civilians in the Uzbek town of Andijan. But the primary focus of the narrative is the image of this poet who becomes a terrorist in the eyes of the world. This wonderfully original construct allows Ismailov to explore the relationship between the timeless and dreamlike aspects of Uzbek culture – already familiar from *The Railway*, and now personified in Belgi – and the harsh reality of life caught between the dictatorship of President Karimov and jihadism.

The story begins on the eve of 9/11, with the narrator's haunting description of the airplane attack on the Twin Towers as seen on TV while he is on holiday in Central Asia. Subsequent chapters shift backwards and forwards in time, but two main themes emerge: the rise of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan under the charismatic but reclusive leadership of Tahir Yuldash and Juma Namangani; and Belgi's movement from the outer edge of the circle, from the mountains of Osh, into the inner sanctum of al-Qaeda, and ultimately to a meeting with Sheikh bin Laden himself. His journey begins with a search for a Sufi spiritual master and ends in guerrilla warfare, and it is this tension between a transcendental and a violent response to oppression, between the book and the bomb, that gives the novel its specific poignancy. Along the way, Ismailov provides wonderfully vivid accounts of historical events (as witnessed by Belgi) such as the siege of Kunduz, the breakout from Shebergan prison – a kind of Afghan Guantanamo – and the insurgency in the Ferghana Valley.

In the Tajik village of Hoit, an IMU stronghold, he is recruited by the Islamists and subsequently crosses the border with Afghanistan during the US bombings. He is taken prisoner by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, but after escaping from Shebergan is reunited with his defeated comrades – and all this time he is writing poetry!

His poems, along with the stories of eyewitnesses and participants in events leading up to the Andijan massacre, grant the reader insight into the very heart of a secretive world previously concealed from outside view. This, of course, is a very topical book, with reports of the death of the Taliban in 2001 now clearly exaggerated. From a journalistic point of view, it is so rich in first-hand and exclusive material, not least the appearance of bin Laden, that it is certain to attract a great deal of interest. But the real achievement of *A Poet and Bin-Laden* is an imaginative one – this is a very powerful story about the forces of extremism in human nature, good and evil, poetry and terror. It is in every way a grown-up version of *The Railway*.

Hugh Barnes

On your road there are nails, staples,
rusted corks, the dried apricot of time,
a concrete path, the railway, grass here and there,
a living snowdrop or simple, ordinary wire...

In actual fact, in fact all this leads one
to think then, but at the same time your premonition
realises: your life in its complete uselessness
can be tied in with these things.

Do not grieve about this,
death in fact is neither high nor low.
It is not death that is greater
but the thought of the road to death
that overcomes death itself.

-Belgi

Cast of Main Characters and a Simple Timeline of Events

Belgi, aka Yosir – an Uzbek "new generation" poet, widely translated in the West, who becomes a militant,

Bakh, aka Haroun – his friend, interested in Sufism, who is killed by militants,

Alish, aka Umar – Belgi's friend and his translator, who also joins the militants,

Sher – Belgi's brother, killed by the Uzbek authorities while being held in detention,

Caroline Rowley – an American journalist, Belgi's girlfriend,

President Islam Karimov – the current Uzbek President who came to power in 1989,

Tahir Yuldash – aka Amir Muhammad Farruk – leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, killed in 2009,

Juma Namangani – military commander of the IMU, killed in 2001,

Zubair – spokesman for the IMU, killed in 2001,

Zainiddin Askarov – aka Abdurahman Mansur, former spokesman for the IMU, died in an Uzbek prison,

Abdurashid Dostum – an Afghani general who is an ethnic Uzbek.

Numerous journalists and experts, who have contributed materials, memoirs and stories, as well as many militants and members of the Taliban.

1989 – Islam Karimov comes to power as the First Secretary of Uzbekistan's Communist Party. He later becomes President of Uzbekistan;

1992 – a standoff between Islam Karimov and Tahir Yuldash, when the Muslims of Namangan effectively take the President hostage, and he promises an Islamic state. This is when Belgi first names him "Comrade Islam";

1992-1996 – President Karimov crushes the secular opposition and dissenters take refuge in the mosques, he launches his campaign against Islam in the country under the pretext of fighting Wahabbism;

1998 – the mutilated body of Belgi's brother Sher is handed over to him by the police, who claim that he committed suicide. Belgi and his friends end up in a militant camp in Hoit.

1999 – six explosions that occur in Tashkent are blamed on Islamic militants, but later substantial evidence indicates the involvement of the

Uzbek special services; the authorities imprison thousands of believers, thousands flee to Tajikistan and Afghanistan;

1999 -2000 – in summer Islamic militants make incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan: the so-called Batken war;

2001 – "9/11": the Americans start bombing Afghanistan: Belgi is arrested by the Americans, then released and, like many Uzbek militants, he disappears.

Map of Central Asia

11/09/2001

The website "Conference of the Refined" at *http://library.ferghana.ru/uz/index.htm* provides the following information about Belgi (real name Asror Abutov, *nom de guerre* Yosir):

> Belgi is a poet of the Uzbek "new wave" and author of the volumes of poetry *Yo'l* (*The Path*), *Ikkinchi kitob* (*The Second Book*), *Bambergiana* and *Moskva Daftari* (*Moscow Notebook*). The recently published English book *Poet for Poet* included a number of poems by Belgi, as well as this brief biographical note: "Born in 1961 in Osh in the Ferghana Valley, applied unsuccessfully to the Literary Institute, took work where he could find it, travelled widely. Now living in seclusion in the mountains of his native province… "

When I asked the author of this note about the final sentence, he exclaimed: "At that time how could I have known that this reclusive Sufi retreat in search of a spiritual master would lead to Afghanistan?" And indeed, at the time when those words were written, the mountains of the Osh province were far from being a theatre of military operations where Islamic militants made annual forays or a political bazaar where some traded in politics and others in narcotics or foreign hostages.

I shall try to recount all this in detail, but I shall start, I think, from the very end.

On September 11, 2001 I was on holiday with my family at Issyk-Kul Lake: how can you expect any Tashkent or Central Asian intellectual to summon up the effort to go any further than that? Before lunch we had been swimming and riding in a catamaran, and after lunch we were relaxing at home. In an attempt to salvage something from those meaningless, monotonous days when, as Pushkin said "*Fare niente* is my law", I was sitting there with a pen and a sheet of paper and a gradually mounting sense of frustration with the members of my household because of the pointlessness of it all. The members of my household were applying their own precautionary defensive measures: in other words, it was normal family life during a holiday. Eventually we decided to

walk to the lake again, I blamed my fruitless depression on my wife's zealous attitude, she got even with me for absenting myself from family activities for two hours, and our two children automatically took mental note of the new cracks between their parents in order later to coerce one into buying ice cream and the other into the interminable construction of skyscrapers of sand.

And now I attempt to recall every little detail, as if there had been some kind of portent, the way a bird will occasionally fly for some distance in front of the windscreen of your car, or the silence is suddenly sucked into both your ears in a contracting sphere of dread, but there was nothing like that, except perhaps for those sandcastles that were washed away by the cold water of the lake.

We got back to our room in the early evening, but there was still some time to go before supper and so on this occasion I felt justified in switching on the television and flicking through the channels. It was strange, though – the foreign satellite channels were all showing a picture of a fire that had started in some tower or other. For some reason I thought about the Tate Gallery in London – I had recently read about it being opened in the magazine *Ogonyok*. Why did I think about London? Most likely because there was someone speaking from London: then I realised it was the BBC channel and I started listening carefully. I wouldn't claim that my English is very advanced – sure, I studied it in school and passed the minimum postgraduate reading requirement, but I'd say I'm probably better at expressing myself in Uzbek at the market than understanding what those analysts are barking about in all those dreary, identical studios. Even so, I did make out the words "New York" a couple of times. And while I was wondering just what it all had to do with New York, the little aeroplane appeared on the screen, exactly like in a second take, and flew slowly and surely into another tower concealed behind the first one. This time I understood without any words – simply from the childish cry emitted by the anchor man – that they weren't showing a Hollywood film, that these unimaginable things were happening even as I watched, and at that moment the entire world was turning into one big Hollywood....

Our whole family sat in front of the television all that evening, missing supper – no great loss – and later, after the whole chilling event had been dubbed and explained by the Russian language channels, in the dead of that cold Issyk-Kul night I had a strange dream that I still remember to this day.

In one of the *kishlaks*, or mountain villages, where I used to be sent for Young Pioneer camp, I walked out of the gate and saw a car hurtling along in my direction. The car's wheels were running along the unbroken line of yellowing clay fences sticking up out of the white

snow, as if these fences marked its only road through the snowfall; it was attached to these fences, and its impetuous motion followed their curves. I would have thought the car was racing along almost vertically, if it had not gone whooshing past me, turned in a steep arc and shot off beyond the dark forms of the bridge and the river that I could see down below. "Lunatic!" I thought, and was about to carry on walking downhill when the car emerged from a dip, swung round and set off back across the bridge. Now it was aiming for me. I went dashing across the snow to get as far away as possible from those fences that held the car the way the electric wires hold a suburban train, but the car made a sharp U-turn and seemed to come lunging after me. I dashed along through snow up to my knees, sometimes slipping into steep holes, but in any case leaving a deep track behind me as I fled. The car could easily pinpoint my location. I put on two rapid spurts of speed and slid down the side of the hollow, all the way to the channel of the glimmering river, and a thought flashed through my mind like lightning: "The car will run straight off into the river here!" True, there was also the thought that it might hook me and pull me with it, but the thought that came after that was even more frightening: "What if the driver comes after me without his car…" How could I defend myself on the white snow?

Woken by a chilly shiver of fear in that black, cold, Issyk-Kul or, rather, Tian-Shan night, I gazed out through the window of our wooden hotel building at the morning twilight advancing from the east, unwilling to admit to myself that this fear under my skin was changing my life forever. And this fear is the point from which I wish to start my story.

Chapter One

"When did it all begin?" Yosir thought in his solitude. On either the sixteenth or the seventeenth day of the month of Sha'ban in the year 1422 of the Hidjra (November 2001), when the time for the after-sunset prayer was approaching, they were ordered to assemble on the southern outskirts of the Zulmat *kishlak*, which fortunately the Americans had not bombed yet. When Yosir asked the messenger if they should turn out with their things – since any other question that was natural in other places and other circles, such as "What for?", "What's going to happen?", "Will it be for long?" could cost you dear – the messenger replied briefly: "As usual!" and Yosir and Hamsa began hastily packing their *hurdjuns*, or traveller's bags, and the AKMS automatic rifles wrapped in Afghan felt cloaks.

Seven minutes later they were sitting in the yard of one of the local mosques after putting their *hurdjuns* down beside the clay fence nearby.

Some men were counting off their prayer beads, some were intently reciting to themselves the most glorious names of God, and a few of those who had only just joined them were bent over in the afternoon prayer that had been missed. But there was something here that went beyond an ordinary gathering, as if the sound of the myna-bird's light, delicate whistle was about to be replaced by the first sound of a plane and a bomb or rocket flying through the air, and the chirring of the first cricket in the corner, its voice cracked from the drought, was about to be drowned out by the rattle of a machine gun replying to the imperturbable plane….

The yard of the mosque filled up quickly, someone ordered the doors to be closed and, glancing from under his brows, Yosir noticed a tall, burly figure appear in the doorway of the mosque itself and move rapidly to the front of the gathering, accompanied by several armed guards. It was Muhammad Tahir Farruk (Tahir Yuldash – the Amir of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan). Like everyone else in the mosque, Yosir was sitting with his head bowed low, but since he was in one of the front rows, out of the corner of his eye he saw the Amir halt facing the gathering, while three of his bodyguards walked on further and three stayed beside him on his right, probing the community with their eyes. That had never happened before. Yosir had prayed with the Amir numerous times, and the Amir had very rarely played the part of an Imam, preferring to make himself inconspicuous somewhere in the general body of the community, but everything was different now.

In a low, hoarse voice the Amir read out the obligatory *hamd* and *naat* – the blessing in the name of Allah and his Prophet – and then, with mounting fervour, he moved on to the sermon itself. He spoke of *jihad*, a holy war against the infidels and above all against the empire of Satan – America; he spoke of *shahids*, who had died a righteous death on this path, of children who had been made orphans, but also avengers, and yet again Yosir wondered in amazement where Muhammad Tahir found that blazing passion that spoke prophetically above and beyond his own thoughts, will and lips, so that he never faltered, or hesitated or stumbled over a misplaced breath. He didn't learn it all off by heart, did he, he didn't rehearse it all in front of a mirror – for where would he get a mirror?

Yosir suddenly remembered that when he came back to Mazari-Sharif from Kabul with the film, they have been shooting, in the afternoon of the twenty-third day of the month of Jumad Al-Sani in year 1422 of the Hidjra (September 11, 2001) and entered a house belonging to Uzbek fighters on Puli Havoi Street, the Amir was sitting in the yard, shaving the head of one of his bodyguards by the light of a small flaming torch. The other two bodyguards were sitting nearby with their already shaven heads bleeding.

A certain alarm, not exactly fear, must have shown in Yosir's eyes, and the Amir had laughed and spoken first, before he could say anything: "Look, I am letting the bad blood out of their heads. It's very good for you, would you like to try it?" He made several cuts in his bodyguard's cleanly shaven skin and covered them with a glass jar heated briefly over a flame, the way in which a cold is usually treated. Blood covered the walls of the jar like dark paint. The bodyguard tensed up, but he didn't groan. "He's short of iron! Look how brown the blood is! You're all short of iron!" the Amir had joked and then, leaving his bodyguards in the yard, he had gone into the house to talk to Yosir.

That evening, following communal prayers in the yard of that house, at which people had gathered, as usual, by making their way through openings between one yard and the next, so that no one in the street could possibly guess who they were and what they were doing there, Yosir, who was tired after his long journey, had decided to go to bed early, without telling the curious all the latest news from Kabul and the Turkistan *madrasah* there. But no sooner had the final mountain passes before Mazari Sharif flashed in front of his eyes than he heard sounds from the next room, where the three sentries on duty were listening to the BBC, the Voice of America and Radio Liberty respectively: a loud braying in three voices was followed by rapid repetitions of "Allah-u Akbar!" – "Allah is great!" over and over again. Everybody in the house jumped up and, in defiance of the rules, went dashing towards the room on the upper floor, but one of the sentries was already flying down towards them with a radio pressed against his ear, and all Yosir could hear was "New York" and then something else, followed by "destroyed". The sentry went rushing past – to do as he was supposed to do and report the extraordinary news to the Amir, who was dealing with somebody in the basement. For some strange reason Yosir caught himself thinking of the gigantic wave that was expected when half of a Spanish island slipped into the sea, and felt horrified as he imagined it:

Hovliqar u, talpinar u, shoshar u,
Go'ringizdan na'ra tortib toshar u…

He had once translated these words of Chulpon about a wave of fire into Russian, and now, in the milling throng of that dark house, he tried to recall the ending:

And the wave will seethe and surge and rage
And scorch your coffins with a mighty roar …

And from there it was but half a step to Brodsky:

Someday it and not, alas, we
Will flood along the railings of the promenade,
Advancing to shouts of: "Don't!.."

"Don't!" the Amir shouted and Yosir, adrift on his sea of memories, shuddered when he suddenly saw the bodyguards, who had pointed their rifles up into the sky, towards the sources of the rumbling that had been expanding for so long, lower their gun barrels, and heard the Amir first shout after them in his wheezing, sleepless voice: "Death to America! Death to the empire of Satan! Allah-u Akbar!" and then order everyone to leave the house one at a time and assemble immediately in the trenches.

Running out of the mosque when the bombing had already begun, Yosir glanced up as if for the last time at the sky, which was scored across by several long, bloody slashes, as if someone had decided to let the sky's bad blood, and high up above, slicing imperviously through the air and glittering like sharp blades in the cuts, he saw the American super-heavy B-1 bombers. Or that same wave of fire….

Chapter Two

To this pool,

to the trees in this pool,
beyond the trees,
the sudden fear of falling
in the bottomless cloud-filled sky,
closing wet eyes.

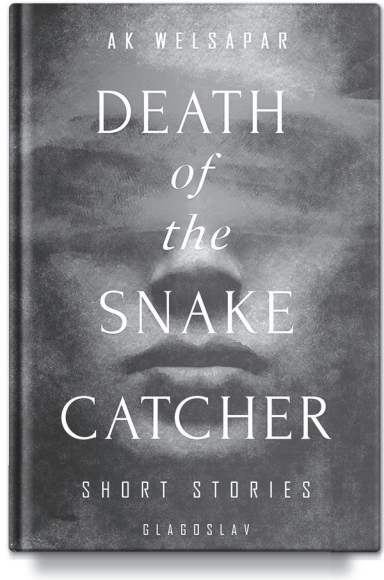
Within oneself,
in the veins within oneself,
beyond the veins
a groan on which one cannot hang words,
or in non-revelation
that is wider than this, more boundless,
more borderless than this.

I was suddenly afraid of falling.

-Belgi

Death of the Snake Catcher

by Ak Welsapar



This book features people from one of the most closed countries of today's world, where the passage of time resembles the passage of a caravan through the waterless desert. This world has been recreated by a true-born son of that mysterious country, a Turkmen who, at the will of fate, has now been living for a quarter of a century in snowy Scandinavia. Is that not why two different worlds come together in *Ryazan horseradish and Tula gingerbread*, to come apart in *Love in Lilac*, in which a student from the non-free world falls in love with a girl from the West?

In the story *Death of the Snake Catcher*, an old snake catcher meets one on one with a giant cobra in the heart of the desert. In the dialogue between them the author unveils the age-old interdependence of Man and untamed nature, where the fear and mistrust of the strong and the hopes and apprehensions of the weak change places but co-exist as ever. *Egyptian night of fear*, in which a boy goes to an Eastern bazaar and falls into the clutches of depraved forces, is created in the writer's characteristic style of magical realism, while the novella Altynai celebrates first love, radiant and sad, pure as virgin snow.

Buy it > www.glagoslav.com

Dear Reader,

Thank you for purchasing this book.

We at Glagoslav Publications are glad to welcome you, and hope that you find our books to be a source of knowledge and inspiration.

We want to show the beauty and depth of the Slavic region to everyone looking to expand their horizon and learn something new about different cultures, different people, and we believe that with this book we have managed to do just that.

Now that you've got to know us, we want to get to know you. We value communication with our readers and want to hear from you! We offer several options:

– Join our Book Club on Goodreads, Library Thing and Shelfari, and receive special offers and information about our giveaways;

– Share your opinion about our books on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Waterstones and other bookstores;

– Join us on Facebook and Twitter for updates on our publications and news about our authors;

– Visit our site www.glagoslav.com to check out our Catalogue and subscribe to our Newsletter.

Glagoslav Publications is getting ready to release a new collection and planning some interesting surprises — stay with us to find out!

Glagoslav Publications
Email: contact@glagoslav.com

Glagoslav Publications Catalogue

- *The Time of Women* by Elena Chizhova
- *Andrei Tarkovsky: The Collector of Dreams* by Layla Alexander-Garrett
- *Andrei Tarkovsky - A Life on the Cross* by Lyudmila Boyadzhieva
- *Sin* by Zakhar Prilepin
- *Hardly Ever Otherwise* by Maria Matios
- *Khatyn* by Ales Adamovich
- *The Lost Button* by Irene Rozdobudko
- *Christened with Crosses* by Eduard Kochergin
- *The Vital Needs of the Dead* by Igor Sakhnovsky
- *The Sarabande of Sara's Band* by Larysa Denysenko
- *A Poet and Bin Laden* by Hamid Ismailov
- *Watching The Russians (Dutch Edition)* by Maria Konyukova
- *Kobzar* by Taras Shevchenko
- *The Stone Bridge* by Alexander Terekhov
- *Moryak* by Lee Mandel
- *King Stakh's Wild Hunt* by Uladzimir Karatkevich
- *The Hawks of Peace* by Dmitry Rogozin
- *Harlequin's Costume* by Leonid Yuzefovich
- *Depeche Mode* by Serhii Zhadan
- *The Grand Slam and other stories (Dutch Edition)* by Leonid Andreev
- *METRO 2033 (Dutch Edition)* by Dmitry Glukhovsky
- *METRO 2034 (Dutch Edition)* by Dmitry Glukhovsky
- *A Russian Story* by Eugenia Kononenko
- *Herstories, An Anthology of New Ukrainian Women Prose Writers*
- *The Battle of the Sexes Russian Style* by Nadezhda Ptushkina
- *A Book Without Photographs* by Sergey Shargunov
- *Down Among The Fishes* by Natalka Babina
- *disUNITY* by Anatoly Kudryavitsky
- *Sankya* by Zakhar Prilepin
- *Wolf Messing* by Tatiana Lungin
- *Good Stalin* by Victor Erofeyev
- *Solar Plexus* by Rustam Ibragimbekov

- *Don't Call me a Victim!* by Dina Yafasova
- *Poetin (Dutch Edition)* by Chris Hutchins and Alexander Korobko
- *A History of Belarus* by Lubov Bazan
- *Children's Fashion of the Russian Empire* by Alexander Vasiliev
- *Empire of Corruption - The Russian National Pastime* by Vladimir Soloviev
- *Heroes of the 90s - People and Money. The Modern History of Russian Capitalism*
- *Fifty Highlights from the Russian Literature (Dutch Edition)* by Maarten Tengbergen
- *Bajesvolk (Dutch Edition)* by Mikhail Khodorkovsky
- *Tsarina Alexandra's Diary (Dutch Edition)*
- *Myths about Russia* by Vladimir Medinskiy
- *Boris Yeltsin - The Decade that Shook the World* by Boris Minaev
- *A Man Of Change - A study of the political life of Boris Yeltsin*
- *Sberbank - The Rebirth of Russia's Financial Giant* by Evgeny Karasyuk
- *To Get Ukraine* by Oleksandr Shyshko
- *Asystole* by Oleg Pavlov
- *Gnedich* by Maria Rybakova
- *Marina Tsvetaeva - The Essential Poetry*
- *Multiple Personalities* by Tatyana Shcherbina
- *The Investigator* by Margarita Khemlin
- *The Exile* by Zinaida Tulub
- *Leo Tolstoy – Flight from paradise* by Pavel Basinsky
- *Moscow in the 1930* by Natalia Gromova
- *Laurus (Dutch edition)* by Evgenij Vodolazkin
- *Prisoner* by Anna Nemzer
- *The Crime of Chernobyl - The Nuclear Goulag* by Wladimir Tchertkoff
- *Alpine Ballad* by Vasil Bykau
- *The Complete Correspondence of Hryhory Skovoroda*
- *The Tale of Aypi* by Ak Welsapar
- *Selected Poems* by Lydia Grigorieva
- T*he Fantastic Worlds of Yuri Vynnychuk*

- *The Garden of Divine Songs and Collected Poetry of Hryhory Skovoroda*
- *Adventures in the Slavic Kitchen: A Book of Essays with Recipes*
- *Seven Signs of the Lion* by Michael M. Naydan
- *Forefathers' Eve* by Adam Mickiewicz
- *One-Two* by Igor Eliseev
- *Girls, be Good* by Bojan Babić
- *Time of the Octopus* by Anatoly Kucherena
- *The Grand Harmony* by Bohdan Ihor Antonych
- *The Selected Lyric Poetry Of Maksym Rylsky*
- *The Shining Light* by Galymkair Mutanov
- *The Frontier: 28 Contemporary Ukrainian Poets - An Anthology*
- *Acropolis - The Wawel Plays* by Stanisław Wyspiański
- *Contours of the City* by Attyla Mohylny
- *Conversations Before Silence: The Selected Poetry of Oles Ilchenko*
- *The Secret History of my Sojourn in Russia* by Jaroslav Hašek
- *Mirror Sand - An Anthology of Russian Short Poems in English Translation* (A Bilingual Edition)
- *Maybe We're Leaving* by Jan Balaban
- *Death of the Snake Catcher* by Ak WelsaparRichard Govett
- *A Brown Man in Russia - Perambulations Through A Siberian Winter* by Vijay Menon
- *Hard Times* by Ostap Vyshnia
- *The Flying Dutchman* by Anatoly Kudryavitsky
- *Nikolai Gumilev's Africa* by Nikolai Gumilev
- *Combustions* by Srđan Srdić
- *The Sonnets* by Adam Mickiewicz
- *Dramatic Works* by Zygmunt Krasiński
- *Four Plays* by Juliusz Słowacki
- *Little Zinnobers* by Elena Chizhova
- *A Flame Out at Sea* by Dmitry Novikov
- *We Are Building Capitalism! Moscow in Transition 1992-1997*
- *The Hemingway Game* by Evgeny Grishkovets
- *The Nuremberg Trials* by Alexander Zvyagintsev
- *I Want a Baby and Other Plays* by Sergei Tretyakov
- *Biography of Sergei Prokofiev* by Igor Vishnevetsky
- *Duel* by Borys Antonenko-Davydovych
- *Mikhail Bulgakov: The Life and Times* by Marietta Chudakova

More coming soon...

Hamid Ismailov

Hamid Ismailov, the acclaimed author of *The Railway*, is an Uzbek poet and writer who was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 1992 and came to the UK, where he took a job with the BBC World Service. Writer in Residence of the BBC World Service whose works are banned in Uzbekistan, Ismailov has followed the history of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia and in Afghanistan starting from its very beginning in the late 80-ies, and as the BBC journalist travelled to Talibani Afghanistan to meet their elite. His observations and experiences have become part of the highly topical book *A Poet and Bin-Laden.*

The "reality novel" *A Poet and Bin-Laden*, set in Central Asia at the turn of the 21st century against a swirling backdrop of Islamic fundamentalism in the Ferghana Valley and beyond, gives a first-hand account on the militants and Taliban's internal life.

The novel begins on the eve of 9/11, with the narrator's haunting description of the airplane attack on the Twin Towers as seen on TV while he is on holiday in Central Asia; and tells the story of an Uzbek poet Belgi, who was disappointed in the authoritarian regime in Uzbekistan and became a terrorist in the eyes of the world. His journey begins with a search for a Sufi spiritual master and ends in guerrilla warfare, and it is this tension between a transcendental and a violent response to oppression, between the book and the bomb, between *Archipelago GULAG* and modern Central Asia and Afghanistan, that gives the novel its specific poignancy.

In this book Hamid Ismailov masterfully intertwines fiction with documentary and provides wonderfully vivid accounts of historical events such as the siege of Kunduz, the breakout from Shebergan prison and the insurgency in the Ferghana Valley as witnessed by the Byronian figure of Belgi, who enters the inner sanctum of al-Qaeda and ultimately meets Sheikh bin Laden himself.

'A complex mosaic of a novel, reflecting Central Asian turmoil and involving jihadists and post-Soviet dictators, young idealists and their power-hungry elders, ending with an account of the murderous conflicts within the family of the Great Moghuls of India. What do these have in common with the modern terrorism of Al-Quaeda and other such groups? The theme is surely the same: Islamic fratricide.'
John Spurling, the acclaimed author of 'MacRune's Guevara' and 'A Book of Liszts'

Glagoslav Publications
ISBN 978-1-909156-33-3
London

ISBN 978-1-909156-33-3
90000
9 781909 156333