

## Kobra

### A reptile call despotia

HUNGARY'S LAG. It is the outlines of an inverted God that Ak Welsapar signs in his allegory of a totalitarian regime. "Kobra" is both grotesque and important but is sometimes burdened by the writer's tendency to write the reader on his nose.

By Johanna Lindbladh · May 12, 2011 · [Save article](#)

"A man must not die prematurely" - how to interpret this statement? For me, and certainly more with me, this appears as a moral stance - no one should have to experience an premature death. But when Ak Welsapar in his novel "Kobra" puts the words of Mr Comrade's president's mouth, the meaning becomes quite different. When someone dies prematurely, preferably a person with divergent opinions, this is a "natural" death - the natural consequence of the prevailing regime, where the life expectancy of a dissident is considerably shorter than that of a party member.

It can be seen that the depiction of the infernal dictator in "Kobra" has its roots in the author's own experiences. Welsapar emigrated to Sweden in 1994 after being subjected to persecution in his native Turkmenistan, where he is still a blacklisted author. Significantly, Welsapar has experienced the horrors of dictatorship both in a Soviet and a post-Soviet Turkmenistan - though under the leadership of the same one-man ruler, Saparmurat Nijazov, who did not give up power until his death in 2006. "Kobra" is a nasty documentary allegory over a totalitarian regime, seasoned with Central Asian folklore, animal symbolism,

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## Our beloved

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Kamila Shamsie's novel "Vår älskade" is both an urgent and a scary beautiful thriller. However, Margit Richert suspects that those who would need it most are those who are least willing to even open it.

