



Wave of Terror

Theodore Odrach , Erma Odrach (Translator) , T.F. Rigelhof (Introduction)

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Publishers Weekly - "Odrach's delightfully sardonic novel about Stalinist occupation ... is rich with history, horror and comedy."

This panoramic novel hidden from the English-speaking world for more than 50 years begins with the Red Army invasion of Belarus in 1939. Ivan Kulik has just become Headmaster of school number 7 in Hlaby, a rural village in the Pinsk Marshes. Through his eyes we witness the tragedy of Stalinist domination where people are randomly deported to labour camps or tortured in Zovty Prison in Pinsk. The author's individual gift that sets him apart from his contemporaries is the range of his sympathies and his unromantic, unsentimental approach to the sensual lives of females. His debt to Chekhov is obvious in his ability to capture the internal drama of his characters with psychological concision.

Wave of Terror Details

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Author : Theodore Odrach , Erma Odrach (Translator) , T.F. Rigelhof (Introduction)

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From Reader Review Wave of Terror for online ebook

Ronald Roseborough says

This is a tale of life in the Ukrainian-Belorussian borderland of 1939, under the new, but already festering regime of Joseph Stalin. Ivan Kulik has been recently appointed the headmaster of a school in a small provincial village, seemingly far from the reach of the new government. The author loses no time in bringing his characters to life. In deceptively simple prose, we are introduced to the villagers and gently drawn into their lives, only to find the darkness within. We are rewarded with deep insights into the minds of the characters, as the Stalinist regime, backed by the terror of the NKVD, the secret police, invades every aspect of the villagers lives. We are shown deep insights into a mind which, when always under oppression, may leap through all sorts of negative scenarios. Oppression and repression feed on fear, strengthening and enabling them. Mr Odrach, having lived through much of what he writes, shows us the mind can be a dark and dangerous place. In his writing, the fear of a violent, sudden death is a constant companion. The NKVD dealt out death sentences or torture, not only for overt acts of rebellion, but for merely wrong thoughts or words or the whispered rumors of these by one's neighbors. The mere thought that no one can be trusted to be a true friend and not an informer, can have a devastating effect on one's piece of mind. The book shows us that fear can make self preservation kick in, making us give up everything and everyone. Hope, friendship, love, all can be lost in the effort to save ourselves. Can we truly be free when we know that those left behind are still enslaved? This is a very enlightening and at the same time entertaining book written by an author who lived much of what he writes about.

Orion says

Wave of Terror is a novel about the effects of the Soviet invasion of Belarus in 1939 on a small Ukrainian village in the Pinsk marshes as seen through the eyes of a young school teacher named Ivan Kulik. Liberated from their uncaring Polish landlords, the village is first happy, but later finds they are faced with an even worse threat from Stalinist oppression.

Originally written in Ukrainian and published as Voshchad' (Incipient dawn) in Toronto in 1972, this edition was translated into English by Erma Odrach, the author's daughter. The story is based on Odrach's personal experiences and was written to expose the horrors of Stalinist Russia, but now reads as historical fiction.

The novel is best at portraying the people and their behavior as they struggle to adapt and survive under changing and unjust conditions. Particularly well done is Ivan's infatuation with the lovely Marusia, and her uncaring response as she tries hard to adjust to the new Russian social environment that Ivan disdains.

Mike says

"Wave of Terror", by Theodore Odrach, is a wonderfully scripted novel of the Russian occupation of Belarus in 1939. Most people are aware of the plight the Jews had as a result of the Nazis', but many are probably unaware of the plight of the people of Belarus, by the Red Army. People were taken from their homes in the

middle of the night, never to be seen nor heard from again. Does that sound familiar? I was completely captivated by the story, and thanks to Erma Odrach, and her ability and willingness to translate her father's writings, we are allowed to learn of another horrible time in history.

The way the story is told is exceptional, as it takes a perspective from one person's point of view, that being Kulik, a Educational Director, in a small village of Belarus, known as Hlaby. We see the whole story through his eyes, and I'm sure that we are seeing it through the eyes of Mr. Odrach. Once you pick up this book and start reading, it will be difficult to put down. There is terror, romance and what might be considered comedy throughout the story.

Thank you so much Theodore and Erma for allowing this story to be told. It is a great read for anyone interested in history. This story even has a surprising ending.

Tetiana says

I found this book fascinating. I'm not often attracted to historical novels because I find they have more historical facts than they do fiction. This book was a pleasant surprise. Wave of Terror is rich with moving scenery and a bevy of interesting and always not so nice characters. It is not only filled with black farce and horror, but provides a clear picture of the Soviet political apparatus.

Wave of Terror is worth a read.

Daisy says

This book gives one of the clearest descriptions of oppression under the Soviet/Stalinist system I've ever read. It's accessible in a way you almost don't want it to be because it brings it all so close. It's beautifully written (and translated by the author's daughter), with full characters in palpable situations, most dangerous, some not. There's horror and there's humor. It's vivid.

Even though it covers a lot of territory, it's an intimate story, personal. It covers an interesting time in Ukraine, no, Belorussia, no, USSR, no... because everything's changing right then. As a reader, you wonder with Kulik, the main character, you change your mind when he does, you fear when he does, and in the end, you are taken by his sudden decision the same way he is. Holding the book and nearing the end with fewer and fewer pages in my right hand, I kept wondering how it would end, what could happen in those last pages to tie it all up. It doesn't feel like fiction but it reads like a novel. I'll think about this one for a long time.

It happens to fit nicely with a book I've just finished, Purge by Sofi Oksanen Purge

Some quotes that describe the eerie transition into the Soviet system:

"We are all being pursued," was the answer. "Even the pursuer is being pursued." p. 124

Everything that had happened was real and frightening, and yet nothing was as it seemed. p. 172

...a system of provocation, manipulation, and intimidation. p. 175

Kulik thought, "A new hierarchy has been established, and in the world's first classless society." p. 246

He wanted to believe in her, more than anything he craved sincerity, but sincerity, he very well knew, was a thing of the past. p. 250

Renee says

Wow. That's what I say. I am amazed that a book written more than fifty years ago could be so relevant and thought provoking today. I am blown away and a little sad that there isn't more of his work to enjoy.

You can read my full review here: <http://www.examiner.com/examiner/x-48...>

Thank you Erma, for sharing your father's work with us. I'm glad you did.

Dem says

I had been looking forward to reading this book and the blurb read well but for me this book was a big let down.

I love historical fiction and especially books on Russia and Stalin and was really looking forward to learning about the Soviet Invasion of Belarus but felt that this book had very little political facts and concentrated more on the story about the people of a small village and how they adapted to the invasion but for me this book needed more information and a better plot.

I did not like or engage with any of the characters and for me this book was lacking in plot and background information and therefore just a 2 star read.

Frankie says

I really was happily surprised by this book. The title makes it seem frightening and the subject matter likewise, but the author actually keeps it pretty light (considering what we know of Soviet Communism). Here is a year in the life of a provincial (yet over-qualified) schoolteacher. The character of Ivan Kulik is a solid, trustworthy hero, not only with other characters but with the reader. The entire plot depends on his unwavering, though sometimes brash, attitude.

The other characters are just as bold in their vigor, even for some in their "consciencelessness," if I could use such a word. Most of them, especially Cornelius and Dounia, are delightfully Gogolian. When Cornelius steals the table but can't fit it through his door - the analogy that comes to mind is, among other things, Ukrainian tongues speaking Russian words (a theme in turn reflecting the Soviet control as a whole). Regardless of how much I read into it, it stands that there's depth of content, which always bring me back to Eastern writers, so psychologically perceptive and yet easy-to-read. Though the novel begins with many comedic characters, there are few remaining by the end. This has a strong effect on the isolation of the hero, and drives home the overall point.

The novel is translated in contemporary fashion, with a simple style. It's a quick read, and exciting. It speaks up from a virtually unheard-of and unrepresented place, the Ukraine of the Soviet occupation. And it certainly stands alongside any classics in or before its era.

CasualDebris says

For my full review, please visit Casual Debris.

Wave of Terror is an unusual mixture of comedy and Soviet horror, dealing with the opening months of the Soviet occupation of a rural area in Ukraine in 1939. We follow the Soviet usurpation primarily through the experiences of two disparate villagers, the school headmaster Ivan Kulik and the pretentious young Maria Valentynovna. In its episodic format we are introduced to many diverse characters and witness a wide array of scenarios, from the comic and absurdist to the horribly tragic. Some scenes are more effective and some simply more interesting than others, yet each episode is fairly short, preventing a potential lag or unevenness in the reading that episodic novels can fall victim to. The overall balance is strong and I was able to read the book at a consistent pace.

Odrach evidently wanted this book to be the first part of a trilogy, yet sadly passed away before he was able to complete it. The ending is abrupt and many situations are left open-ended, but this lack of closure enhances the work, especially considering that its aim is to solely examine the beginnings of occupation and its prompt affects on the rural populace. Odrach's point is made and his vision of the early Soviet Ukraine remains quite vivid.

The singularly unique aspect of the novel is the combination of outright humour and devastating tragedy. Though there is some slapstick, particularly in the opening sequences, the humour succeeds best when used to illustrate the absurd notions of social reform by a regime that pretends to be a saviour, when it is evidently less benevolent to its people than its predecessor. Odrach emphasizes his point that salvation from the cruel Polish landowners is less than a blessing when the new controlling Soviet force has less to offer the people of Hlaby, and instead finds more from their meagre holdings to seize. It is a horrible tragedy, and though the tragic events are often bleak, the humour shines through making for an unusual read. As we become enmeshed in the lives of the victims of this new regime, the humour takes a back seat, overshadowed by the elements of persecution and paranoia that overtake the town and its inhabitants.

My favourite sequence in the novel is the election held to appoint a Deputy of the Village Soviet (Chapter 19). Two comical and glutinous Soviet officials stage an election as a ploy to keep a certain lascivious local within their insatiable grasps. The staged election becomes a farce as the townspeople cannot take the proceedings seriously, not caring for these formalities and expecting to gain nothing from this supposedly serious and important civil act. When the two officials nominate their intended, they ask that the townsfolk call out their nominations for the four party seats in order to make up a presidium, specifying that they should elect their most upstanding citizens. In a wonderful show of mockery and chaos, the four names are among the town's social outcasts, who have not a clue as to what is going on around them. In this scene Odrach succeeds in portraying the extremes of political absurdity, and though I laughed aloud while reading it, I could not escape the intended seriousness behind the scene.

Being a historical novel of Soviet occupation, there are some truly disturbing moments with less than comical characters, emphasized primarily though the sinister Sobakin. One can argue that most of the characters (if not all) are two-dimensional, and indeed they are, but the two opposing forces here are the

Soviet motherland and the rural town of Hlaby. The many characters are used to illustrate the various degrees extremes that people go through in such conflict, the victims, rebels, submissives and those who manage to strive as best they can. Though we do pursue the experiences of two specific characters, the novel is not a character study nor the relating of a single unified set of experiences, but an overall view of a vast event. In that the novel succeeds, and I can only hope that we will see more of Mr. Odrach's work in translation.

Chrissie says

NO SPOILERS!

Finished: My concluding thoughts on this novel, which actually is very close to a memoir, become a single question - how would YOU feel to live your life never knowing whom to trust? Think about it. You can trust NOBODY..... The dialogue strikes me more as being the text of drama, rather than that of a novel. Very unsettling!

Through Page 232: I am a member of the group Historical Fictionistas, which is great! We have threads where we "Share A Blurb". There is one where you pick a paragraph from page 42. Here is what I quoted from this page:

Pausing to take some tea, after a moment he started up again. "Oh, the heart of a young man, it's like the spring rain, it will pour for about a month, then by summer everything will dry up. And so it goes. Their household has fallen apart completely and now poverty has consumed them like fleas on a dog. Everything Paraska touches turns to smoke and dust. That is the kind of daughter-in-law I have, as useless as an old shoe."

From this paragraph you get an idea of the type of language used.

I am much further through the book, and what I notice is that I am constantly questioning everyone's opinions. The Soviets are frightening and yet at the same time so bizarrely stupid that you can hardly be anything but amused. So I don't know who are the bad guys and who are the good guys. OK, Kulik is good, but he too makes mistakes. This tends to be very confusing/disturbing to me. For example you are sure that something terrible is going to happen - and then BINGO nothing happens and all ends up rosy and the "bad" Soviets prove to be in fact very understanding and reasonable. In this case.... Then 5 pages later all hell breaks loose. This leads to a rollercoaster ride. Maybe the author wants us to feel this way; the total insecurity of the times becomes so very real to the reader. To the terror is added the insecurity and almost bizarre comedy of what plays out. This is disturbing b/c it occurs at such an extreme level.

Through chapter 10, page 100: I continue to enjoy this book. I enjoy the writing style which has an abruptness that I find very realistic and characteristic of Russian literature. There is no fooling around - people say what they have to say. A conflict is rarely avoided. At the same time one learned to keep quiet when speaking would get you in grave trouble. You don't play around with being sent to a gulag in Archangel! Here is an example of a dialog:

"Kulik (the main protagonist and schoolteacher), feeling tremendously insulted, spoke up, intending to put the poet (Nikolai) in his place: 'Nikolai Nikitich, have you ever gone to the zoo?'"

Nikolai had never expected such a peculiar question. He crinkled his nose and cleared his throat. 'Er,

unfortunately, no.'

Kulik continues: 'Well in Prague I saw a beautiful chimpanzee whose imitation of humans was remarkable. The Czecks named him Potapka, which means imitator. If I might add, there's a striking resemblance.'

And you learn, through these people and their exploits. You experience a time that has passed. History affects the future. It is important to understand what others have lived through. I like the Russian manner of singing and drinking and allowing themselves to be people with both good and bad qualities. This makes them real. Stereotypes are just as far from this book as you can get. And I like Kulik b/c he often doesn't know how to deal with a new situation. He is as blown over by events as you or I would be. He thinks and thinks and sometimes his solutions are so bizarre and yet so perfect! I loved his idea to propose a party..... read the book and you will understand!

Through chapter three: I am thoroughly enjoying this. The language is very direct and straightforward, which I enjoy. What moves you is the tale being told, the quirky characters that feel so real and the humor embedded in the the story line. That what occurs has been seen and experienced by the author firsthand is evident. There are simple village people just trying to cope, There is friendship and kindness, but also others obsessively concerned with their prestige and even a village clown, the laughingstock of all. This takes place in the Pinsk Marshes on the border between what is today Belarussia and the Ukraine, a little after 1939 when the Soviets took this area from Poland imposing the Russian or Belorussian language on people who predominantly spoke Ukrainian. That is the setting.

Before starting the book: I feel like I have been let out of prison, the last book I read was horrible and a total waste of time to read. I am so eager to dig into a book with some substance, something you can learn from. Wave of Terror is a novel, but the main protagonist, Ivan Kulik, has many experiences in common with the author. Furthermore the book is translated by the author's youngest daughter. Often when an author dares to write about what lies close to home, the result resonates with veracity and deep emotions. The author had one of his short stories, *The Night Before Christmas*, included in editor Alberto Manguel's Penguin Book Of Christmas Stories along with such author's as Grahame Greene, John Cheever, Vladimir Nabokov and Alice Munro. T. F. Rigelhof, who reviewed Manguel's book for the Globe and Mail, states "When you read Odrach, you realize immediately that you are in the presence of a front-line eyewitness to some of the more casual brutalities of the 20th century. His fictional world feels like the everyday world must have felt for ordinary people living through extraordinary times, as captured by a rigorous investigative reporter of a kind that world would have ruthlessly silenced just as it sought to first shut up, then defame, Solzhenitsyn. Odrach as a writer has been compared not only to Solzhenitsyn in his "investigative reporter style", but also to Chekhov in his ability to "capture the internal drama of his characters". A Globe and Mail article is my source for these opinions. I am quite excited to start this book!

David Lentz says

Recently, I decided to focus upon reading great but lesser known masters of repressed writers from the Soviet Union during the time of Lenin and Stalin. Since some of the finest writing was considered to be critical of Soviet leadership, many beautifully written masterpieces have only fairly recently come to see the light of day. Of course, Solzhenitsyn has been recognized for his trials on the gulag with the Nobel Prize but there are many other genuinely great and supremely gifted writers of the era. And Theodore Odrach has earned a worthy place of prominence among the most talented and courageous authors of an era in which

writers truly suffered for their art. In Odrach's case he escaped from the Ukraine and came to North America to live and write in Toronto. He was published by a discerning publishing house in Chicago who recognized his talent, the importance of his message and the sublime talents of Erma Odrach as her father's translator. Like other Soviet era writer's Odrach is powerful because of his understatement and the highly polished, vivid almost journalistic style. His journalistic writing style at times reminded me of Hemingway in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and in *A Farewell to Arms*. The characters are uniquely and sensitively drawn portraits with realistic traits which bring out their humanity. The women in this book are especially well sketched, and -- although the writer was a man and capturing the essence of women is more challenging than writing about one's own gender -- perhaps Erma's devoted commitment to find Moliere's "mots juste" helps to distinguish every character in this novel. The Odrachs make this incredibly difficult era, with its incessant danger and hardship, come alive luminously. There are profound and enduring lessons in this novel for freedom-loving peoples worldwide -- hope for those seeking democracy through perseverance and caution to those blessed to live in democratic societies whose freedoms are at risk from powerful megalomaniacs. I really can't say enough in praise of the courage and talents of the Odrachs whose important work is worthy of wide readership. The Odrachs have given us the benefit of a great, living legacy to treasure: I really loved this intelligent, humble and truly beautiful novel. It represents a high standard of novel which America should aspire both to write and widely read. I was moved deeply and inspired by this lyrical, gorgeously crafted novel -- my best advice is to buy and read this timeless masterpiece now: you'll never forget this book.

Amy says

Talk about a timely book! This novel is based on Theodore Odrach's own life when Stalin's Red Army came in to power in Belarus. Given that Belarus is very much in the news this week, with the controversy over recent elections and the beating and deportation of several journalists, it seems that a glimpse at its history is appropriate.

I know of several people who have read *Wave of Terror* recently, and all were moved by it because of how revealing the novel is about resilience, fear, and courage. Briefly, it deals with the experiences of a school teacher in the rural region of the Pinsk marshes-one who finds himself trying to walk the tightrope of pleasing the new regime without losing his moral balance. He is an endearing character, much like Ivan in Vasily Grossman's *Everything Flows*. However, while the Grossman novel features Ivan looking back on his experiences, in this we see Kulik and what he is thinking as he experiences the significant events that turn the small region upside down, yet again. As an educated man, he is a threat to the Stalinist leaders, who give him simple advice to follow:

"I know you're a historian with a degree...which is not to your credit. To put it simply, you have an education from a bourgeois institution where you were taught not only by non-socialist professors but also by pretentious, self-serving priests. You were educated in a hostile and unproductive environment. Take my advice and study the five volumes of Soviet history. Become a master of Marxist methodology...Give added attention to the Communist Manifesto, and learn how the capitalist classes of all nations will be overthrown and eliminated by a worldwide working-class revolution."

The pressure to succumb to the indoctrination is great; if he doesn't conform he will be shipped away to Siberia. Anyone can endanger him, as just the simplest lie about him from a student or associate will be enough to remove him, because the regime rewards those who inform. With a starving community and hostility around, every word he speaks endangers him, and yet "even silence could bring disaster". The story of how he moves through this virtual minefield is both surprising and inspiring.

What is especially revealing about the novel's voice is its coverage of the subject of languages. Having read a few Stalin-era books lately, I hadn't quite caught on to how language itself is a tool of indoctrination. In Kulik's rural village, the villagers normally spoke Ukrainian. Having been previously invaded by Poland however, they had been impelled to only speak Polish before reverting back to Ukrainian. Then the regime change insisted that they all speak Belorussian, but made clear it was a stepping stone to the entire area speaking Russian. Without access to their native tongue, the people had much of their culture stripped away, long before the Red Army came in and further eliminated cultural distinctions. Germany eventually occupied Belarus as well, which adds yet another linguistic layer to their history.

The language issue is significant because even now in Belarus, as its citizens are divided because those who wish to retain the Belorussian language and cultural identity (in order to prevent further "Russification" of their region) are outnumbered by those who wish to embrace the Russian language for simplification and economic benefit. The loss of one's native language means the loss of unique phrases, idioms, and subtle historical details. The poet Valzhyna Mort is one writer who is fighting for the language, which she describes in parts of her book *Factory of Tears*.

Wave of Terror also answered a question that had been gnawing at me. Why did the people let the Red Army take over? Why didn't they resist more? In the narrative, a key element made a great impact on me: the people were hungry and without basic necessities. In this state of desperation, any change was embraced, even if it meant turning on lifelong friends or family, and even if the promised changes never materialized. Stalin's leaders offered food to hungry people, and although they didn't get much, they were easily manipulated. It's the same sort of manipulation that Hitler used to great effect, as well as the Roman Caesars who were able to draw crowds to the gladiator fights with the promise of food. Without the essentials of daily life, oppression can easily take root, because the ordinary person has so little to lose.

Lastly, despite all the fear and suffering endured, it was interesting to read of what doesn't change. Old married couples still fought and young people still sought romance. People still danced and enjoyed a drink and found pleasure in the simplest of foods. Perhaps this was the key to survival-maintaining their humanity and dignity when others lost their own.

J. says

Historical fiction has been enjoying growing readership in recent years, and I count myself among that readership. I became aware of *Wave of Terror* on Goodreads and quickly added it to my reading list.

Partially autobiographical, *Wave of Terror* tells the story of Ivan Kulik, headmaster of a grammar school near Pinsk, in Ukraine, during the years Stalin was coming to power in Russia. Like the author, Theodore Odrach, Kulik, too, was an unruly child who, after committing a petty offense, spent time in a reform school in Vilnius before enrolling in University.

Wave of Terror, lovingly translated by Odrach's daughter, Erma, ranks with Orwell's *Animal Farm* as a chronicle of how despots creep into a small village to hail the new regime, to assure the people of a prosperous future for one and all. Of course those who dissent disappear mysteriously, never to be heard from again. Soon, distrust of neighbors grows: is he or she an informer? The sound of a motorcar coming to a stop outside your home, two doors slamming—have they come at last for me?

In America, we cannot know such terror; yet our previous administration showed disdain and no fear of its people. A government should fear its people. In *Wave of Terror*, Odrach makes the fear of the new regime and the secret police palpably real as the backdrop for this fictional cat and mouse game between Kulik and the authorities, who will stop at nothing, including manufacturing truths, to remove him as a threat to Stalin's plan for the greatest socialist regime in history, masked as a democracy.

Kulik is very human: he wants to trust (as is man's nature), fears to trust, even those closest to him, even for love. Yes, Kulik is a dissident. He wishes to teach the truth and to keep alive the rich heritage of Ukraine; while the new regime tells him he must teach only what they wish the populace to know.

In the end, the black motorcar comes for Kulik, he is kept in a prison for a day and a night, interrogated and released. But he knows this is the beginning of the end for him, that next time he will not be so lucky, and so he flees Ukraine.

However, where Kulik's story ends, Odrach's continues. Odrach escaped to Slovakia through the Carpathian Mountains, changing his name from Sholomitsky, eventually making his way to Germany and England where he wed, and ending up in Toronto where he wrote novels, short stories, memoirs and articles for local Ukrainian newspapers until his death from a stroke in 1964.

His books, all written from his Toronto home, were banned in the Soviet Union. *Wave of Terror* is his first novel to appear in English.

Highly recommended.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

3.5 stars

This book is a fictionalized account of real events witnessed and/or experienced by the author himself. In 1939, Stalin's Red Army ousted the Polish capitalist oppressors from the Ukraine. They annexed Ukraine to Belarus, making it part of the emerging USSR. At first the Ukrainians were happy, believing the propaganda and thinking Communism would bring them a better standard of living. They very soon found out that the new regime was far worse than the old one.

This is a story of that transition period immediately after the Stalinists took over. The NKVD set about terrorizing the countryside and whipping everyone into shape, literally and figuratively. Innocent people were arrested en masse and executed or sent to Siberia. The intelligentsia were especially targeted. No thinking for oneself allowed, and no speaking out against the new leaders.

Ivan Kulik, the main character, realizes that "he could be found guilty of thinking differently, or even thinking at all."

The "Wave of Terror" is largely psychological. As time goes on, people become increasingly paranoid and confused. Everything familiar is stripped from their lives as the Stalinists seek to eradicate all that is non-Russian. Uniformity is paramount, and everything Russian is superior, so everyone must conform in their clothing, music, literature, and food. They are even forbidden to speak their language and made to speak Russian or Belorussian.

We all know the history from a larger perspective as regards the atrocities committed and the failure of the Soviet system. This story provides a more intimate view of the countless smaller ways in which people's lives changed, and the growing mistrust among friends and family for fear that *anyone* could be an informer.

The book was lovingly translated from Ukrainian by the author's daughter Erma. As I was reading, I forgot it was a translation, which I consider a sign of a good translation.

I agree with another reviewer who said the book is a little redundant. But I doubt it would seem so to those who experienced these events, and it's an important record from that standpoint.

Friederike Knabe says

Ivan Kulik, newly appointed village school headmaster, chronicles the events of 1939 in Hlaby, his village in the Pinsk Marshes - a region straddling the border between Ukraine in the south and Belorussia in the north. "Wave of Terror" is an extraordinary story, a social portrait of a community struggling to survive in the face of constantly mounting and increasingly violent Soviet interference in the lives of the villagers. By focusing on one village and a limited group of primary characters, Theodore Odrach takes the historical facts onto a very personal and intricate level, building empathy and understanding in the reader who is captivated early on and will remain engaged until the end of the novel and beyond.

Odrach's characters are lively and personable, realistically captured in their daily lives and their new, at times conflicting, emotions. For the young women in particular, embracing the "modern" Russian way can lead to unforeseen consequences. Especially fascinating is Odrach's use of language conflicts to illustrate the social tensions in the community.

WAVE OF TERROR is closely based on the author's personal experiences. Odrach has beautifully fictionalized what he knew and lived through and presented it in a way that readers from everywhere can relate to the individuals, their lives, hopes and struggles. His language is straight forward, almost journalistic, a touch of irony and humour makes some of the dramatic events easier to absorb for the reader.
