



Sailing Against the Wind: A Novel (Writings from an Unbound Europe)

Jaan Kross

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Jaan Kross's historical novel *Sailing Against the Wind* fictionalizes the life of Bernhard Schmidt (1879-1935), an Estonian-born inventor. Schmidt lost an arm in his youth while experimenting with a homemade rocket, resulting in psychological trauma that would plague him for the rest of his life. Largely self-taught, Schmidt was driven to seek recognition of his talents.

He moved to Germany in the 1930s, where, after perfecting techniques for polishing lenses, he began developing ideas for improving astronomical telescopes. He was arrested for selling one to the Russians, and although he got off with only a warning, he later suffered a breakdown and was sent to a mental hospital, where he soon died. *Sailing Against the Wind* becomes a meditation on national identity, the relationship between history and the individual life, and the mechanisms of the historical novel as a genre.

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