

the Polish opposition party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* demanded international investigation but the book implies that theirs is a crazy conspiracy theory. The authors do not for a moment question the veracity of the Russian pronouncements about the catastrophe. The expressions of sympathy by the Russian people are duly recorded, but much care is put into structuring the narrative in such a way that the idea of it being anything other than a tragic accident would be ruled out in the future. Then comes a narrative of what happened in Poland next, and Poles are implicitly blamed for their protests over the Smolensk investigation. One wonders whether a book on Katyn should end in this way. It is hard to avoid the impression that this part of the narrative is meant to create a picture of Poles as quarrelsome and unable to come to terms with history. Why is a scholarly book on Katyn trying to hastily produce an interpretation of Polish political life in 2010 and 2011?

On p. 151 the authors suggest that those who wish to investigate the catastrophe further believe that Putin wanted to kill Kaczyński because of the latter's stand on Katyn. This is emphatically untrue; the Polish opposition has stated countless times that it believes Putin was taking revenge on Kaczyński for the latter's trip to Georgia in 2008 that mobilized other presidents of the former Soviet-controlled countries to go to Georgia at that time, and possibly prevented a Russian invasion. On p. 140 the authors suggest that those who gathered at the cross in front of the presidential palace in Warsaw in 2010 were hooligans who screamed aggressive slogans; the opposite was the case, as videorecordings of the "conservatives" show. Those who gathered there, day after day, prayed aloud, while the hooligans were those who physically and verbally disturbed those who prayed, kicked down the memorial lights and urinated on them. The police did not interfere, which was interpreted by the "defenders of the cross" as a sign that the hooligans acted with police approval. These happenings and many more remain unmentioned. The chapter fails as an objective presentation of events transpiring in Poland in 2010 and 2011.

Elsewhere in the book the authors mention a poll about Russian attitudes toward Katyn, according to which only one-third of Russians believe that Katyn was the work of the Soviet leadership (138). Surely this translates into continued hostility of Russians toward Poles. Given the fact that Russia has had a history of aggression toward its neighbors, Poles are justifiably suspicious of Russian intentions. In taking a conciliatory attitude toward Russians even before the Smolensk catastrophe has been properly investigated, the present Polish government can be suspected of political corruption—which is what the opposition party maintains. All these issues are blissfully ignored by the authors.

In conclusion, what the authors propose is utopian in the same way in which old Marxism was utopian. Following the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School, they propose a struggle against nationhood in the vain hope that when smaller nations disappear, an equivalent of the old communist utopia will be within reach. Δ

## Bruno Schulz (1892–1942)

by Stefan Rajmund Kaminski

If we are to insist that a man lived,  
We will not escape the insistence of the shade,  
The reproach that, captive in life,  
One dares not promulgate a prison for eternity.

Some things remain the same,  
The texts, the sketches,  
How a well-fed tourist can still see impoverished  
Galicia--  
Why on earth would one want to go to  
Drohobycz?

But take care if you think you've mapped it out,  
The frontiers moved after the war,  
And Cyrillic laid hands on the Polish street signs.

Who can account for the quirks of genius?

A loner who published, painted, brooded to  
produce—  
In those flashes of genius, there's a Galicia passed  
away.

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And what is that?  
 A muttered sotto voce conversation, Polish,  
 Yiddish, or Ukrainian,  
 A market square with its attendant scattering  
 swallows,  
 Then a heavily accented negotiation in the lingua  
 franca.

Later *Pan Schulz's* learned German would come in  
 handy,  
 Poor people in a lonely outpost,  
 And provincial Lwów, bordering on hubris,  
 Proud in the way  
 That Warsaw or Kraków or Gniezno aren't.  
 Beware the town that has its name changed,  
 There is forever a spurned claim insisting upon  
 satisfaction.

No, *Pan Schulz* wanted to be left alone,  
 Hunched over a sketchpad, arcing.

Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house,  
 And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may  
 lay her young.  
 Yes, any naturalist may tell you how the swallow  
 circles the pond.

Even words that mean the same are different  
 depending on the speaker:  
*Nach links, nach rechts*, to the left, to the right.  
*Na prawo, na lewo*, to the right, to the left.  
 The former can be barked or bored, but always  
 came loaded,  
 The latter muttered, apprehensive, forced out,  
 worried, waning.

A language owns its own,  
 A simple statement doesn't void possession.  
 Now there may be a curator or critic or two  
 Determined to enlighten us about  
 Schulz the secular anxious saint of the twentieth  
 century  
 (How I suspect he'd dislike that)  
 But who else better to be put upon?  
 Teaching dabs in a provincial town  
 Where you can't capture  
 The rolling eyes of a clerk, drumming the dusty  
 counter of pine,  
 The milk pails, the sledges making their rounds.  
 A different kind of permanence  
 Desired past the contents of a parish:

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Canvases, like people, can go missing or worse--  
 Better a mural for a testament  
 And risk the prewar foundation will stand  
 Since a great artist is born to deal  
 With contingencies even after death.

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## About the Authors

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