

LISTY DO REDAKCJI

To the Editors:

The article by Tomáš Murár (“Die Tragik in der Kunst Michelangelos als Max Dvořáks Vermächtnis in der Kunstgeschichte Hans Sedlmayrs”, *Folia Historiae Artium. Seria Nowa*, 20, 2022) ignores some easily accessible information and research on Sedlmayr and offers some erroneous and misleading interpretations as a result.

Murár approvingly deploys the research of Hans Aurenhammer published in an essay that appeared in 2005 in the *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* to the effect that (p. 37) “Sedlmayrs Engagement in die Politik des Nationalsozialismus am Ende der dreißiger und zu Beginn der vierziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht primär im Rassenhass, sondern in einer nostalgischen Sehnsucht nach der Rückkehr einer Österreich-Ungarischen Konzeptualisierung von Mitteleuropa verwurzelt war.” While there may be some merit to this argument as it might have applied to Julius von Schlosser (who towards the end of his life is seen in a photograph where he seems to be wearing a party pin, although his membership in the NSDAP lacks firm evidence) an essay published by Evonne Levy in the same periodical (*Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*) in 2010 indicates that this thesis cannot be the case with Sedlmayr. In correspondence with Meyer Schapiro over the years 1930–1935 Sedlmayr describes himself in his own words as a political Anti-Semite. One might add that it is precisely the emphasis on Anti-semitism (call it for what it is, not *Rassenhass*, which perpetuates the Nazi absurdity that Jews constitute a race – so Ethiopian Falashas are the same as Uzbeki Jews or the Jews of China or Ashkenazim?) that differentiates Nazi ideology from other right-wing or nationalist parties of the time.

Moreover it is exceedingly misleading to compare the situation of Sedlmayr to that of Dvořák in reference to the way that the former “...an der Wandel vom demokratischen zum totalitären System anpassen musste.” Sedlmayr was a committed Nazi, not one by opportunism or resignation. As summarized in *The Dictionary of Art Historians*, research into Sedlmayr’s politics has revealed that “in 1932 Sedlmayr joined the Nazi party in Austria (when it was still illegal to do so) and well before other art historians felt pressured to do so in order to retain their teaching positions.” His greeting of Hitler’s appearance on the Heldenplatz (as in the Pinder *Festschrift*) is no accident,

and his subsequent conduct (uniform, Hitler salute, condemnation of student demurrals from the party line, etc., all detailed in recent literature) during World War II is consistent with it.

As for the evocation of Sedlmayr’s nostalgic *Das goldener Zeitalter* as evidence for Murár’s thesis, one might keep in mind the circumstances in which this memoir was written: Willibald Sauerländer pointed out that Sedlmayr wrote it while he was serving in the German army in Russia.

Murár alludes to the interpretation of the past in terms of present circumstances. It hardly should be necessary in Poland to recall that Neo-Nazism is on the rise around the world from Australia to the United States, where it has been reported that the number of attacks upon Jews in 2022 was the greatest ever recorded.

Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Frederick Marquand Professor of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University; Foreign Member, Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN); Foreign Member, Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU)