

Picasso, a political enemy of Francoist Spain

by GENOVEVA TUSELL GARCÍA

ALTHOUGH BY THE mid-1950s Picasso was widely considered the most important artist in the world, for Franco's regime in Spain he was a political enemy who, only in time, might be accepted for his great achievements, as long as the painter refrained from expressing his political opposition to the regime. Picasso's life had not been characterised by a heavy involvement in politics. As a young man in Barcelona he had frequented several anarchist circles, but this was not particularly significant until the outbreak of the Civil War. During the 1930s he was scarcely known to the general public in Spain, even though he was very much admired by a younger generation that had matured in the 1920s. In 1936 a small exhibition of his work, organised by the Asociación de Amigos de las Artes Nuevas (ADLAN), was held in Barcelona and Madrid. It was not, however, an initiative of the Spanish government.¹

The painter's political commitment began with the Spanish Civil War when he was named director of the Museo del Prado. He accepted the appointment but never took up the post, nor did he visit Spain at that time. On the occasion of the 1937 Paris World's Fair, Picasso was commissioned to paint *Guernica* for the pavilion of the Spanish Republic and exhibited alongside works by Julio González, Joan Miró and Alexander Calder. These well-known circumstances form the background of what happened after the Civil War. Picasso was considered to be an enemy of the regime and of Spain itself, although, with the passage of time, his enormous significance was gradually accepted.

Until 1964 the only painting by Picasso in a collection belonging to the Spanish state was his early *Woman in blue* (1901; Fig.21).² The painter had not retrieved it after it was shown in the National Exhibition of Fine Arts that took place in Madrid in 1901 and it remained forgotten in the storerooms of the Museum of Modern Art in Madrid. Nevertheless, Picasso's mythical status by then was a permanent source of attraction for young Spanish artists, even though his direct influence had diminished after 1945. In this respect it is worth noting Antoni Tàpies's remarks on the occasion of their first meeting: 'I saw him in 1950 when I was in Paris on a scholarship. For me, Picasso was a kind of symbol that, in its political aspect, explained to me what had happened in this country, something that was not clear to us young people because the victors had always distorted everything. Both Picasso and Miró were the ones who put us on the alert and made us begin to question certain things [. . .] Picasso's example encouraged me to study the period of the Republic'.³



21. *Woman in blue*, by Pablo Picasso. 1901. Canvas, 133 by 100 cm. (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

Picasso's affiliation with the French Communist Party in the mid-1940s coincided with the German occupation and subsequent liberation of Paris in August 1944. It resulted in a further souring of relations between the painter and the Spanish regime. His Communist affiliation did not seem strange to anyone in his intimate circle of friends, given that intellectuals and artists close to him such as Paul Eluard were members of the Party. In Spain, however, it was received with great surprise, particularly in regard to the painter's declarations: 'I have always longed for a homeland; I have long been in exile, but now I no longer am; until the day when Spain can welcome me back, the French

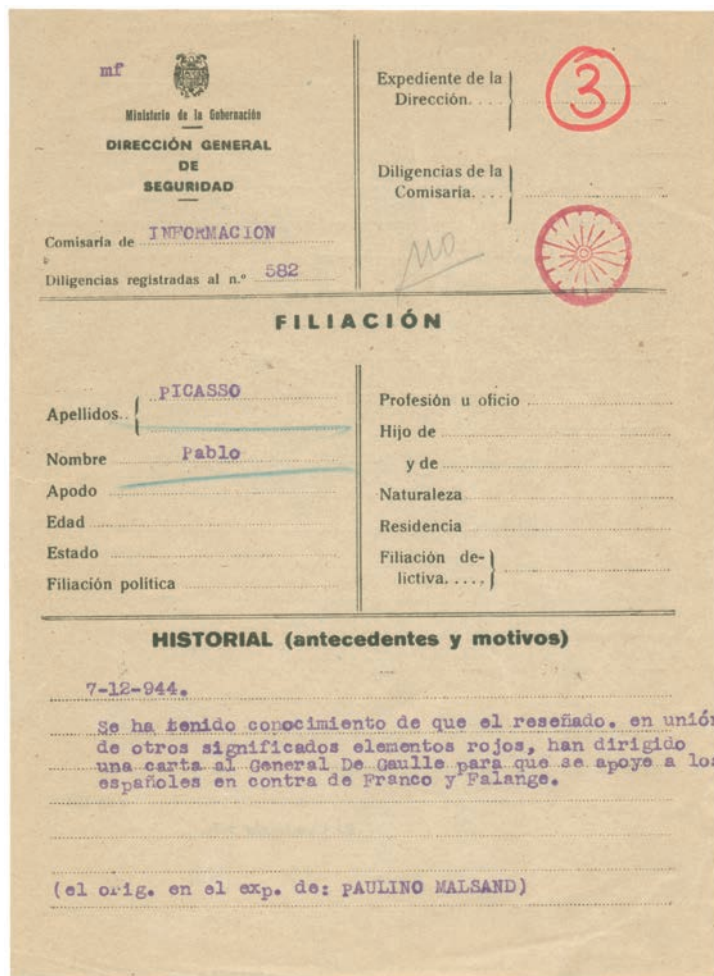
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¹ The Museo Picasso in Barcelona held a documentary exhibition last year about this show; S. Domènech *et al.*: exh. cat. *Picasso 1936. Huellas de una exposición*, Barcelona (Museo Picasso) 2011-12.

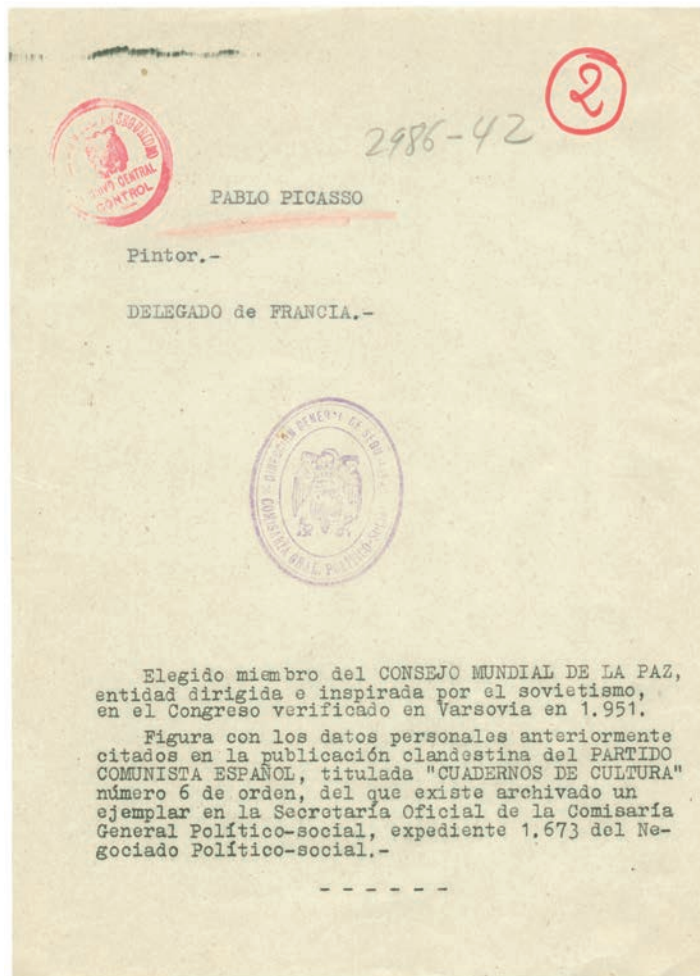
² In 1932 the City of Barcelona and the Generalitat of Catalonia acquired the Plandiura collection containing twenty-two works by Picasso, while the museums

administered by the Spanish state had only the *Woman in blue*; see 'La adquisición de la Colección Plandiura por la Generalidad de Cataluña', *ABC* (16th July 1932), p.26; and 'La Colección Plandiura', *La Vanguardia* (16th July 1932), p.6.

³ I. Julián and A. Tàpies: *Diálogo sobre arte, pintura y sociedad*, Barcelona 1977, p.46: 'Le vi en 1950 cuando estuve en París con una beca. Picasso era para mí una especie de símbolo que en el aspecto político me explicaba lo que había pasado en este país, lo cual no estaba nada claro para los jóvenes, porque los vencedores lo tergiversaban todo. Tanto Picasso como Miró fueron quienes nos pusieron alerta e hicieron que nos empezásemos a preguntarnos algunas cosas [. . .] El ejemplo de Picasso me estimuló a estudiar la época de la República'.



22. Police record of Pablo Picasso, 7th December 1944. (Archivo Histórico Nacional, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, Madrid, FC-Mº_INTERIOR_POLICIA_H, exp.108).



23. Police record of Pablo Picasso. (Archivo Histórico Nacional, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, Madrid, FC-Mº_INTERIOR_POLICIA_H, exp.108).

Communist Party has opened its arms to me'.⁴ His political stance was interpreted in a benevolent and ironic way by the Spanish press, who presented him as a 'clever villager' (*'aldeano listo'*) and a 'rustic gypsy' (*'rústico agitanado'*).⁵ According to them, he had joined the Communist Party as a means of making money through a wider diffusion of his work.

Picasso's police record in the Dirección General de Seguridad, the Spanish security service, reveals that Franco's police were early aware of his membership of the French Communist Party. His record begins with a note of 7th December 1944 referring to his signing a letter to General De Gaulle 'together with other prominent "red" elements [. . .] asking him to support the Spanish people against Franco and the Falangists' (Fig.22). The record later mentions his election to the World Council for Peace in 1951, which is described as 'an entity directed and inspired by Sovietism' (Fig.23). Lastly, it includes a press clipping from the American magazine *Life* dated 30th January 1950 containing a photograph of the painter with the caption: 'Pablo

Picasso, whose art is denounced by the Soviet critics, continues politically to adore the reds and be adored'.⁶ In 1951 the Office of Diplomatic Information prepared a report on Picasso and his political activities (Fig.24). It is full of uncorroborated and absurd conjectures, such as the allegation that the painter gave out reproductions of *Guernica* to German soldiers who visited one of his exhibitions in Paris during the occupation. It also mentions his aid to Spanish refugees in France in addition to his militancy in the Communist Party and his participation in World Peace Congresses.⁷

According to a card preserved in the archives of the Musée Picasso in Paris, the painter kept up his membership of the French Communist Party until 1952. During this time he was in close contact with the activities of the Party, particularly through his attempts to mobilise international opinion against the War by participating in various peace congresses directly organised by the Party. The tense relations between Picasso and the Francoist regime were clearly evident in many of the anti-Franco

⁴ P. Gaillard: 'Why I became a Communist', *New Masses* (24th October 1944), p.11; and; 'Pourquoi j'ai adhère au Parti Communiste', *L'Humanité* (29th-30th October 1944), pp.1-2.

⁵ These comments appeared in an article by César González Ruano, published in *Arriba* (18th April 1948) and quoted by J. Tusell: 'El ambiente cultural, político y artístico en el Madrid de la posguerra', in *idem*: exh. cat. *Arte para después de una guerra*, Madrid (Comunidad de Madrid) 1993-94, p.51.

⁶ Police record of Pablo Picasso; Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional.

⁷ 'Apunte informativo', Oficina de Información Diplomática, Servicio de Información

de Temas Españoles; dossier dated 1951, Madrid, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter cited as AMAE), file R.3512, doc.13.

⁸ See L. Trabazo: 'Una gran manifestación artística. Don Leopoldo Panero habla sobre la Bienal', *Informaciones* (11th October 1951), n.p.: 'simplemente, porque no es español, pues [. . .] ha adoptado hace tiempo otra nacionalidad extranjera'.

⁹ Dispatch no.1238 from the Spanish ambassador in Paris, José Rojas y Moreno, to the Directory General of Cultural Relations, Paris, 13th May 1953, AMAE, file 3685, doc.60: 'a todos los artistas cuyos nombres conocía, sin excluir a ninguno por razones políticas, salvo en lo que afecta al comunista Picasso'.

exhibitions held in several countries, particularly in France, during the 1940s and 1950s, that almost always revolved around Picasso, who acted both as organiser and exhibitor.

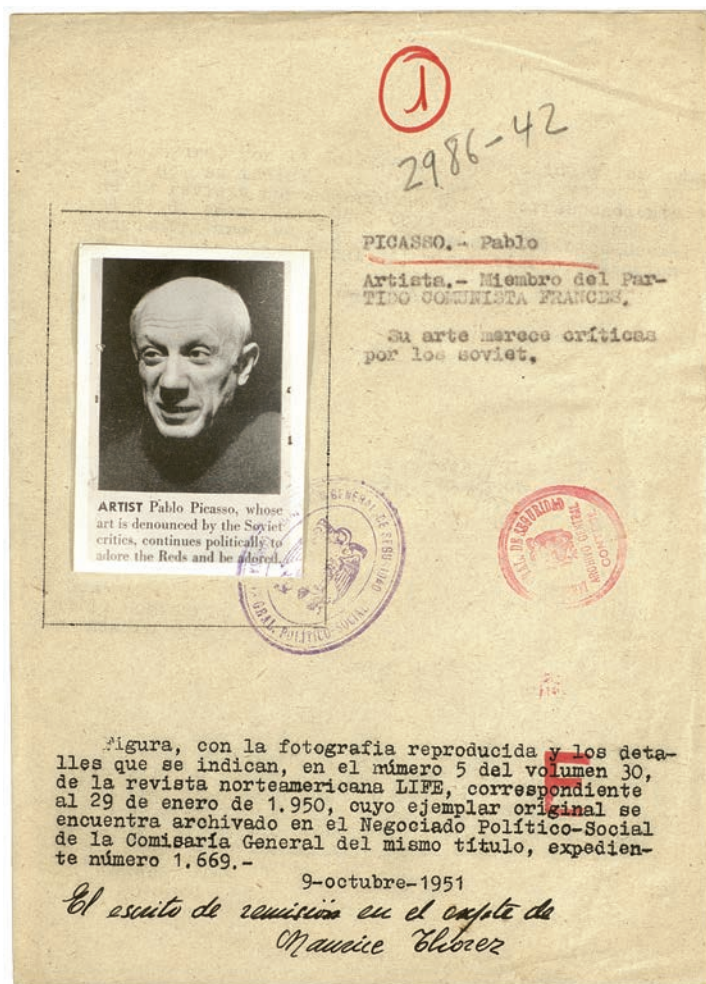
In 1951 the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica, an institution dependent on the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organised the First Biennial of Hispano-American Art, the first extensive exhibition to be held under the Franco dictatorship. Picasso refused to participate in this kind of official initiative and, together with other Spanish painters and intellectuals in exile in Paris, signed a manifesto recommending that they not only not participate in it but that they organise a 'counter-biennial' in the French capital and in various American cities. Picasso's rejection of the Biennial angered its organisers, and one of them, in spite of having invited the painter officially at the start, later denied having done so 'simply because he is not Spanish, for [...] he adopted a foreign nationality a long time ago'.⁸ Two years later, when the Spanish embassy in Paris organised the exhibition *Artistes Espagnols à Paris*, the ambassador decided to invite 'all those artists whose names I knew, without excluding anyone for political reasons, except the Communist Picasso'.⁹ Thus his name was eliminated from the very beginning.

In the mid-1950s the official Spanish political position towards Picasso began to change, albeit in very peculiar terms. On the one hand, for those in the highest echelons of official policy he continued to be an enemy with whom there would be no contact whatsoever; on the other hand, officials in the lower echelons were perfectly aware of Picasso's significance for contemporary art, as a glory that was shared by all Spaniards. Thus, a series of individual initiatives arose during those years but were cut off, for the most part, when they surfaced in public or seemed to affect official, as against unofficial, policy. The evolution of the relationship between the painter and official policy is a clear testimony of the differences between those who worked within the regime, as well as a gradual narrowing of the distance between the two.

Among the prominent men who contributed to narrowing this gap were the art critic José María Moreno Galván, a government official who worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the architect José Luis Fernández del Amo, Director of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Madrid. Both men were aware of the new aesthetic tendencies developing in Spain and abroad, thanks to their friendship with young artists, and both were familiar with the international avant-garde from their visits to France and Italy. In June 1956, Moreno Galván travelled to Cannes for a meeting with Picasso on behalf of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in order to propose the organisation in Madrid of an exhibition of his work on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. Moreno Galván's mission was to explain to the painter the wish of several museum directors to add to their collections works by artists unfavourable to the regime.¹⁰ This proposal was yet another attempt to approach Picasso by the Museum of Contemporary Art with the purpose of organising an exhibition of his work in Spain or having works of his in its permanent collection.¹¹

¹⁰ Letter from José María Galván to José Luis Fernández del Amo, Cannes, 23rd June 1956, Madrid, Biblioteca Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Archive José Luis Fernández del Amo, special collection 4973 35251. Moreno Galván was one of the most outstanding art critics in twentieth-century Spain. He continually championed the most innovative art and his political commitment led to his imprisonment on several occasions. During this visit Picasso made a portrait of Moreno Galván (present whereabouts unknown).

¹¹ Moreno Galván conveyed these proposals to Picasso in a handwritten note while he was waiting for several hours to be granted an interview with the painter at



24. Police record of Pablo Picasso. 9th October 1951. (Archivo Histórico Nacional, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, Madrid, FC-M° INTERIOR_POLICIA_H, exp.108).

After two failed attempts while in Cannes, Moreno Galván finally succeeded in obtaining a personal interview in July 1956 to present his proposals to Picasso. The results of the conversation – in which political aspects inevitably arose – came to the attention of Antonio Villaceros, Director General of Cultural Relations, thanks to José Luis Messía, the cultural attaché at the Spanish embassy in Paris. Moreno Galván explained that 'Picasso did not regret his political stance, but he didn't boast about it either'. The painter told him 'with a mixture of stubbornness and sadness' that 'once a person takes a certain stance, he is obliged to hold to it as long as he lives'. When asked about what would happen to his works after his death, Picasso replied, 'I hope Franco lives longer than I do', and he seemed disposed to have some of his work remain permanently in Spain. Messía writes that Moreno Galván told him that if 'they could find a formula that did not imply a renunciation of his principles, he [Picasso] would be willing to send to Spain some thirty works comprising the most outstanding and representative examples of his output

La Californie. He commented in the above-mentioned letter: 'I thought it [the proposal] up while I was waiting around. I thought that this was the best way to approach the maestro. Let him be enthusiastic about the possibility of helping the "progressive youth" of Spain, as he calls them, without his giving in and making it perfectly clear that we are acting with the best intentions of the Contemporary Museum': 'me lo inventé en estas horas de inactividad. Creo que es la mejor manera de entrarle al maestro. Que se ilusione con la posibilidad de ayudar a la "juventud progresiva" española, como él la llamaría, sin que eso signifique una claudicación y dejando bien claro que se actúa de acuerdo con las mejores intenciones del Museo Contemporáneo'.



25. *Horse's head: study for Guernica*, by Pablo Picasso. 1937. Canvas, 65 by 92 cm. (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

of the last twenty years'. Also speaking of the possibility of organising an exhibition in Spain to celebrate Picasso's seventy-fifth birthday, the painter was initially willing, but nothing ever came of it. For Messía, this meeting between Moreno Galván and Picasso was a unique opportunity for the regime to establish a definitive and cordial relationship with the painter, thus 'killing the political myth of Picasso'. In any event, this was an opportunity that could not be wasted. The cultural attaché's report ends with the comment: 'If only García Lorca were alive today, we could have had the possibility of burying his myth too'.¹²

The Picasso affair was taken up again when José Luis Fernández del Amo and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alberto Martín Artajo, went to Paris at the end of that same year. According to Messía, the minister took special interest in the matter and ordered him to follow it closely. He recommended that Messía 'proceed with caution and tenacity' to the point whereby a personal meeting with the artist could be arranged. The attaché had not wanted to take that step until then: 'No matter how I "camouflaged" my post as cultural attaché with my supposedly personal position as an intellectual or writer, he [Picasso] would always end up seeing who I really am'. Nevertheless, he felt that this was the most opportune moment to renew relations with the painter because 'in spite of *Guernica* being in the spotlight again, his state of mind might not have changed much from a few months before, and it would be worthwhile to take advantage of his willingness to find a way for an important number of his works to come to Spain'. This was why Messía recommended that Fernández del Amo be the one to talk to Picasso, saying that 'he is not a "sniper" (*un francotirador*, 'a

Franco-shooter', a pun in Spanish referring to the art critic's politics) like Moreno Galván or a government official like me'. As the Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, this would give him 'both a representative status and a margin of neutrality that would be flexible enough to avoid the aversion of our gruff compatriot'. More importantly, 'We should not waste this opportunity and we should proceed, as the minister said, with the utmost caution and tenacity'.¹³ Because of their delicacy, these conversations were held in secret, for this was not yet the moment to deal with them through official channels.

The minister himself urged discretion in carrying out these contacts. Through his subordinates he signalled to José Luis Messía that 'for the moment, no official or even apparently official steps should be taken [. . .] Fernández del Amo can talk to the painter, albeit cautiously, and then we'll see what happens'.¹⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of the secrecy surrounding these conversations, news of a possible Picasso exhibition in Madrid immediately hit the newspapers after a note was published in *Informaciones* stating that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would offer all kinds of facilities for such an exhibition in Madrid.¹⁵ Picasso's contacts with the regime became public through his statements in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in which he announced that he had been invited by a Spanish delegation to have two exhibitions in Madrid and Barcelona. These declarations were taken up by the French newspapers,¹⁶ who dared to mention, without any foundation, that the alleged exhibition – whose organisation committee would be made up of some of Spain's most eminent intellectuals – would also include *Guernica*, Picasso's most controversial work.¹⁷

Profoundly annoyed by the news leaked to the press, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promptly moved to dismiss the painter's statements and deny any official contact with him in an extensive note to the public. In it, Villaceros, the man in charge of cultural policy abroad, declared: 'I never told anyone that the Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales would give any help to facilitate the Picasso Exhibition'. Villaceros added that, in answer to a reporter from *Informaciones* who asked if it was true that a Picasso exhibition was to be held in Madrid, he replied that, 'in a meeting outside this ministry I had heard something about the idea that a group of art lovers, critics and academics considered asking the Dirección General de Bellas Artes for permission to organise said exhibition on their own, and I took great pains to inform said reporter that this Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not intervene, nor did it have any intention of intervening in a purely private initiative'.¹⁸ Villaceros gave an identical explanation to the Ministry of Culture, making it clear that, in his view, 'this was one more case of superficial reporting to lend sensationalism and call attention to the news. I would never have become involved

¹² Moreno Galván told José Luis Messía the details of his conversation with Picasso and, in turn, Messía conveyed them to Antonio Villaceros. Confidential letter from the cultural attaché at the Spanish embassy in Paris to the Director General of Cultural Relations, Paris, 31st July 1956, AMAE, file R.8630, doc.114, 'Pablo Picasso. Expediente Reservado': 'No se dolió Picasso pero tampoco se vanaglorió de su postura política [. . .] con mezcla de testarudez y de melancolía'. 'Ciertas actitudes, una vez tomadas, obligan de por vida [. . .] Espero que Franco viva más que yo'. 'Le dio a entender que si se encuentra una fórmula que no implique para él una claudicación, estaría dispuesto a enviar a España una treintena de obras que comprendiese lo más sobresaliente y representativo de su producción de los últimos veinte años [. . .] matando así el mito político Picasso'. 'Ojalá que García Lorca estuviera vivo y tuviésemos también en la mano la posibilidad de enterrar su mito'.

¹³ Confidential letter from Messía to Villaceros, Paris, 7th December 1956, AMAE, file R.8630, doc.114: 'un interés muy especial [. . .] instrucciones de seguirlo muy de cerca y hacerlo progresar con prudencia y tesón; pues por mucho que "camuflase" mi condición de Consejero Cultural con supuestas condiciones personales de intelectual o de escritor, siempre acabaría viéndose el plumero [. . .] Pese a la nueva actualidad de *Guernica*, su estado de ánimo no debe haber

cambiado desde hace unos meses y que valdría la pena de aprovechar su buena disposición para encontrar la fórmula que hiciera posible la entrada en España de una masa importante de su obra [. . .] Pues no es un "francotirador" como Moreno Galván ni un agente oficial como yo'. Simultáneamente carácter representativo y un margen de "neutralismo" todo lo elástico que se quiera para evitar la alergia de nuestro bronco compatriota [. . .] No desaprovechar la ocasión que tenemos en las manos y conducir el asunto como lo vio el Ministro, como la máxima prudencia y tenacidad'.

¹⁴ Confidential letter from Villaceros to Messía, Madrid, 14th December 1956, AMAE, file 8630, doc.114: 'de momento no hay que dar ningún paso que sea oficial ni parezca siguiera oficial [. . .] Fernández del Amo puede hablar al pintor, también con cautela, y luego ya veremos'.

¹⁵ 'Picasso expondrá en Madrid', *Informaciones* (10th April 1957).

¹⁶ See 'L'Exposition Picasso à Madrid', *Indépendant*, Perpignan (12th April 1957); and 'Picasso expondrá "Guernica" a Madrid', *L'Adennais*, Charleville (9th April 1957).

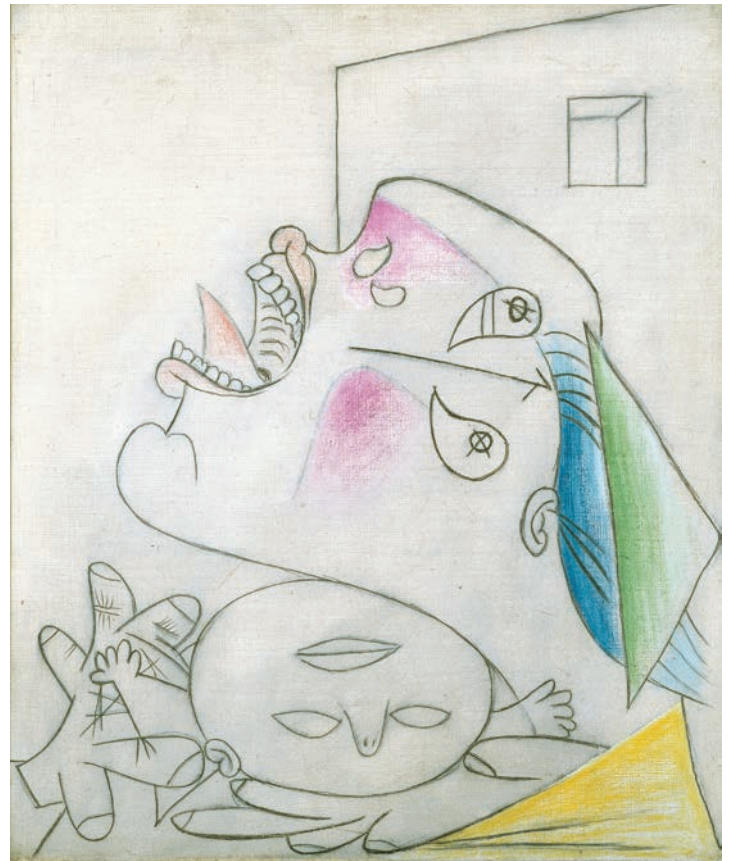
¹⁷ The article mentions Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Joan Miró, Gregorio Marañón, Julián Marías, the film director Luis García Berlanga and the bullfighter Luis Miguel Dominguín: 'Exposition Picasso à Madrid. "Guernica" y figureait', *Parisien-Libéré* (17th April 1957).

in a matter that this Ministry of Foreign Affairs had never even considered. Moreover, it falls strictly within your authority to decide whether or not there will be any official preparation or intervention in said exhibition'.¹⁹ Thus the first contact between the artist and Franco's regime was abruptly terminated. It was nothing more than a failed attempt, guided by personal goodwill, but impossible to carry out in the Spain of that era.

In 1957 the homage to Picasso on his seventy-fifth birthday finally happened, but it took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Moreover, the only work owned by the Spanish state, his *Woman in blue* (1901), was included. On the occasion of this show, *Newsweek* referred to the above-mentioned Picasso exhibition being planned in Madrid and Barcelona for the end of 1957, saying that the painter had stipulated that the only condition for the show was that both *Guernica* (1937) and *Massacre at Korea* (1950) should be exhibited. 'I have been invited to attend, but I don't think I will go. After all, we are still on bad terms', the painter declared in regard to this show.²⁰ The article also referred to the large mural Picasso was to carry out for the UNESCO building in Paris, in addition to a monument to the Spanish Republic on a hill near Perpignan looking towards Spain. Finally, an exhibition of Picasso's paintings, sculpture, mosaics and ceramics was held at the Sala Gaspar in Barcelona in 1957, but it was privately instigated and had no government support. In the meantime, Franco's regime continued its efforts to establish contact with Picasso, while simultaneously criticising his political tendencies.

Another source of contention between Picasso and the regime revolved around *Guernica*. Since the end of the Civil War the painting had become a weapon for the struggle in favour of the Republicans in exile. Even in 1951, on the occasion of the Ninth Milan Triennial, the organiser of the Spanish pavilion, José Antonio Coderch, referred in one of his reports to those political aspects surrounding both the figure of Picasso and *Guernica*. He wrote: 'It took only a few propagandistic drawings by Picasso, reproduced extensively in politically neutral but widely circulated art journals, for the "carnage" of *Guernica* to become dogma in numerous artistic circles in Europe and America'. The reason for this reaction was that *Guernica* had become the symbol of the struggle against Franco's dictatorship. It was no wonder that Coderch, a great architect and staunch supporter of the regime, referred to the painter in his report as 'that defector Picasso' ('*tránsfuga Picasso*').²¹

In 1955 *Guernica*, then on deposit in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, left the United States to be shown in various museums and galleries in Europe. These exhibitions elicited countless commentaries on the part of the press and the public concerning the dictatorial regime in Spain. Naturally the diplomatic corps abroad was displeased and reacted accordingly. One



26. *Mother with dead child (I) postscript for Guernica*, by Pablo Picasso. 1937. Oil, graphite and pastel on canvas, 55 by 46 cm. (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid).

of the first protests was motivated by a documentary film about *Guernica* shown within the course of a lecture on Picasso and his work by the former French Minister of Education, Olivier Lapie, at the National Gallery of Oslo in February 1955. José María Campoamor, the chargé d'affaires at the Spanish embassy in the city, had been invited to the talk and had decided to attend because he was suspicious of how the subject-matter might be treated: 'In the foreign service you never know what might happen, and on this particular occasion, two things leaped out at us: one was artistic-nationalistic and the other, political'. The first 'insults' were heard when the lecturer referred to Picasso as 'this great French painter' and 'the more favourable atmosphere of freedom he found in Paris'. But the crowning blow came with the projection of the film about *Guernica* narrated by María Casares.²² While the film showed the destruction caused by the German bombing of the town, the voice-over spoke of the attack carried out by 'Franco's hired thugs' on a 'city full of women and children'.²³

¹⁸ Villaceros: 'Nota Informativa', to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alberto Martín Artajo, Madrid, 12th April 1957, AMAE, file 8630, doc.114: 'Jamás he dicho a nadie que la Dirección General de Relaciones Culturales fuese a dar facilidades para la Exposición de Picasso. Le contesté que había oído decir en una reunión fuera de este Ministerio que un grupo de personas aficionadas al arte, críticos y académicos pensaban pedir autorización a la Dirección General de Bellas Artes para organizar dicha Exposición, a título puramente particular; y, precisamente puse empeño en manifestar a dicho periodista que este Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores no intervenía ni tenía por qué intervenir en una iniciativa puramente privada'.

¹⁹ Confidential letter from Villaceros to Antonio Gallego Burín, Director General of Fine Arts, Madrid, 12th April 1957, AMAE, file 8630, doc.114: 'Se trata de un caso más de ligereza informativa, para dar atractivo o sensacionalismo a la noticia. No me iba yo a meter en un asunto que en este Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores no se ha plantado y sería de tu exclusiva competencia si hubiera preparación o intervención oficial en tal Exposición'.

²⁰ K. Lansner: 'The world of Pablo Picasso', *Newsweek* (27th May 1957), pp.105–10.

²¹ When the 1937 Paris World's Fair closed, *Guernica* and nearly 70 preparatory drawings and paintings were shown in Oslo, London and elsewhere in Britain until

1939; see J.A. Coderch: 'Informe B del arquitecto J.A. Coderch de Sentmenat sobre la participación en la IX Trienal de Milán, Exposición Internacional de Artes Decorativas e Industriales Modernas y de Arquitecturas Modernas', Barcelona, June 1951, AMAE, file R.4838, doc.5: 'Bastaron unos dibujos panfletarios de un Picasso ampliamente reproducidos en revistas de arte políticamente neutras pero de gran circulación para que la "carnicería" de *Guernica* pasara a ser un dogma en grandes sectores artísticos de Europa y América'.

²² Another probable source of the Spanish diplomat's irritation was the fact that María Casares was the daughter of Santiago Casares Quiroga, the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic, the equivalent of Prime Minister, at the very moment of the outbreak of the Civil War.

²³ Dispatch no.168 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the chargé d'affaires, José María Campoamor, Oslo, 25th February 1955, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9, 'Rojos españoles en Francia, Pintor Picasso': 'Nunca se sabe en el servicio exterior dónde saltan las liebres y la ocasión se prestaba a que dieran salto de mata dos, una artístico-nacionalista y la otra política'. 'Este gran pintor francés [...] mejor ambiente de libertad que encontró en París'. 'los sicarios de Franco [...] estando la ciudad llena de mujeres y niños'.

Profoundly irritated by such comments, Campoamor sent a letter of protest the following morning to the French ambassador in Oslo. Besides making it clear that *Guernica* had been made into 'a propaganda weapon' due to a series of circumstances created unnecessarily, he recommended that they make 'a few changes in a film that was universally extremely offensive to Spaniards', in order to avoid 'the political inconvenience derived from minor incidents such as these'.²⁴ The Dirección General de Política Exterior in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave its approval to Campoamor's reply, considering that the documentary contained numerous 'insulting references to the National Movement and the present Spanish regime'.²⁵

Between May and September 1955 *Guernica* was shown at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris with the preliminary drawings, but in a very different way from the 1937 World's Fair. Here the painting was presented as a work of art, as the culmination of the different stages in its evolution and illustrated with preliminary gouaches, crayon, pen-and-ink drawings, etchings and small oil studies (Figs. 25 and 26). The Spanish ambassador in Paris informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs of an article published in the daily *La Croix* describing *Guernica* as a magnificent work that 'produces the vision of a nightmare'. According to *La Croix*: 'It does not go beyond reality, but it gives us a symbolic expression of reality never before achieved by anyone'.²⁶ These declarations prompted the Spanish ambassador to send a letter of protest to the editor of the newspaper, pointing out that his remarks were based on political, rather than artistic arguments: 'To say that the painting is one of the greatest compositions of all time is, in my opinion, an exaggeration; to say emphatically that the nightmarish vision it suggests does not surpass reality, is to give a political slant to the question'. In conclusion, the ambassador reflected that '*Guernica* has been the trumpet of propaganda, a little like García Lorca, who is presented as a martyr because of the Nationalist Party and shot by order of the government, when he was simply assassinated by his personal enemies'.²⁷

In May 1956 an exhibition of *Guernica* and its preliminary drawings was inaugurated at the Brussels Palais des Beaux-Arts. The Spanish ambassador, Count Casa Miranda, wrote that the show served as an example of how, 'under the guise of art criticism, it is an excuse to drag out a thousand more times the hackneyed cliché of this incident in the war that our enemies have succeeded in imposing on world opinion'. In the words of this government representative, the exhibition had been prepared 'almost in secret because, up until the very moment of

its inauguration, there was not a single word of the imminent event in the newspapers, or even in artistic circles'.²⁸ Contrary to what the ambassador said, the commentaries in the Belgian press were uneven. However, most of them were critical of the Spanish regime, a fact that further contributed to the controversy and showed to what extent the memory of the Spanish Civil War was still being kept alive. On the occasion of the exhibition the Spanish embassy organised a campaign to counteract this criticism. In one of his reports, the Spanish ambassador wrote: 'There is no doubt that the driving force that motivates the exaggerated eulogies of said painting is not, in essence, aesthetic but political, and *Guernica* still continues to be one of the catalysts that brings together our old opponents of Spain's War'. The Spanish embassy contacted several journalists to try to play down the offensive commentaries about the regime with positive results. In the words of the ambassador: 'The conscious or unconscious manoeuvre implied by exhibiting Picasso's painting in Brussels was effectively counteracted'.²⁹

From there *Guernica* was taken to Amsterdam where it was exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum in July 1956. The Spanish consul who attended the opening, congratulated himself on the fact that 'they did not make a political issue out of the ceremony, and in the brief speeches there was no mention of our civil war or the Head of State'. Also present at the inauguration was Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, the organiser of the *Guernica* exhibitions. In his speech Kahnweiler emphasised the Spanish painter's 'humanism' and his 'endeavours to bring about peace and his hatred of all kinds of destruction and war', describing him as 'idealistic, sentimental and unselfish', making no mention whatsoever of his pro-Communist ideas.³⁰ After its European tour, and in accordance with Picasso's instructions, *Guernica* was deposited indefinitely at MoMA in New York where it became a universal icon for peace and against war, after having served to collect funds for the Spanish exiles of the Civil War.

During the 1960s Franco's regime adopted a more open attitude towards Picasso by sponsoring the first official monographic exhibition of the artist's work. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Madrid showed a selection of his graphic work which promptly became the most important exhibition of the entire year. Nevertheless, the inauguration of the Picasso Museum in Barcelona (1963) and UNESCO's intent to exhibit *Guernica* within a show on war and peace rekindled the controversy. These aspects will be pursued in a subsequent article.

²⁴ Copy of letter from Campoamor to the ambassador, Luis de Monicault, Oslo, 25th February 1955, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9: '*un arma de propaganda política* [. . .] *los inconvenientes políticos que derivan de pequeños incidentes sin importancia como éste* [. . .] *alguna modificación en un film que ofende, de la manera más innecesaria del mundo, a los españoles*'.

²⁵ Confidential dispatch from the Dirección General de Política Exterior to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, Conde de Casa Rojas, Madrid, 25th March 1955, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9; and file R.4840, doc.70: '*citas insultantes para el Movimiento Nacional y para el actual Régimen español*'.

²⁶ Quoted in a letter from José Rojas y Moreno, the Spanish ambassador to France, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Paris, 5th July 1955, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9: '*produce una visión de pesadilla* [. . .] *No rebasa la realidad, sino que nos da una expresión simbólica de la misma por nadie alcanzada*'.

²⁷ Copy of letter from the Spanish ambassador to the Revd Père Gabel, the editor of *La Croix*, Paris, 6th July 1955, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9: '*Dire que le tableau est une des plus grandes compositions de tous le temps, est à mon point de vue une exagération; souligner que la vision de cauchemar qu'il suggère n'a pas outrepassé le réel, c'est déjà prendre parti politique dans la question* [. . .] *Guernica a été la trompette de propagande, un peu comme le cas de García Lorca qu'on présente comme martyr du parti nationaliste et fusillé par ordre du gouvernement, alors qu'il fut simplement assassiné par des ennemis personnels*'.

²⁸ Dispatch no.265 from the Spanish ambassador to the Director General of Cultural Relations, Brussels, 14th May 1956, AMAE, Leg.R.4468, doc.9: '*Para que al socaire de la crítica de arte, se saque una y mil veces a relucir el manoseado cliché de la interpretación que de este hecho de guerra han logrado imponer nuestros amigos a la opinión universal*'. '*Casi en la clandestinidad, sin que hasta el momento de su inauguración se haya dicho ni una palabra en ningún periódico, ni siquiera en los medios artísticos del inminente acontecimiento*'.

²⁹ Letter from the Spanish ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 8th June 1956, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9; and file R.4840, doc.70: '*Es indudable que el motor que impulsa los ditirambos que sobre dicho cuadro se han vertido, no es de esencia estética sino política, y que el Guernica continúa siendo aún uno de los puntos catalizadores que agrupan todavía a nuestros viejos adversarios de la Guerra de España* [. . .] *la maniobra consciente o inconsciente que representaba exponer en Bruselas el cuadro de Picasso, se ha visto eficazmente contrarrestada*'.

³⁰ Dispatch no.82 from the Spanish consul in Amsterdam, J.M. Triás de Bes, to the Dirección General de Política Exterior of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quoting Kahnweiler's words at the inauguration, Amsterdam, 26th July 1956, AMAE, file R.4468, doc.9; and file R.5228, doc.59: '*No se quiso dar carácter político a la ceremonia y en los breves discursos pronunciados no se mencionó nuestra guerra civil ni el Jefe del Estado*'. '*humanismo* [. . .] *desvelos por la paz y su odio a toda clase de destrucciones y guerras* [. . .] *idealista, sentimental desinteresado* [. . .] *ideas pro-comunistas*'.