

Picasso as director of the Museo del Prado, an intention that the minister and journalist announced to the press on September 12, 1936 and put into effect by means of the corresponding decree signed by President Manuel Azaña.² Renau commented that his proposal was preceded by an ‘exploring letter’ written by his Secretary Antonio del Toro and signed by himself. This letter was answered by Picasso himself with deeply moved acceptance, remaining at the Government’s service and stressing his understanding of the Republican cause in the ongoing war (Cabañas Bravo, 2007a: 167 and 2007b: 144-5; Renau, 1981b: 18).

Before mid September 1936, the French press had already announced this offer to Picasso to direct the Museo del Prado, and Paul Éluard himself let Gala know in a letter on September 15 (Jeffett, 2014: 88). Communication with Picasso may have been channeled through Luis Araquistáin since his appointment as Spanish ambassador on September 19 (Tusell, 1981: 38), as he became an enthusiastic instigator of the Spanish participation in the 1937 World Exposition. In any case, Picasso’s enthusiastic acceptance was the first symptom of his support for the Republican faction. Regarding artistic creation, this symptom was confirmed when Picasso, on his own initiative, began to etch in the early days of January 1937 the two plates known as *Sueño y mentira de Franco* (*The Dream and Lie of Franco*). These plates, finished in mid June 1937, were a series of vignette-shaped small images satirizing Franco’s action and condemning his destruction of culture. However, Picasso never visited Madrid or Valencia to take over the post that he had accepted.

Renau soon travelled to Paris. He has repeatedly described this stay in Paris as an official visit that took place in December 1936 and involved the specific mission of sealing the collaboration of the Spanish artists living there for the pavilion, bearing in mind that Picasso’s collaboration was his main aim. Their meetings finally ended up with their collaboration and the commission that finally resulted in the famous mural painting known as *Guernica*. Shortly after putting an end to his exile after Franco’s death, Renau also gave rather hasty interviews to the press, which was avid for knowledge on that period and the famous commission of *Guernica*. Renau sometimes expressed that “he was commissioned to give Miró a second place” (Arancibia, 1977). However, his much more pondered 1981 memoirs express that —like Picasso— Spanish artists living in Paris gave a positive response. There was one only exception though: the second of the prepared appointments, corresponding to Salvador Dalí,

