BIOGRAPHY *VERSUS* STEREOTYPES: THE CASE OF MANUEL AZAÑA

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A glance at the entry for Manuel Azaña in the *Diccionario Biográfico Español*, recently published by the Real Academia de la Historia, shows the extent to which factual errors and stereotypes as keys to interpreting his life continue to affect, for the worse, as usual, the figure of the man who was president of the government between 1931 and 1933 and, later, from 1936 to 1939, president of the Spanish Republic. These factual errors go from identifying Manuel Azaña as the public employee in charge of the section of last wills and testaments at the General Directory of the Registres and of the Notary, to stating that his widow, Dolores de Rivas Cherif, died "many years later in Buenos Aires." The stereotypes include, necessarily, that of the intellectual who undertakes a government action guided by resentment, and that of the Francophile Jacobin who hides a despot.

This absurd, supposedly biographical portrait of Manuel Azaña did not arise through spontaneous generation, nor is it a flash in the pan. It has been going on for a long time. It took root during the years of the Republic and the civil war, it was cultivated after the war and during the dictatorship, and some of its main elements managed to penetrate a good part of the historiography and to persist, as the dictionary mentioned shows, until our days. Naturally, such a potent and enduring construction cannot originate solely in the enemies of his politics. There is no doubt that the Catholic and militarist right wing that rose up in arms against the Republic contributed, of course; but neither is there any doubt that the defenders of the Republic blamed the final defeat on their president's evil passions –his cowardice, his defeatism, his treason.

What I would like to present here today is the construction process of an image of Manuel Azaña that achieved the category of stereotype, that is, following the definition of the DRAE, the "image or idea commonly accepted by a group or society with an immutable character," which has reached us, those of us who were born not long after the defeat of the Republic and began to become interested, in our youth, in what Azaña himself called it cruel and undeserved destiny. This image has reached us with such strength that it is not unusual to find, still today, the remains of its shipwreck, which turn up here and there, most recently just today, while I am writing these lines, in an article by Antonio Muñoz Molina. In this article, he says that Manuel Azaña was "a man so rich in nuances (veladuras) and enigmas that, so many years after his death, he continues, to a large extent, to deserve the title that his brother-in-law and intimate friend Cipriano Rivas Cherif gave to the book that he wrote about him, *Portrait of a Stranger*."[1] So many years after his death, with so many thousands of pages devoted to him and to his politics, Azaña continues to be a stranger. At least that is what Antonio Muñoz Molina says.[2]

Manuel Azaña as an enigma, Manuel Azaña as a perfect stranger: the prehistory of the construction of the lasting image of Azaña began right there because he seems to have been a stranger, as if he were a nobody. The beginning of this image can be dated to 1931, when his rapid and, for most of the politicians and political commentators of the time, surprising rise to the presidency of the government of the Republic was seen with the astonishment of one who believes that he is at the end of the race and, suddenly, someone he has never even heard of bursts out in front of him. As was to be expected, after surprise came an avalanche of biographical essays that Azaña himself contemplated, half amused and half annoyed. "Now," he writes in his diary one March day in 1932, "there are many people determined to know what I am like and what I have been like. And they invent biographies for me." Shortly afterward: "Since political events have thrust me suddenly into notoriety, some

[1] Cipriano de Rivas Cherif, *Retrato de un desconocido*, Barcelona, 1981.

[2] In "Toda la vida," *Babelia*, *El País*, 6 and 7 of April, 2012.

people have felt tempted to invent a biography for me."[3] Invented because, according to him, he lacked a biography.

This invention of biographies started up from the moment when, due to the enactment of the Constitution, Manuel Azaña consolidated his position as president of a coalition government formed by two parties of the Republican left, another two nationalist Republican parties –from Catalonia and Galicia- and the socialist party. It was not natural that someone who had supposedly come out of nowhere, a second line personage, about whom all that was known was that he had been secretary of the Athenaeum of Madrid and leader of a small political group without any history, would suddenly leap to the presidency of the cabinet at the first crisis the government suffered on occasion of the debate of the religious issue. Ignorance turned into mystery: this stranger hid some terrible enigma in order to arrive, all at once, with one speech, to the presidency of the government. It was necessary to investigate, to poke around in his past, to penetrate what Muñoz Molina today calls *enigmas y veladuras*, to see what his infancy and youth were like, in order to find the key to this event. It is not surprising that a multitude got to work, people who devoted themselves, as Azaña himself said in the courts on March 16, 1933, days before writing it in his diary, to "the useless distraction of inventing intimate biographies for me." Intimate, because it was not in his public life, in his political action, in what he had, up to that moment, said or done, where the fans of his biography sought the answer to the mystery, but in the intimacy of the personage.

And that is how Catholics and monarchists, on one hand, and radical republicans (from the Radical Party, that is, the least radical of all the republican parties), from the moment they abandoned the government in the crisis that arose after the proclamation of the Constitution, on the other, devoted themselves fruitfully to the task of finding some anomaly in his past that would explain his political success. It is significant that Catholics, monarchists, and radicals, together with not just a few intellectuals who had dealt with him closely at the Madrid Athenaeum, and with whom he had maintained correspondence regarding the many articles of theirs that he

[3] Manuel Azaña, Diarios, Madrid, 1932, entries from March 21 and May 31, in *Obras Completas*, ed. by Santos Juliá, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2007, vol. 3, pp. 947 and 985.

published while he directed the journals *La Pluma* and *España*, coincided in attributing obscure origins to him. A color –dark gray- that will always accompany him in the future and that derives from his supposed job as administrative staff in the section of last wills and testaments of the General Directory of Registries and of the Notary, an obscure employee who attended the distressed relatives of people who had recently passed away from behind a window. Thus, his life is marked by a rather sinister office and some will draw him with the sleeve protectors that at that time went with all the caricatures of office workers. To sum up, an insignificant being who, from the section of last wills and testaments had assaulted the presidency of the government: that is how the Catholic journalist Nicolás González Ruiz presented him in a book supposedly devoted to analyzing his ideas; but that is also how many of his acquaintances and friends recalled him from the moment that he scaled the highest peaks of government.[4]

But this obscure office worker, always dressed in gray, had cultivated a certain literary enthusiasm that had, however, not raised him to the firmament where the sparkling stars of Madrid in the first third of the century shone. He was, in short, a failed writer or, as they say that Miguel de Unamuno said of him, a writer without readers, or with few readers, who ruminates in silence the bitter taste of failure in a corner of the literary circles (tertulias) where he used to spend his free time. There, in the gatherings, he was always remembered as sitting in the shadows, mostly quiet, never daring to open his mouth. Who is that man? One of Max Aub's characters asked the person he was with, pointing to the corner of a Madrid gathering. That man? Azaña. Oh, I don't know him.

Unknown, failed, with no readers, the idea got around that he was a solitary person, a Robinson Crusoe-type soul, as Giménez Caballero said.[5] Besides finding out that he had carried out his clerkship at the same table as the great reactionary, cave-man minister of Fernando VII, Calomarde, Giménez Caballero described him to be an antisocial type, incapable of tenderness, doubly frustrated by unconfessable defects, a euphemism for the suspicion of

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[4] Nicolás González Ruiz, *Azaña. Sus ideas religiosas. Sus ideas políticas. El hombre*, Madrid, 1932, p. 5.

[5] Ernesto Giménez Caballero, *Manuel Azaña (Profecías españolas)* [1932] Madrid, 1975, p. 111.

homosexuality, who, lacking social success, had become a kind of despot during the years he was secretary of the Athenaeum. This is the path along which the explanation that the rise to the head of the government of this unknown offfice worker, failed writer, obscure member of literary circles, who had let his bitterness out by being a despotic secretary of the Athenaeum of Madrid, ran.[6]

But the biographical invention does not stop there. The most curious people also wondered about his family origins and found them in his house in Alcalá de Henares, where he was a solitary orphan and later, a dangerous dreamer, seeking the way to dominate and crush others. Here is where the image constructed by Catholics such as González Ruiz and by fascists such as Giménez Caballero came together with the image created by the radical republicans in the opposition: Azaña has covertly cultivated a desire for power, Azaña is a despot, a dictator, who is occupying a position in the government that should not be his and for which he does not have enough social support. Alejandro Lerroux, with whom he had shared the direction of the Alianza Republicana during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, and who had never considered him to be a possible contender for leading the government of the Republic, could not get used to the idea that Azaña was there, at the head of the blue bench, not as a substitute, but to stay, thus reducing his chances to reach the head of the government. And he had no better weapon to fight his position than to attribute a malignant passion for power, a despot's soul, to him.

It was in this terrain, in denouncing power exercised despotically, in occupying a position that, with the number of members of parliament that he had, did not correspond to him, that the Catholic party, the CEDA, found the material to weave its future coalition with the Radical Party. Because this resentful despot was ready to do nothing less than destroy Spain. All of those intimate attributes are blamed now, when it becomes clear that the president of the government is ready to uphold the Constitution, military policy, religious

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[6] I dealt with the construction of this image of obscure, rancorous government employee in my first text *Manuel Azaña. Una biografía política*, Madrid, 1990, pp. 52-54 and, in greater detail, in "La perfidie du rancunier: Manuel Azaña dans l'imaginaire de la droite," in Jean-Pierre Amalric and Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Dirs., *Autour de Manuel Azaña: Nation et mémoire en débat, Actes des Journées Manuel Azaña 2009 et 2010*, translated by Jean François Berdah, Castelsarrasin, 2011, pp. 75-82

policy, and the autonomous policy of the republican-socialist government coalition, and to make sure it is upheld. And thus Azaña, as the year 1932 wore on, was presented as the personification of anti-Spain, the frustrated, rancorous politician, the dictator, who has proposed to crush the army, to demolish the Church and religious feeling, to destroy the unit of Spain. All of this, naturally, served other interests: Azaña, leader of a minority party, only presides the government because he is a prisoner of the socialists and marxists, and because he is serving the "dark dens" of the Masons; Marxists and Masons who, notoriously, only seek the destruction of the mother country. Destroying Azaña would finish off the Republican-Socialist coalition and open a wide road for a government by the Radical Party who, as things turned out later, could only remain standing with the parliamentary support of the CEDA, the Catholic Party.

When he achieves this first objective, the image of a cowardly politician who escapes through the sewers after participating in the revolution and who chooses to run upward when, in May 1936, frightened by what is coming, he abandons the government and takes refuge in the presidency of the Republic, is added to the image created during his years in the government. From the military rebellion onwards, Manuel Azaña reappears, in the pages that Joaquín Arrarás and Francisco Casares devote to him, as a disgusting, loathsome person since childhood, who knows nothing about laughing, happiness, love, optimism, or spring, and who renegates on his faith and his Spanish origins. A spurious freak, a miscarriage of the Freemasons, perverted, cruel, infamous, a bundle of hate and failure, that fed a satanic pride during anonymous days as an obscure bureaucrat and insignificant secretary, incapable of tenderness, a stranger to emotion, who dreams of being a tyrant and walks alone, dominated by resentment. He was, writes Casares, hard and cruel with defeated adversaries; he cultivated the undesirable authors, dissimulated his emotions in his effort to seem not to have any at all, but, in reality, he was a coward, who hid in December 1930, the first to flee from Madrid, all of which reveals a "lack of manly qualities."[7] The kind of perverted, homosexual Azaña who was the

[7] Everything in this paragraph is from the commentaries by Joaquín Arrarás to Azaña's notebooks that were stolen in Geneva and published in the Seville *ABC* during the

subject of obscene conversations among the ladies of high society that Ángel Ossorio visited thus becomes one reason more for his behavior: his lack of manly qualities is enough to explain his propensity to flight.

Two new elements will appear in this reconstruction of the image of the president of the Republic at war, elements that will multiply in the future. The first is the method that resorts to zoology, the growing identification of Azaña with animals, especially animals that crawl over the earth. There is a lot of the wild animal in Azaña, and enough of the reptile, too, as Francisco Casares himself writes. And a certain Juan de Córdoba, from the pages of the *ABC* that continues to be printed in Seville, after resorting, as usual, to hatred for the dark man, the window attendant, now draws him as a toad.[8] Galinsoga, director of *La Vanguardia*, sees him as a monster that, fleeing like a cornered reptile, liquidates the final cycle of infamy that his black soul perpetrated against Spain, attributing the hatred of the army that he had fed to the resentful man's perfidy. Arrarás also resorts to zoology, but not to the image of a reptile that crawls over the ground, the preferred image during these years, but to the image of a hyena that travels alone. Azaña is, in short, "the monster," as Wenceslao Fernández Florez titled one of his articles in the *ABC*, with his gelatinous belly, his widely-spaced teeth, the warts that splash his broad face, a unique monster, because there is no other like him.[9]

The second novelty consists of including him in the list of "common delinquents": Azaña is a thief, "symbol of the ethical marrow of the Republic." When the defeat of the Republic is at hand and its president crosses the border, he will become the bandit, the thief who fled from Spain to take refuge in France carrying a load of 75 kilos of jewels, 30 precious stones, several gold ingots, and a coffer with several million foreign coins, many necklaces, and other jewelry. Azaña is the supreme criminal, an unseemly nouveau riche, full of resentment

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months of August, September, October, and November 1937, gathered later in *Memorias íntimas de Azaña*, Madrid, 1939, as I already pointed out in my "Introduction" to his *Diarios, 1932-1933. Los cuadernos robados*, Barcelona, 1997, p. XXn; and from Francisco Casares, *Azaña y ellos*, Granada, 1938.

[8] Juan de Córdoba, "Y el milagro se hizo", *ABC*, 24 December, 1937..

[9] Luis de Galinsoga, "El presidente de la guerra civil" and "Los hombres y los días", *La Vanguardia*, 18 February, 1940, and 13 July, 1939; Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, "El monstruo," *ABC*, 1 March, 1939.

and envy, a sordid, impotent bureaucrat, black-souled, abject in his perversions, the one who launched the civil war. Elusive and cautious, he slipped over the border to France, the supreme hierarch, that is, the supreme criminal of the extinguished Spanish Republic.[10] He ran away, yes, but he took a great fortune and he first ensured an annual income of half a million Swiss francs, which allowed him to buy a villa in Pyla-sur-Mer that cost him two million francs and that he moves to, from Collonges-sous-Salève, followed by a caravan of trucks full of furniture and other objects.[11]

If the intention of the images of the first years of the Republic –based on hatred of religion and the army of a poor public employee eaten up by bitterness- was to destroy the president of a government because of his policy of demilitarization and secularization of the state, these new materials intended to destroy the legitimacy of the Republic, presided by a monster, a criminal, the repulsive caterpillar of Red Spain, the Spain of massacres and secret police, of refined, satanic cruelties. The purpose of destroying its legitimacy was now to close the path to any sign of international mediation to end the war without reprisals against the defeated side: "We true Spaniards will never be able to have dealings with the men who, "presided" by Azaña, have assassinated so many of our brothers, pursued the Catholic Church, burned all the Church's temples to see if they could manage to eradicate the last vestiges of innate religiousness in Spaniards." The dilemma continues to be crystal clear for the Republicans, one of the *ABC*'s pleas concludes, after presenting the president – again, as a reptile- as a sobbing crocodile: they can surrender unconditionally to the Caudillo's magnanimity, or suffer one defeat after another.[12] There is no other possible solution to the war but unconditional surrender, and France and Great Britain would do well to maintain their policy of non-intervention in

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[10] "Azaña huye a Francia con el producto del robo," "Delincuentes comunes," and "¡Acordaos!", *ABC*, 27 and 28 January and 1 March, 1939.

[11] The income is from a report by the Service of Information and Military Police at the Court of Political Responsibilities, Archivo General de la Administración, Justicia, J 30329. The acquisition of the villa, Consulado Española en Burdeos al Embajador, 6 November, 1939, Archivo General de la Administración, Asuntos Exteriores, 11287.

[12] "Un cocodrilo que 'solloza'," *ABC*, 7 January, 1939.

Spanish affairs. Azaña has become, writes Fernández Florez, the president of a crowd of assassins and thieves.[13]

To sum it all up, the first image is one of the gray public employee and failed writer who comes from an obscure clerkship and achieves power by machinations in the Masons lodges and dens and by giving himself to the Marxists; a man who behaves like a perfidious and resentful man who, moved by his hatred, destroys or crushes the army, religion, and the country, constructed in the first years of the Republic. To this image, that of the coward and homosexual who flees through the sewers during the October 1934 revolution, is added, to be broadened during the civil war with the images of a reptile that crawls over the ground and of the thief and delinquent who presides a Republic splattered with blood, with its resulting abominations of blood, robbery, and destruction. The first image of Azaña was put to use in the fight against the reformist legislation of the Republican government. But the second was constructed to deny the legitimacy of the Republic, to make it responsible, or to make Azaña directly responsible, for originating or causing the war, and to justify the persecution of the president in exile as a common criminal. Thus, Manuel Azaña became a central element of a mythical narration in which, by playing the role of the bad radical, he causes the appearance of the absolute good, the renowned Caudillo, who received the holy mission of saving Spain from certain death directly from God. Azaña, absolute evil, destruction of religion and of the homeland, cause of the war in which Spain is bleeding and dying, is the counter-image of Franco, sent by God to defend the faith and save Spain.

It would be necessary to carry out a more detailed analysis than I can do here, today, of the influence that this approach, taken to his policy by Azaña's enemies and political adversaries, as well as his friends and followers who at some point felt cheated by his policy, has had on the view of the historians who have studied the Republic and the civil war. "Resentment –a very frequent feeling among human beings- played a part in the start of his political life," wrote Jesús Pabón, and Carlos Seco states the same, not only to explain the beginning, but the whole, the totality, of his political life. And the fact that this

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[13] "El Estado fantasma," *ABC*, 15 February, 1939.

resentful person was an obscure public employee, an administrator, is something that is still habitually repeated, as does Federico Suárez when he says that Azaña "won a job of clerk in the General Directorate of the Registry and of the Notary". Not to speak of his characterization as a repugnant toad. Gabriel Jackson recalls that Jesús Suevos, director of the Institute of Political Studies, speaking about Azaña many years later, told him that his face looked like a toad's face, adding that the Republic had been governed by homosexuals. And that this administrative officer was "one of the most clear personal causes of the civil war" was one of the thesis that Ricardo de la Cierva never ended to repeat[14]

It was precisely this biography of Azaña that was in force during the long years of the dictatorship, fleshed out with some elements from the criticisms by the defenders of the Republic about the mediation projects for ending the war through a negotiation directed by the European powers and by denouncing his resignation from the presidency in the final days of February 1939. Starting in April 1938, Azaña was accused of defeatism and, in the meeting of the Permanent Committee on March 31, 1939, he was described as a traitor by Juan Negrín and Dolores Ibárruri, the socialist party and communist party leaders who defended a policy of resistance to the end.[15] His efforts to achieve a negotiated peace were described as an anti-constitutional monstrosity and the unconditional defeat of the Republic was attributed then, and still is today, to his resignation from the presidency of the Republic. All this was necessary food to nourish the image of the fearful, cowardly man, always ready to run, to seek refuge in a dark place.

I am afraid that, by this point, I have used up my time. But before I finish, I would like to suggest a point for discussion in this seminar. The title of this paper refers to this point: instead of doing what we could call deconstructing these stereotypes, many biographies of Azaña have started out with the assumption that, in effect, Azaña was stranger when he arrived in the presidency; that he spent most of his life as an obscure little employee; that

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[14] Federico Suárez, *Manuel Azaña y la guerra de 1936*, Madrid, 2000, p. 19. Gabriel Jackson, *Memoria de un historiador*, Barcelona, 2009, p. 70. Ricardo de la Cierva, *La Segunda República. El mito de Azaña*, Madrid, 1997, p. 38.

[15] *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados. Diputación Permanente*, Session of March 31, 1939, pp. 30-32 for Negrín's condemnation and p. 41, for that of Dolores Ibárruri, who repeats Negrín's words on April 1.

when he received the maximum power, he was able to give free rein to the resentment he had incubated about his failure as an author; that his politics was dominated by an atavistic hatred for the military and priests; that he left himself, at decisive moments of his life, be carried away by fear or cowardice and that, when all is said and done, he ended his political life as a prisoner of his own weaknesses, not daring to break the ties that linked him to the communists and socialists. From Jesús Pabón to Federico Jiménez Losantos, including Carlos Seco, when dealing with Azaña, what is considered valid to explain his politics are not political analyses but the characteristics that adorn the character. Julián Marías summarized these characteristics perfectly when he wrote that Manuel Azaña "had, almost all of his life, been a quite obscure figure, a public employee, a good writer who was not very popular, not very creative, better known in the Athenaeum than in other circles." It is logical that, as Pabón states, resentment was what counted the most "in launching his political life."[16]

This is not only a tendency of his adversaries or of historians who are clearly biased by a conservative political option. For example, the most notorious case is his resignation from the presidency of the government to occupy the presidency of the Republic in May 1936. A political analysis of this decision should explain or discuss what Azaña himself wrote in his notes and in his correspondence: that becoming president was a necessary condition to broaden the basis on which the government of the Republic was based by reincorporating the socialists. He was the only one who could execute this operation, which would have required putting a socialist in charge of forming the new government, because he was the only one with enough authority to force the republicans to accept a socialist as president of the government. Evidently, this thesis can be argued, but even such solid and authorized historian as Francisco Tomás y Valiente attributed it to his elusive nature and a kind of cowardice in the face of the coming problems.[17] Something similar has

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[16] Julián Marías, *Una vida presente*, Madrid, 1988, p. 86; Jesús Pabón, *Cambó*, Barcelona, 1969, vol. 2, p. 211.

[17] "In Spring 1936, the evasive man in him won out over the lucid politician [...] Azaña, as happened in December 1930 and April 1931, or on October 6, retires, he removes himself. Now, in April and May 1936, he flees upward": "Huir hacia arriba. Reflexiones sobre Manuel Azaña," in José L. de la Granja and Alberto Reig Tapia, *Manuel Tuñón de Lara. El compromiso con la historia*, Bilbao, 1993, p. 140.

happened with the explanation of his preference for Negrín, instead of Prieto, for the presidency of the government in the May 1937 crisis. Azaña himself offered plenty of political motivation that has been discounted or left unconsidered by those who have preferred to resolve the issue by attributing it to a "soviet intrigue," such as François Furet, following a long tradition which sees in Azaña a prisoner of the communists.[18]

I can give multiple examples, but there is not enough time and that is not the point. All I want to present for debate is the pertinence of going to what could be called, as Azaña himself called it, his intimate biography, with the intention of explaining issues related to his public biography. In Azaña's case, does his childhood as an orphan have any bearing on his early dedication to studying and debating social and political issues? ¿Can his policy towards the Catholic Church be attributed to resentment? Did Azaña really feel a hatred toward the military that would explain his military policies? Can his rapid rise to the presidency of the government be based on the Azaña enigma? Are his cowardice, his fear, or his timidity really arguments for explaining his remaining in the presidency of the Republic throughout the entire war? I am leaving out all the connections between Azaña's resentment and the destruction of Spain established by the subversive right wing, but does it make any sense to repeat that the cause of the civil war –as Madariaga wrote- has its roots in Azaña's incapability of getting along with Lerroux?

There is no doubt that our knowledge about Azaña and his politics has definitely increased a great deal in recent years, but the rocky persistence of the stereotypes constructed using the axiom *Manuel Azaña, that stranger,* to explain the course of the Republic and of the civil war is admirable. Because of this, my first reaction when I came in contact with the words of Manuel Azaña, with his speeches and his diaries from the years of the Republic, was exactly the opposite. Azaña is his word: all the mystery resides in this. And it is not surprising that my first article about Azaña was titled: *Manuel Azaña, reason, word, and power.* For me, there was no Azaña other than the politician who, through his discourse, awakens in his audience an emotion accompanied by

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[18] In *Le passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XX^a siècle*, Paris, 1995, p. 298.

illumination, a suddenly clear vision of a tangled situation with no apparent solution. Regarding the authority derived from his word, the expression of his capacity to propose a policy in which the disparate forces could meet, his resplendent arrival to the presidency, these were also the reason behind his definitive fragility.

In my opinion, therefore, it is necessary to reconstruct Azaña's biography sweeping away all the intimate dead wood of the orphaned, solitary child, the failed young writer, the resentful, bitter office worker, and going directly to the political analysis of the policies that he undertook from his leadership in the government. In my first incursions, I gave Azaña a credibility that I should have questioned: until the Republic was proclaimed, he had no biography, as he said and he had lived focused on himself until it came time for him to stretch out. I paid very little attention to his childhood years and his youth, I rushed through his years of work as secretary of the Athenaeum and I only devoted detailed attention to his republican years. Because, in my opinion, Azaña did not explain the Republic, it was the Republic that explained Azaña. And for this explanation, there was no need for all that accumulation of considerations about his solitary childhood, his work in the general directorate, his bitterness as a writer with no readers, his obscurity in the literary circles, his persecutionary Jacobinism, his hatred toward the military and the Church, his cowardice and weariness, his defeatism and his treason. Because none of these explained why he abandoned his reformism and his appeal to the Republic, his work toward a Republican alliance directed toward a coalition with the socialists, his military policy from the ministry of war, the reform programs that he would have executed in coalition with the socialists, his refusal to participate in the 1934 projects of revolution, his work for reconstructing an alliance in 1935, his policy to rescue the Republic and, on the whole, his continuous and public exhortation, well known by the governments, to find a negotiated solution to the war. All of this could be explained politically, with no need to resort to considerations about his intimate personal life. And besides, that was the Azaña in whom I was interested.

Later, I had the opportunity to edit the truly complete works of Azaña, allowing me to take a look at an Azaña with whom I had not dealt until that moment: the child who lost his mother and father when he was ten years old,

the young man who argues social and political issues in the Academy of Jurisprudence, the candidate who wins a position as a lawyer in the general directorate of the registry and notary, the secretary who really carries out the functions of president in the Madrid Athenaeum, the intellectual who joins a reform party in order to try out the monarchic experience, the director of cultural journals, the founder of a small group of Republican Action, and, later, that other Azaña with whom I had only dealt partially, the president of a Republic at war.

The result of all this was that, in effect, Azaña had a biography, that his election to the presidency of the cabinet of ministers was less a leap than an arrival, but as I have accompanied him on this long journey, I have never wanted to resort to his private life, his feelings or his emotions, his sexual relations or friendships, in order to understand his politics. I have explored his infancy, considered the first speeches of his youth, his work in the Athenaeum, his presence in reformism, his relations and friendships, and, naturally, his "particular friendship" with the man who would become his brother-in-law. But in these intimate affairs I have borne in mind, from long before he wrote it, what Hobsbawm says in his presentation of his autobiography: "Any attempt to relate the economic theories of Keynes or Schumpeter with their respective sexual lives, equally full but completely different, is doomed to failure." And this is what I continue to think, without limiting the observation to sexual life: any attempt to relate Azaña's politics to any enigma or nuance regarding his personality is doomed to failure: Azaña is his word and action and this is the base upon which I believe his biography should be built. Or, at least, that is what I am presenting for discussion.