

Violence and the Displacement of Rail Workers of Altsasu-Alsasua in the Spanish Civil War and its Aftermath

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ABSTRACT: Forced displacements in the context of civil wars are intimately bound to the violent practices which accompany them. In the case of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, this relationship manifested itself in the massive flight of people who feared reprisals but also in displacements imposed by the authorities, or motivated by social exclusion. Studies relating to internal population movements within this context are rare, however. This work deals with the flight of the rail workers of Altsasu-Alsasua in the days following the coup of July 1936. After reviewing the literature on wartime displacements, both internationally and in Spain, the article uses 175 records created during the subsequent dismissal of rail workers in order to trace their wartime experiences. First, we examine the circumstances that produced early flights, which only make sense if we bear in mind the myriad experiences of socio-political conflict which preceded the war and heralded its beginning. Thereafter, the article maps the itineraries of those who abandoned the area. Finally, we examine the difficulties that marked the return home and the displacements many rail workers endured as part of the regime's repressive policies.

KEYWORDS: political violence; forced displacement; professional purges; railway workers; Spain; flights; wartime experience; Francoist repression.

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Título traducido: La violencia y los desplazamientos del personal ferroviario de Altsasu-Alsasua en la guerra civil y la posguerra españolas.

RESUMEN: Los desplazamientos forzados en contextos de guerra civil guardan una relación estrecha con las prácticas violentas que las acompañan. En el caso de la guerra civil y la posguerra españolas, esta relación se materializó en huidas masivas por temor a represalias, pero también en desplazamientos impuestos por las autoridades o como consecuencia de la exclusión social. Sin embargo, apenas existen estudios dedicados los movimientos de población internos en aquel contexto. Este trabajo se ocupa de la huida de personal ferroviario de Altsasu-Alsasua en las jornadas posteriores al golpe de Estado de julio de 1936. Tras repasar la producción investigadora sobre los desplazamientos en contextos bélicos y en el caso español, se analizan los 175 expedientes instruidos para la depuración del personal ferroviario a fin de rastrear su trayectoria bélica. En primer lugar, se estudian las circunstancias en que se produjo la huida temprana, que cobra sentido en un sustrato de experiencias en el conflicto sociopolítico que precedieron a la guerra y marcaron su inicio. A continuación, se cartografían los itinerarios de quienes abandonaron la localidad. Por último, se desganan las dificultades que revistió el regreso a casa y los desplazamientos que sufrieron como parte de las políticas represivas del régimen.

PALABRAS CLAVE: guerras civiles; violencia política; desplazamiento forzado; depuraciones profesionales; personal ferroviario; España; huidas; experiencia bélica; represión franquista.

INTRODUCTION

When the hot August of 1936 arrived in Altsasu, Eugenio Martín had not slept in his house for some days.¹ Already, at least 300 other residents, most of them men, had left a town which now appeared deserted. The war would prove to be a constant journey for this *Madrileño*² employed by the *Compañía de Caminos de Hierro del Norte* (Northern Railtrack Company, hereafter *Compañía*). Altsasu was at that time a medium-sized industrial town situated on the northwest boundary of Navarra and Gipuzkoa. Since the nineteenth century, it had developed into a well-known railroad enclave, and one of the most active nuclei of the Navarran workers' movement had emerged there and put down strong roots (Layana, 2021a, p. 330; Majuelo, 1989). It is perhaps for this reason that many individuals from a broad spectrum of left-wing groups chose to bid farewell to their homes, once it became clear that resistance to the coup of 18 July 1936 was useless. Many professional colleagues would be absent alongside Eugenio, the majority belonging to the *Sindicato Nacional Ferroviario* (National Railway Union, hereafter SNF) of the *Union General de Trabajadores* (General Workers' Union, hereafter UGT). Others, such as Eugenio's own family, were expelled "as undesirables." Eugenio made it to Gipuzkoa and the vicissitudes of the war later took him to Bilbao and Santander. There he was taken prisoner and began a new journey, now in captivity. Eugenio endured fourteen months in a labour battalion where he continued to be moved around as part of forced labour of cleaning up and reconstruction. Despite being ordered to present himself in Ávila after his release, Eugenio managed to return to Altsasu to demand his reinstatement as a railwayman in 1939. The war might have been over but even now Eugenio could not put down his suitcase. Owing to his union and wartime record, he was jailed

in the Pamplona Provincial Prison on Christmas Eve 1939, and in May the following year, was sentenced to a minimum of six months and one day in prison. Finally, his company penalised him with a transfer to the Soto del Rey station (Asturias), which condemned him to exile some 400 km from his original home.

Eugenio's journey is without a doubt a tale of violence. The coup of 17-18 July unleashed a broad range of violent practices in the territory controlled by the military rebels. Studies of lethal Francoist violence have arrived at a total of around 150,000 victims throughout Spain during the civil war and Francoism (Espinosa, 2021), and 2943 for Navarra (Majuelo *et al.*, 2021). Even so, in the last two decades there has been a 'qualitative leap' (Rodrigo, 2001) within this field, which has progressed to study other 'psychological, moral, economic or social' faces of this violence (Del Arco and Hernández, 2016, p. 78).³ As wider scholarship has shown, forced wartime displacements, in their diverse manifestations, are intimately bound to the violent practices which accompanied these conflicts (Hedman, 2008; Meertens and Segura-Escobar, 1996; Engel and Ibáñez, 2007). In the case of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, this relationship took the form of a massive flight of individuals who feared reprisals but also involved displacements imposed by the authorities—in the form of labour sanctions, penal transfers, concentration camps, or exile—or movement prompted by the exclusion or vulnerability imposed upon part of the community. However, as Balcells (2018) has shown, in the case of the Spanish Civil War there are few studies which analyse the relationship between population displacement and violence, in spite of the latter's influence and importance. Indeed, more generally in the Spanish case, internal displacements remain relatively understudied (Serrano, 2010, p. 17).

The present work is concerned with the flight of rail workers living in Altsasu-Alsasua, against a backdrop of massive population displacement taking place in the area in the days following the coup of 18 July 1936. Altsasu's location, next to territory that initially remained in Republican hands, allows us to examine a

1 For Eugenio's story, see Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (CDMH), Archivo Ferroviario de la Depuración (AFD), Caja (C.) 354, Expediente (Exp.) 2337; Archivo Intermedio Militar Pirenaico (AIMP), legajo 32, orden 1915. See also FDMHN, 2022a; Urrizola, 2017, p. 306; García-Sanz and González Gil, 2019, pp. 120-121.

2 Somebody from or residing in Madrid.

3 For a recent review, see Pérez-Olivares and Riesco, 2021.

massive early flight of people in a border town, who felt themselves to be in imminent danger (AKT, 2018). Meanwhile, the study of rail workers allows us to analyse both the displacements themselves, and the behaviour of a professional group with a notable degree of internal cohesion, shared previous experiences and high levels of unionisation (Polo Muriel, 2015). First, we will examine the existing literature on wartime displacements and its relation to the Spanish case study. Next, we will analyse 175 dossiers created during the process of dismissing railway personnel, in order to reveal their wartime experiences. We will focus particularly on the 39 men who, according to what can be verified in the existing records, left the area. The article interrogates the circumstances and motivations that prompted individuals to flee, against a backdrop of population displacements in the rest of Navarra. The immediacy and earliness of this mass flight can only be understood if we bear in mind the experiences of socio-political conflict and repression which preceded the war and shaped its initial rhythms. Likewise, the article establishes the number of personnel who chose to flee. The journeys of those who fled the area are then followed and displayed in interactive maps, highlighting the most common patterns. Finally, the article explores the difficulties these individuals faced upon returning home, and the further displacements they might be forced to endure owing to the repressive policies of the new regime.

This article is based on a qualitative analysis of the processes followed by the instructing judges of the *Compañía* in compliance with the legislation for the purging of personnel and is further complemented by archival documents from military proceedings and a growing body of secondary literature on the region, the civil war and Francoism, and population displacements more generally. The piece falls within a long-standing trend in Spanish repression studies which has relied upon microhistory and case studies (Hernández Burgos, 2015; Pérez-Olivares, 2018) to conduct fine-grained analysis on political violence which has later been successfully used for comparative research and general studies (Preston, 2011; Espinosa, 2010). One hundred and seventy-five records of the 178 workers of this company have been found (Polo Muriel, 2015, p. 416). The rebel authorities obliged all employees to apply for their readmission to the company. With the aim of evaluating their behaviour and attitude, the courts sought detailed information about their actions during the war. Thus, *inter alia*, the company's questionnaires inquired about the side that an individual had 'lent support' to, about services carried out and about 'political parties and union groups to which he had belonged'.⁴ In these

and other documents compiled for readmission to the company, and in the workers' own depositions, individuals offered details about their wartime activities. The dossiers also contain reports by the authorities and the *Compañía's* own records. Even though, as happened frequently in judicial sources, the individual's voice is tempered and influenced by the exigencies and the threat of dismissal (Farge, 2013; Zemon Davis, 1987; Rodríguez Barreira, 2016), these first-person accounts allow us to reconstruct the story of many rail workers from the area.

VIOLENCE IN MOTION. FORCED POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The forced displacement of civilian populations often goes hand-in-hand with military conflict. Scholars have long noted the devastating social consequences that population displacements can give birth to, the additional conflicts they can lead to (Kulischer, 1948, pp. 18-23), their long-term political consequences (González Calleja, 2013, p. 162), and the difficulties posed by the eventual return of those who have abandoned their homes (Serrano, 2010). Broadly, experts agree that population movements are directly related to levels of violence unleashed in conflicts, although the precise mechanisms of this association are not always evident. Population movements are often considered, in themselves, a form of non-lethal violence, and indeed, in many cases, unintentional (Balcells and Stanton, 2021, p. 48). At the same time, wartime displacements can also entail deliberate strategies with diverse objectives, most notoriously in cases of 'cleansing' but also in policies of depopulation, forced removal or rehousing (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 147; Steele, 2017; Wood, 2008, p. 549; Lichtenheld, 2020). Often, the violence does not end with the original displacement. Population movements themselves can result in cycles of violence and even in conflicts with the receiving communities (Kulischer, 1948, pp. 18-23; Hovil, 2008; Balcells, 2018). Confrontations, in any case, not only trigger displacements but can also entail the forced *immobility* of thousands of people (Lubkemann, 2008). Meanwhile, attempts to unpick the logic and direction of displacements have not only shed light on rates of violence but also myriad economic, political, ethnic, social, and even geographic determinants (Adhikari, 2012). Whilst violence severely influences (and often limits) the options of a population, the influence of other factors has also been documented, as has the agency of the individuals and groups involved and their ability to make alternative decisions, even in extraordinary circumstances (Moore and Shellman, 2006, p. 599). Even so, as Serrano (2010, p. 17) has noted, internal displacements are still "a ghostly phenomenon

4 CDMH, AFD, C. 0347, Exp. 02060. Ley de 10 de febrero de 1939 para la depuración de funcionarios públicos (Law of 10 February 1939 for the dismissal of civil servants), *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 14 February 1939. Decreto de 27 de febrero de 1939 sobre depuración de funcionarios de Corporaciones y Empresas concesionarias de Servicios públicos (Decree of 27 February 1939 concerning dismissal of functionaries of Corpo-

rations and Businesses franchised for Public Services), *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 28 February 1939.

from the historical point of view,” and, in cases such as the Spanish Civil War, continue to be relegated to a secondary status.

Nevertheless, the Spanish Civil War was a powerful motor for population movements. According to Serrallonga, Santirso, and Casas (2013, p. 50), more than 4 million people were forced to abandon their homes during the war, and their suffering has been recognised as part of multifaceted wartime violence (Preston, 2011, p. 19). Even so, quantifying population movements during the war and its aftermath, in line with its chronologies and motivations, is a task beset by documentary and methodological complications (Ortega and Silvestre, 2006). Since the time they took place, reasonably detailed estimates of these displacements, and in particular the Republican exile, have formed part of a specialist literature (Kulischer, 1948), and this multifaceted phenomenon continues to attract scholarly interest (Aznar and Murga, 2019). Frequently, even now, specific works are dedicated to personalities or groups experiencing these migrations—such as children (Qualls, 2020), women (Martínez Martínez, 2021; Egido *et al.*, 2021), or scientists and intellectuals (Cabañas Bravo *et al.*, 2020)—as well as the activities and political thought of exiles abroad (Andrade, 2019). Nevertheless—and this is mirrored in broader specialist treatments of the subject—internal population movements and their intimate relationship with wartime and post-war violence have received, comparatively, less monographic attention (Prieto and Barranquero, 2007; Sánchez Collado, 2015; Díaz Sánchez, 2020 and 2021).

These migrations would shake the entire country and span the whole of the conflict. What is more, they occurred from the first moments of the coup. In places where the revolt was resolved quickly in favour of the rebels, such as Galicia or Navarra and parts of Andalucía, the threat of repression prompted many to flee their homes (Serrallonga, Santirso, and Casas, 2013, p. 48) and even to try to cross into Portugal (Espinosa, 2003, pp. 109-124), Gibraltar (Stockey, 2018), or—as we will see below—France, with varying degrees of success (Rubio, 1977). The decisive advances and campaigns of the rebels, in turn, provoked successive waves of people who filled up roads and tracks (Serrallonga, Santirso, and Casas, 2013, pp. 51-82; Mayoral, 2013; Rubio, 1977; Sánchez Collado, 2015). Occasionally, the flight could also involve long journeys marked by several temporary stops, each one thrown into disarray by the progress of the war. This happened, for example, with hundreds of people who left Málaga towards Almería and ended up dispersed across different areas of the peninsula, Europe, North Africa, and Latin America (Prieto and Barranquero, 2007). The Republican authorities could also create mechanisms to enforce evacuations, as happened in the case of Madrid when Francoist troops approached the capital and the resources for its defence were running short (Sánchez Collado, 2015). Often, flights of people became gruelling, and the impact of columns of displaced people was felt throughout Europe. They were

transformed into one of the most representative images of the human catastrophe that the war marked (Graham, 2005). Many never reached their destinations owing to the harshness of the journeys or direct military attacks from rebel forces (Serrallonga, Santirso, and Casas, 2013, p. 51). The conditions in which they were accommodated in their new homes were often no better, and meeting basic needs caused innumerable additional problems, in an administrative environment already severely damaged by the war. In December 1937, for example, the mayor of an overflowing Ciudad Real claimed the population of the town had tripled (Alía, 2017, pp. 288-291). Local solidarity and international humanitarian help proved decisive in recording and partially alleviating the adversities that the population would endure (Orduña, 2017; Pretus, 2015; Mendlesohn, 2002).

However, population displacements were not solely an indirect consequence of military action and the justified fears of the population. As much in the post-war years as during the conflict itself, the repressive and disciplinary practices of the rebel and Francoist authorities included deliberate and regulated displacement of thousands of people, either temporarily or permanently. Many individuals completed long odysseys involving numerous spaces of internment, ending up in various concentration camps and forced labour battalions across the nation. This certainly occurred as part of the policy of classifying prisoners and youngsters of military age (Rodrigo, 2005; Mendiola, 2011; García-Funes, 2022). Something similar also happened in the sphere of prisons, in what became a sort of ‘penitentiary tourism’ (Rodríguez Teijeiro, 2010, pp. 226 and 235), which prompted the displacement of thousands of prisoners in programmes for the Redemption of Sentences Through Work (Gómez Bravo, 2007). Within this framework, some prisoners were transferred to Penal Detachments (Falquina *et al.*, 2008) and Militarised Penitentiary Colonies (Acosta *et al.*, 2004), and sometimes their families were dragged along with them. Even for those who went into exile, internment—and such mobility as it afforded—could take the form of refugee and concentration camps. This fate was not only the result of the German occupation of France and the unfolding of the Second World War but had already taken place at the hands of the pre-war French authorities as well (Pike, 2015; Naharro-Calderón, 2019).

Furthermore, and as part of the mechanisms for the release of political prisoners, Francoism made extensive use of conditional liberty through a programme of post-prison Supervised Liberty. This policy included, generally at the recommendation of local authorities, temporary or permanent exile from the habitual municipality of residence (Torres Fabra, 2018; Rodríguez Teijeiro, 2012). In turn, many workers were obliged to change residence following their dismissal. Quite deliberately, the legislation underpinning these processes considered relocation amongst its sanctions (Cuesta, 2009). With respect to the mass movement of people, however, reconcentration constituted a last resort. Although the Spanish army had some form in the use of mass resettlement of people

(Martí, 2016), in this case, their use was essentially limited to combatting post-war guerrilla activity, and also limited to certain regions (Marco, 2020, pp. 502-503). In other cases, relocation did not take place under a legal framework but rather, informal expulsions of residents took place through force or the threat of it (Ayerra, 2002). The indirect consequences of violence and social and economic exclusion resulted in the migration of many others. Purges of professions, periods of confinement, and the erosion of previous social bonds resulted in many losing their jobs. To this could be added the practices of dispossession and appropriation (Langerita, 2016) typical of the legal and extra-legal economic repression of Francoism, which for many people involved the plunder of their goods and financial means (Casanova and Cenarro, 2014; Serém, 2017; Layana, 2021a). These processes resulted in situations of vulnerability which could not always be softened by old networks and practices of solidarity or protection. Many had no other choice but to migrate to large cities, in which reliance on the immediate social surroundings was less, and where becoming lost amongst the anonymous multitudes might partially cover over past responsibilities (Tudela, 2018; Díaz Sánchez, 2020).

Population displacements, in turn, could be the trigger for new violent episodes and practices. Castillo (2014) and Ledesma (2003) have proposed for Spain, as Kalyvas (2006) has already asserted more broadly, that the production of violence in the rear guard often requires the participation of local and external actors. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, this gave rise to an itinerant violence in which ‘outsiders’ played a decisive role. Occasionally, this correlation played out when forcibly displaced people arrived in an area, more often than not with no explicit desire to engage in violence. Frequently those in flight carried plausible news about rebel atrocities, they symbolised failure and defeat, and, on occasion, they belonged to armed committees in the localities from where they came. Upon the arrival of groups and individuals in flight, any of these scenarios could result in an increase in violence in the Republican rear-guard (Prieto y Barranquero, 2015; Balcells, 2018), which was itself in the process of adapting to, and indeed characterised by, a ‘counter-coup logic’ (Ledesma, 2010, p. 158). Furthermore, although they did not often lead to direct confrontation—and indeed numerous testimonies exist as to the solidarity of local populations (Sánchez Collado, 2015, pp. 382-383)—coexistence between refugees and their hosts also produced innumerable conflicts, which grew worse as the war went on (Alía, 2017, pp. 287-297; Serrallonga, 2004, pp. 163-212). Finally, some found themselves in a position of forced immobility (Lubkemann, 2008). Many groups did not have the chance to abandon the territory in which they found themselves trapped after the coup, or did so after passing a period of time hiding from danger. In wartime Madrid, hundreds of people sought refuge in embassies (Piriz, 2020). Similarly, in rebel territory, and even after the war had ended, some remained hidden for years (Fraser, 1972). Mean-

while, during early-Francoism, the regime considered the control of the population’s movements—particularly to cities and in the case of political enemies—as a matter of public order. Accordingly, the regime tried to monitor, and when necessary, prevent certain types of movement (Díaz Sánchez, 2020 and 2021).

“I LEFT MY HOUSE BECAUSE I FEARED BEING ARRESTED.” FLIGHT AND DISPLACEMENT OF THE RAIL WORKERS OF ALTSASU-ALSASUA⁵

Avoiding the coup

In 1936, Altsasu was a medium-sized industrial town with a long tradition of union organisation, particularly in the rail workers’ sector. When news of the coup became known, residents from a broad spectrum of the left tried to offer resistance. However, although they disarmed the rightists and gained control of the area, rebel troops turned the town into a primary objective. The subsequent arrival of the first rebel contingents on 19 July made it impossible to sustain the opening successes.⁶ At that point hundreds of residents opted to flee the area. Many of them at first left provisionally, and, only after learning of developments, chose to cross the frontier with Gipuzkoa into loyalist territory (AKT, 2018; Layana, 2021a). Given that infrastructural and geographical constraints prove decisive in the materialisation of population movements in conflict situations (Adhikari, 2012, p. 602), the proximity of the Gipuzkoa frontier offered an opportunity that many other Navarrese did not enjoy. The runaways were, in the majority, men, youngsters, and of UGT leanings, although there also existed a minority of *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (National Confederation of Labour, hereafter CNT) militants (Layana, 2021a, pp. 330-332). After leaving, in some cases suffering accidents and filled with shock, some escapees met up on the roads and in nearby towns, and some insisted on the need to prepare resistance immediately from their new positions (AKT, 2018; Jimeno Jurío, 2021, pp. 157-158, 185, 190).

There is no accepted figure for escapees. Estimates of the authorities, investigators, witnesses, and the rail workers themselves vary between 300 to 500 individuals (Layana 2021a, p. 331; Ayerra, 2002; Altsasu Memoria, 2014).⁷ According to Altafiaylla, some 350 people vanished on the night of 19-20 July and another 150-200 departed the following day (AKT, 2018, pp. 191-192). Even the most conservative estimate suggests a departure of almost 10% of the 3339 inhabitants of the 1930 census (Dirección General del Instituto Geográfico, Catastral y de Estadística, 1932, p. 193). The percentage is much higher if we count only adult men. Those in flight set out

5 CDMH, AFD, C. 300, Exp. 250.

6 See the testimony of a resident regarding the armed patrols in the first hours (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 133).

7 CDMH, AFD, C. 00342, Exp. 01829.

on successive days, and although the priest Marino Ayerra stated that the exodus began at night (Ayerra, 2003, p. 46), various rail workers specified that they had escaped in daylight.⁸ Thus, most of them slipped away on 20 or 21 July. Many residents, be they rail workers or other professions, delayed their departure and had to find ways of hiding themselves or escaping later on.⁹ Others chose to return, not always with happy consequences. Gregorio Zufiaurre, who went back trusting that his family links with the rebels would protect him, was murdered (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 144). Indeed, despite the flight of people, the repression of residents of the town was fierce. Twenty-six killings of residents of the town have been documented (FDMHN, 2022a; AKT, 2018, pp. 194–195), and a total of 105 lost their lives in various forms of repression if we include people who had stayed in the village, those who died in loyalist territory—often at the front—those who were executed after being taken prisoner, and those who died in captivity (FDMHN, 2022a).¹⁰ As well as violent deaths and detentions, many women had their hair shaved and were forced to parade after ingesting castor oil. This ghastly panorama was augmented by seizures, confiscation of goods, expulsions from the town, and the purging of professions (AKT, 2018, p. 193).

Many rail workers joined the flood of escapees. At the outbreak of the war, and as interactive map 1 shows (FDMHN, 2022b), the Altsasu workforce for the *Compañía* included 178 employees and was one of the largest in Navarra (Polo Muriel, 2015, p. 416). Of the 175 dossiers that have been found for Altsasu staff present in the area when the coup was launched, 39 (22% and all men) unequivocally indicate an individual escape.¹¹ As many of the available studies of Navarra (Majuelo, 2008, pp. 217–219) and other areas (Balcells, 2018) have also noted, the dossiers demonstrate clearly that political sympathies played a key role in the decision to leave in those early moments. The dossiers ascribed a specific political or union affiliation across the broad spectrum of leftist groups for 30 of the 39 railway workers who fled (77%).

In the main, they were members of the SNF of the UGT, with deep roots in the profession and the region. A minority combined this affiliation with membership of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, hereafter PSOE) or had alternatively opted for the CNT. The reports cited concluded that 5 of the 9 remaining workers were 'leftists' or 'socialists', without specifying their group. Many of those concerned referred to their earlier union involvement as a strong motive for choosing to leave, fearing that "members of the Rail Workers' Union would be taken into custody."¹²

Indeed, the explanations and depositions of most of the rail workers share certain features. Their accounts, which almost always tried to downplay their guilt, can best be understood in the context of the first days of the coup—the 'exceptional circumstances', as one of the investigators put it¹³—a fundamental narrative vehicle. Thus, the flight is always framed within a situation of uncertainty, infused with 'alarm', 'confusion', 'nervousness', or 'haste'.¹⁴ A further essential element is 'fear'. The rapid advance of rebel units left little room for manoeuvre and the more prominent politically active residents soon became unsettled. Many of those who fled—in the main, members of the SNF of the UGT—admitted suffering an intense 'fear of reprisals' in those days.¹⁵ The fact that these declarations were made within a prosecutorial framework, where political or union sympathies and activities were on trial, explains why those implicated did not feel able to be more specific as to the roots of these anxieties. For this reason, on many occasions, they simply referred to the existence of 'alarming rumours' or 'unfounded rumours', in which union members or leftist sympathisers were going to be jailed upon the arrival of the rebels. Some claimed that the initial uncertainty was such that even some local rightists chose to leave.¹⁶ They also recounted that rumour, and therefore flight, was rife in the area. This was the climate that Daniel Berasategui described, for example:

The motives that induced me to flee my home and go to Gipuzkoa were the persistent rumours that were going around that those belonging to the unions would be arrested immediately. That and the confusion reigning in those first days of the National Movement, whose intentions nobody could have known at the time.¹⁷

Many of the displacements covered in broader scholarly studies resulted from a deliberate war plan or resulted from military attacks. In this case, however, the movement of population was, in many ways more similar to those documented in places such as Galicia (Serrallonga,

8 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0325, Exp. 01172.

9 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0363, Exp. 02686. Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 145.

10 For other estimates see Ayerra, 2002, pp. 49–50; Altsasu Memoria, 2014.

11 The figure requires some clarification. Some of the employees were in territory still under government coup when the coup was launched, and were not counted as escapees in the estimate. See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0582, Exp. 13062; CDMH, AFD, C. 0276, Exp. 09861; CDMH, AFD, C. 0561, Exp. 01146. On the other hand, there were also others who remained who were victims of repression and expelled, directly or indirectly, from the town. See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0352, Exp. 02223; CDMH, AFD, C. 0431, Exp. 05455. At the same time, many of the records consulted offer hardly any detail about the trajectories of the accused and it is possible that some of their names are also absent. Lastly, and although 175 of the 178 dossiers for company employees have been found, various accounts appear to indicate that the reports of various escapees could be absent (Jimeno Jurío, 2020, pp. 125, 135–137, 152).

12 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0300, Exp. 00250.

13 CDMH, AFD, C. 0390, Exp. 03798.

14 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 00342, Exp. 01829; CDMH, AFD, C. 0419, Exp. 04982. For other accounts of the 'psychosis of terror', see Jimeno Jurío, 2021, pp. 177 and 192.

15 CDMH, AFD, C. 0325, Exp. 01172.

16 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0354, Exp. 02337 y CDMH, AFD, C. 0357, Exp. 02453.

17 CDMH, AFD, C. 0301, Exp. 00251.

Santirso, and Casas, 2013, p. 48) or the Campo de Gibraltar (Stockey, 2018). That is to say, it was preventative and before the majority of the violence that would be unleashed. In Navarra as a whole, many people at risk owing to their political or union identity, affiliations or actions tried to avoid the coup by abandoning their homes. We still await a detailed study and quantification of internal displacements in Navarra, though the cases of some individuals who ended up in exile are perhaps better known (García-Sanz, 2001; Chueca, 2021; Virto, 1993). Factors such as previous political attachment, family and geographical circumstances, the will to put up active resistance to the coup, or even the wish to avoid being called up to the rebel army, could all play a part in the decision to flee (Layana, 2021a, p. 351). Many tried to hide themselves in isolated spots and areas close to their homes during the first days of uncertainty and scraped by on hills and in caves in contact with friends and family (Ayerra, 2002, pp. 63-64). Some went back, even when the extrajudicial killings had started, trusting in their innocence, or after having exhausted their options for escape (Guerra, 2012). Others tried to reach the Republican zone or French territory. Flights could begin as individual undertakings but often protagonists found themselves reunited *en route* with other escapees. Those who lived or worked in zones close to the French frontier or close to the Huesca or Gipuzkoa provinces, still in Republican hands, could make a getaway or hide themselves while waiting for an opportunity to do so (Instituto Navarro de la Memoria, 2021; Mikelarena, 2015, pp. 26-27; FDMHN, 2022a). Some of the rail workers of Olazti-Olazagutía, a municipality close to Altsasu, decided to take advantage of their relative proximity to Gipuzkoa to escape (Aranguren, 2017). Many of those who abandoned their towns left their families behind, and no small number died serving in Republican units (Majuelo, 2008, pp. 217-219).

Even in places where the geography of the coup quickly choked off the prospect of a rapid and safe flight, there were many who tried to get away from danger. On 19 July, when the futility of any resistance in Navarra was confirmed, some even tried to take trains from Pamplona to Gipuzkoa¹⁸ or Zaragoza, and others decided not to spend the night in their homes (AKT, 2018, p. 483; Vierge, 2013, pp. 72-74).¹⁹ CNT member José Gurpegui—who refused to be ‘hunted like rabbits’—tried to get on a train to Zaragoza with other workmates. In his subsequent journey northwards from the Aragonese capital to try and reach Republican positions, he was met by dozens of escapees in a column.²⁰ Residents of southern areas of the province also swelled the ranks of the exodus. Gregorio Izquierdo—a resident of Arguedas and CNT militant—was forced to abandon his locality on 19 July, having been threatened. He noted the presence

of some 600 escapees from Ribera Navarra in Monte de Yerga in the days following the coup.²¹ Meanwhile, Gerardo Guerra, a UGT member, and councillor in Caparrosa, fled his home that same day after being warned of the gravity of the situation. In his flight towards Aragón, he met up with other residents from the area in the desert of Bardenas, where, he claims, around one thousand people were hiding, having escaped from neighbouring towns. After a stealthy return to his house, where he remained hiding for months, Gerardo crossed the whole of Navarra and tried to get to France with the help of the Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid) (Guerra, 2012, pp. 80-101). As with his case, there continued to be a trickle of difficult escapes, to which we must add those of deserters and draft dodgers who abandoned rebel military units or militias (Layana, 2021a, pp. 352-363). These displacements involved a pronounced risk for their protagonists. Those who fled could be detained, imprisoned, killed, or even shot in full flight (Aldave, 2020). Many, at least temporarily, found themselves reduced to a forced *immobility* (Martínez Lacabe, 2021; Elío, 2002). Getting to, and crossing, the frontier would be made possible by individuals and networks who facilitated escapes, and in later years still permitted the crossing of the frontier when France was under occupation (Mikelarena, 2020; Jiménez de Aberasturi, 2019; Pallarés, 2019).

As scholars have noted (Kalyvas, 2006; Balcells, 2018), understanding the logic underpinning violence against civilians is key to explaining wartime displacements. In our case, which involved an early movement of individuals, we can see that existing fears of possible rebel violence were bolstered by the first news of the repression that followed the coup. These fears derived from a long tradition of violent military interventions in public order (Ballbé, 2020), as well as experiences of repression of union movements and union activity in the preceding years. As others have noted, in conflict zones (González Calleja, s. d.; Hasan-Rokem, 2005; Greenhill and Oppenheim, 2017), and in the Spanish Civil War specifically (Píriz, 2016), the existence of confrontation, ambiguity, and uncertainty all favoured the circulation of rumours, particularly of those that spoke to existing fears. Their dissemination and plausibility could be spurred on by social and cultural dimensions, such as the repetition of the rumour, individual experiences, and beliefs, or the perception of a possible threat. In the case of Navarra, the history of the preceding years made the prospect of reprisals in the event of rebel victory seem plausible and, many assumed, could end up in arrests. Adding to the existing, and shared, fears of the left regarding the Spanish state was the rise of the extreme right in Europe, and their experiences during October 1934 (Kerry, 2020). During the repression of the revolutionary strike, the army deployed extraordinary violence. The aftermath of the movement involved savage repression and hundreds taken prisoner, many of whom were interned in the

18 Case of Constancio Erice Monreal, FDMHN (2022a).

19 Case of Jesús Cepero Barbería, FDMHN (2022b).

20 José Gurpegui Zabalza's unpublished autobiographical notes. Fondo José Gurpegui Zabalza. Fondo Documental de la Memoria Histórica en Navarra.

21 Archivo Personal (Personal Archive), Emilio Majuelo Gil, Fondo Julio García Pérez.

nearby prison of San Cristóbal (Sierra and Alforja, 2006; Kowasch, 2017). In Altsasu, the rail workers had shown themselves active during the strike. These days had witnessed the derailment of a train and two carriages, and most notably of all the death of a resident who had tried to stop the arrest of Constantino Salinas, a leader in the PSOE (Majuelo, 1989, pp. 246-249; García Sanz, 2003, p. 125). Amnesty became one of the key demands of the electoral campaign for the elections of February 1936. In short, for the left in Altsasu, the memory of violence, and of imprisonment in particular, remained fresh in the summer of 1936.

There is no doubt that fears were well-founded. The rates of violence unleashed in those parts of northern Spain with a previously notable record of conflict grimly fulfilled even the most pessimistic predictions (Mikalarena, 2015; Majuelo *et al.*, 2021; Gil Andrés, 2006), and the days following the coup did nothing except heighten pre-existing anxieties. Post-war, the authorities were often quick to declare that “nobody was being persecuted” in the days when the flights took place.²² However, some of the rail workers who decided to cross into Gipuzkoa even had time to witness arrests of workmates before leaving Altsasu (Layana, 2021a, p. 331). Jesús Mellado, a member of the UGT, recalled in his declaration that on 20 July, when rumours were circulating, he saw how “they took Víctor Fernández Povorinos, watchman at the Dormitorio de la Reserva (Reserve Dormitory), into custody” and “fearing being arrested” he sought to leave.²³ It is also probable that in these first hours, when the trains were still functioning, news began to circulate of the repression in those areas where the coup had already triumphed. As the priest Marino Ayerra noted, the information reaching the area in those days was far from soothing (Ayerra, 2002, p. 64). This situation, the consolidation of the rebellion, and the approach of troops could also explain why flights were not immediate but took place rather over successive days. On the other side of Navarra, for example, Gerardo Guerra left Caparrosa on 19 July when a resident of the town brought news from Pamplona and confessed to him “the situation is very ugly” and urged him to make a getaway (Guerra, 2012, pp. 80-81).

Those who left early and as a precaution could not have known the instructions given to the rebels to proceed with violence (Viñas, 2019), nor could they foresee the scale and sheer range of repressive practices that the province of Navarra would suffer. Nonetheless, it is probable that their massive exodus prevented an even higher degree of repression and killings in these first moments. Altsasu recorded a much lower rate of lethal violence than other areas with high rates of union membership and social conflict, and it seems reasonable to assume that the flight of several hundred adult men was one of the reasons (Majuelo *et al.*, 2021). Some of the surviving accounts of violence from residents of the town support

this interpretation. They also demonstrate that the relationship between flight and the developing threat of violence grew stronger in the community, becoming a key element in the story of the mass exodus. Repression in the surrounding area was intense (AKT, 2018, pp. 192-193). According to the priest Marino Ayerra, on finding the town deserted the Falangists chose to satisfy their “thirst for slaughter” in the neighbouring towns (Ayerra, 2002, p. 72). Asked by Jimeno Jurío, a survivor claimed that “they killed very few [in the town] because they escaped” (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 143). In fact, some of the inhabitants who had stayed at the start of the conflict chose to leave when the danger became noticeable and explicit. Thus, for example, on realising that Martín Somocurcio had stayed in the town, one of his neighbours was warned by the rebels that “this man belongs to Russia [...] you tell him that he should leave, because if not we are going to leave him in a ditch” (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 184). Others, such as Joaquín Arregui, acknowledged that after realising the scale of reprisals, those who had refused to leave “would not have stayed if we had known any better” (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, p. 178).

Finally, in both preparing for and proceeding with it, displacement was a markedly collective social process. The dossiers show that information and plans for escape circulated through family, neighbourhood, and workplace networks, and that departure had a collective component. The available declarations and depositions of the rail workers eschew any individual responsibility and show only the most coercive impression of a collective decision to leave. Thus, many claimed that, if they abandoned the town, it was following ‘orders’ or even frightened by ‘duress’ or ‘deceptions’.²⁴ One of the escapees claimed that before leaving he presented himself at the station to offer his services, and it was then that “a group of leftists forced me with threats [to] abandon the town and I ended up in Zumárraga.”²⁵ According to the reports of the Guardia Civil, this type of defence was offered by those residents who “saw the game was up.”²⁶ Some reports and judgements claimed that the rail workers’ leaders had tried to influence others to flee and that they had then taken up arms against the rebels.²⁷ Although it was not common to admit to collective deliberations or negotiations, some of the accused indicated that they were influenced by the interpretation and conduct of broad sectors with whom they shared neighbourhood, work or union relations. Some also claimed that the involvement of people with a degree of authority, social standing or resolve in their neighbourhood, party, that or workplace, might have influenced them in those dark hours. Many declared that even on 21 July they had turned up for work, and it was then, after having conversations with workmates and superiors, that they chose to

24 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01527.

25 CDMH, AFD, C. 0329, Exp. 01325.

26 CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01528.

27 CDMH, AFD, C. 0501, Exp. E1484. See also Layana, 2021a, p. 332.

22 CDMH, AFD, C. 0329, Exp. 01325.

23 CDMH, AFD, C. 0508, Exp. E2166.

flee.²⁸ After referring to the rumours of potential arrests, another escapee claimed that “seeing that the majority of the men [...] were fleeing, I proceeded to do the same.”²⁹ According to post-war documents, on their return, some of the rail workers even berated their own conduct to workmates who had stayed behind.³⁰ In addition, flight had other severe consequences at the community level. In fact, escapees were on many occasions forced to leave family members behind in Altsasu, and some, such as those of Eugenio Martín, the protagonist of our introduction, were expelled.

Paths of War

By the same token, flight was indeed collective, and numerous rail workers followed similar paths. The military dynamic meant that those who left their homes as civilians found themselves immersed in the militarisation of social and professional life typical of civil conflicts (Wood, 2008; Alonso and Alegre, 2017; Leira, 2020). Thus, some carried out duties appropriate to their trade, which was controlled by committees in the service of the war effort. Others enrolled in military units, and many alternated between new activities and intermediate occupational spaces opened up by wartime circumstances, such as patrol duty.

Map 2 (FDMHN, 2022c) shows the itineraries of those who left. They appear as they did in the dossiers prepared for dismissals, as threads weaving through different routes. The map offers an interactive cartography, allowing us to visualise, in different colours, the course and direction of the displacements of every individual under review here. As well as recording conventional displacements, the key also highlights two peculiar features. On the one hand, there is an icon which denotes movements limited to the surrounding areas and which came to an end within a few days. On the other, the map highlights where displacements clearly occurred but where the available documents offer no more details about them. The map also shows sites of known stays. Meanwhile, for those cases in which the dossiers do not refer to a specific locality but instead to a region (‘Asturias’, ‘Jaén’, or ‘France’, for example), the map assigns a specific symbol at a representative point. Selecting any of the individual itineraries shows the name of its protagonist and the complete sequence of their registered destinations until the end of the war or their capture. Their later movements have been left out but could easily include transfers between spaces of captivity, or movements resulting from professional sanctions.

The dossiers of eight of the 39 rail workers recorded as fled tell us that they had abandoned the area but do

not contain details about the vicissitudes of their protagonists. Two others spent several days in the hills or the outskirts of the municipality before returning. The report that the Guardia Civil compiled on Mariano García stated that he had fled “to the hills, abandoning his work, returning four days later and resuming work.”³¹ According to the memoirs of the priest Marino Ayerra, many residents initially hid in the woods and farmhouses in the area where, waiting anxiously, they received assistance and news of their families (Ayerra, 2002, pp. 47, 63-64). Some later recalled that they thought that their flight would be temporary and only for a few days.³² Indeed, many were not gone for very long. For Sebastián Larrasa, for example, the *Compañía* concluded that “he left on the first day for the red ranks, showing up again one month later.”³³ However, the journey of most of the escapees lasted for the greater part of the war, and even after the conflict, in the form of internment in concentration or penitentiary units after their capture.

Even though displacements took shape according to innumerable personal and collective decisions, the progress of the coup and the war contributed decisively to shaping the horizon of possible mobility, and thus to the map of the rail workers’ journeys. The coup forced all the escapees to cross the provincial frontier and get into the province of Gipuzkoa, where the rebellion initially failed. Well aware of the terrain, those who left documentary proof—obtained, of course, under investigation—could point to their exact destinations, particularly their first stops in the areas of Zumárraga, Beasain, or the station at Brinkola. In the following weeks, the military campaign in Gipuzkoa significantly split the itineraries in two: while the records of various rail workers indicate that they crossed into France after the fall of the frontier town of Irún, the rest continued moving towards the west. The majority of the latter ended their journeys, or were apprehended, at some point in the rebel occupation of the North, completed in 1937 (Puell, 2007). The first group saw first-hand the dramatic circumstances surrounding the fall of Irún and the mass flight of civilian refugees and soldiers resulting from the Gipuzkoa campaign (Preston, 2011, p. 567). This flight into France – which accepted some of this wave of humanity but eventually opted mostly for urging their repatriation – resulted in the arrival into Catalonia of some two thousand refugees in lamentable conditions. The region had serious problems in accommodating them within the community and responding to their needs (Serrallonga, Santirso, and Casas, 2013, pp. 52-54; Serrallonga, 2004, p. 173). These human waves included some from Altsasu (Jimeno Jurío, 2021, pp. 156-161, 165), among them rail workers such as Fermín Miguel.³⁴ As this train guard explained in his deposition, armed patrols had forced him to cross from Irún to Hendaye on 4 September 1936. The French

28 CDMH, AFD, C. 0347, Exp. 02060; CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01527.

29 CDMH, AFD, C. 0525, Exp. F0230.

30 CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01529; AIMP; Leg. 32, orden 1931.

31 CDMH, AFD, C. 0557, Exp. 00616.

32 CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01529.

33 CDMH, AFD, C. 0551, Exp. 00903.

34 CDMH, AFD, C. 0325, Exp. 01172; AIMP; Leg. 31, 1877.

authorities “locked him up in a storehouse at that station alongside hundreds of rail workers” until, on the afternoon of the following day, by order of the French government, they were taken to Portbou. In Barcelona, he reported to those in charge of the rail workers and was sent to Tarragona to carry out services suitable to his position until the occupation of the city in January 1939. Among the dossiers studied there are also cases of rail workers who crossed into the Republican zone through France after the fall of Santander³⁵ or Gijón.³⁶

In effect, this is because most of those who found their way into Gipuzkoa in those July days comprise the sheaf of arrows heading west across the map parallel to the coast. Their movements, particularly after the Gipuzkoa campaign, mirrored the successive advances of the rebel troops in the 15 months following the coup and until the capture of Asturias, and swelled the massive exodus of civilians which shook the population (Martínez Bande, 1980). Excluding those who crossed into France, the rail workers who gave details of their journey to the west almost always referred to a stay in Bilbao. After a period in several municipalities in Gipuzkoa, and on occasions in San Sebastián, the rebel occupation of Gipuzkoa pushed them towards Vizcaya. Some ended their journeys here. The reports show that José María Garasa died in Gernika³⁷ and that Luciano Celorrio took ill in Bilbao.³⁸ Indeed, tragic endings were not uncommon amongst those who fled to the Republican zone (FDMHN, 2022a). Others, such as Juan Echeverría, simply fell upon the mercy of the rebel soldiers after the fall of Bilbao in June 1937 and endured various punishments.³⁹ Seventeen individuals specified getting to Cantabria, where almost all went to Santander, and many were captured during the occupation of the region in August 1937. Many studies and accounts show that some residents of Altsasu were killed after being taken prisoner. On occasion, this involved neighbours who had sought and found them at sites of internment (AKT, 2018, p. 196; Barandiaran, 2021).

Only five rail workers continued their journeys when operations moved into Asturias. They managed to reach Gijón and other areas of the province. There is only documentary evidence that one of them made it to Catalonia through France. A report of the Inspector of Operations for Asturias claimed after the war that, “when they arrived in Gijón, such was the number of [rail workers] evacuated from Gipuzkoa, Vizcaya, and Santander with their families, no control was applied to them, and they set up camp in the station and its surroundings.”⁴⁰

The long road home

With the exception of those cases where escape was fleeting and ended with an early return to Altsasu, the journeys of the other rail workers studied here entered a new phase when they fell into the hands of the Francoist authorities, as and when territory was conquered. Often, as happens frequently in post-conflict situations (Serrano, 2010), their stories did not end with an early and lasting return home. The uprooting of those who had made their escape was prolonged within the framework of the repressive policies of the regime, and the road home was both long and winding. Military justice and the sentences deriving from it, processes for the detention and classification of prisoners, forced labour, or investigations for political responsibilities, were just some of the ways in which the rail workers received abundant punishment (Layana, 2021a and 2021b). On the one hand, their liberty of movement was often totally or partially reduced upon undergoing processes of imprisonment. Conversely, they might be obliged to move as part of their entry into the penitentiary or concentrationary universe, or subject to labour sanctions. This repressive corollary was an epilogue to, and in part a consequence of, the rail workers’ wartime journeys. Indeed, as happened in the case of Eugenio cited above, rail workers’ flights were included in the list of charges against them, whether as part of professional purges or within the framework of military penal justice and punishment.⁴¹ As we have seen, others lost their lives during the war in various circumstances, and never had the chance to retrace their steps to go home.

Not all the dossiers of dismissal have preserved details about reprisals suffered by rail workers but the trajectories that we can reconstruct show that if they were captured, the most common punishment was being sent to a concentration camp, and later to forced labour battalions. We also know that there were civilian Falangists from Altsasu, who willingly visited detention centres to ensure the punishment of numerous civilians who had passed from Altsasu to the Republican zone (Barandiaran, 2021). The punitive cycle could begin immediately after the occupation of territories, when the rail workers were taken prisoner, or after return to Altsasu, as soon as they presented themselves to the authorities. Periods of captivity in camps and battalions, with corresponding movements, were common, given that, according to the regulations, the classification of prisoners in the camps could lead to their being placed in forced labour units (Rodrigo, 2005; Mendiola and Beaumont, 2006; García-Funes, 2022). Thus, Fermín Adán entered the concentration camp at Orduña before crossing half the peninsula and ending up in a battalion setting up in the Madrid districts of Pinto and Carabanchel.⁴² Given the stories of most of the people studied here, it is not unusual that a large number of the concentration camps and labour

35 See, for example, CDMH, AFD, C. 0538, Exp. 36, 154.

36 CDMH, AFD, C. 0419, Exp. 04982; Jimeno Jurío, 2021, pp. 156, 161, 165.

37 CDMH, AFD, C. 0484, Exp. 0C465; Jimeno Jurío, 2020, p. 127.

38 CDMH, AFD, C. 0484, Exp. 0C464.

39 CDMH, AFD, C. 0363, Exp. 02686.

40 CDMH, AFD, C. 0420, Exp. 05025.

41 CDMH, AFD, C. 0354, Exp. 02337.

42 CDMH, AFD, C. 0347, Exp. 02060.

battalions they found themselves in were in the north of the peninsula, in places such as Santoña, Oviedo, Galdakao, Miranda del Ebro, Orduña or Pamplona. However, the existence of other itineraries and the broad mobility occasioned by the penitentiary or concentrationary universe meant that others found themselves in institutions in very distant provinces, such as Jaén, Málaga, or Madrid.

Mobility between institutions and spaces of captivity was also very frequent. After the fall of Santander, and after working on the construction of a railway bridge, José Bengoechea returned to Altsasu with a work certificate and safe conduct. However, the authorities decreed his transfer to a concentration camp in Pamplona and thereafter to Miranda del Ebro, from where he was sent to harvest with a battalion in Granada and Baena (Córdoba).⁴³ Sometimes, the versatility of the battalions in hard labour also promoted mobility to meet wartime and post-war demands. Thus, Vicente Aguirrebengoa claimed that in Workers' Battalion number 65 he had, among other tasks, carried out "services of fortification, tracks, clearing rubble and cleaning liberated provincial capitals and towns, [and] the reclamation of materials."⁴⁴ To all of this we should add that many rail workers entered the prisons of Pamplona, Vitoria-Gasteiz or the 'Tabacalera' prison in Bilbao. Those who specified periods of captivity were referring to periods that could last longer than eighteen months.⁴⁵ A good number of the rail workers studied here managed to return to Altsasu but on occasions only for a short time, and after long journeys. On seeking to return to work with the company, the dossiers reveal that many remained in a situation of provisional or conditional liberty. Many others, as we have seen, were arrested upon presenting themselves at Altsasu. Independent of the outcome of the processes of dismissal and repression to which they were simultaneously subjected, their eventual return to work was met with suspicion, close oversight and a degree of control typical of occupied Spain in the post-war years (Gómez Bravo and Marco, 2011; Pérez-Olivares, 2020). Juan Zabalo, for example, had made his way to Altsasu after spending time in various camps and battalions. The reports on him, in addition to confirming that he was subject to provisional liberty, show that the authorities did not stop watching him. As such, in the charges that were put together against him in January 1940, it was claimed that "even now he allows himself protests against the New Spain, just as he has criticised other co-workers of similar ideas for not following his example of fleeing from the Nationalist zone." He ended up being condemned to six months and one day of prison by a military court.⁴⁶

For many escapees, even when readmitted to work as rail workers, the outcome of their workplace dismiss-

sal proceedings meant they could not return to live in Altsasu. Just three of the escapees recovered their positions without suffering any form of sanction. A third—of whom a good number did not even formally seek reinstatement—were definitively dismissed from service. Some had already made the move and were employed in other towns, while the fate of others was unknown. More than half (some 54%) endured, among other punishments, a "forced relocation with disqualification from requesting another residence or destination for a period of five years." This punishment was deliberately envisaged in the law of dismissals of 19 February 1939 and effectively entailed exile from the job market. The employees, who had participated in a collective flight, and in many cases were friends and had shared work and activism over many years, were dispersed, and some of the members who were considered most problematic were removed from the workforce. Their new workplaces—which were rarely the same and often moved them significantly away from their place of origin—were spread out across provinces such as Barcelona, Tarragona, Valencia, Madrid, Oviedo, León, Santander, Valladolid or Palencia.

CONCLUSIONS

The Spanish Civil War and its aftermath were the setting for intense political violence, at a national level as well as in Navarra. Even though scholars have shown that violence has an intimate and multifaceted relationship with forced population displacements, few studies have explored the interrelationship between these phenomena for the Spanish Civil War. This lacuna is particularly noticeable in the case of internal displacements. The present work contributes to this field of study through analysis of the displacement of the rail workers of Altsasu during the Spanish Civil War and its immediate aftermath. It is supported by the dossiers of workers' dismissals in order to create a case study of the features that characterised displacements of a professional group involving various peculiarities. First, this was a trade characterised by a high degree of internal cohesion. Second, the rail workers resided in a border area, industrial in character and with a long history of political and union mobilisation. Finally, this early and preventative displacement took place in the context of fear and uncertainty generated by the imminent arrival of the military rebels.

The study offers various conclusions with respect to the nature of the escapee and the later collective displacements. Documentary evidence has allowed us to confirm that at least 22% of rail workers whose records have been preserved were part of a massive displacement recorded in the area in the days that followed the coup. Their flight ran parallel with those of other people who, throughout the rest of Navarra, sought to escape possible reprisals in the first moments of the war. These absences were, in the main, of a preventative and temporary nature but the progress of the coup and the war meant that they might be prolonged. Written accounts of the varied per-

43 CDMH, AFD, C. 00332, Exp. 01464.

44 CDMH, AFD, C. 0300, Exp. 00250.

45 CDMH, AFD, C. 00342, Exp. 01829; AIMP; Leg. 38, orden 2182.

46 CDMH, AFD, C. 00334, Exp. 01529; AIMP; Leg. 32, orden 1931. See also Urrizola (2017, p. 305).

sonal or social motivations that could prompt these displacements underline two central contextual features. On the one hand, anxieties regarding the foreseeable violent actions of the rebel army drank deeply from experiences of repression in the socio-political conflicts of the preceding years. In turn, the initial violence of the rebels and the circulation of plausible information and rumours about their aggressive performance in the first days fed into the rail workers' worst fears, ensuring not only that flight would take place but also that its rate would begin to accelerate. Three-quarters of the rail workers were active in political or union organisations across a broad spectrum of the left. Their stories fit neatly with those explanations which posit that political sympathies are a key factor to consider in predicting displacements. At the same time, our analysis shows that flight was a markedly collective experience, as much in its preparation as in going through with it. Information and plans for escape circulated through social, family, neighbourhood, workplace, or union circles, and many stated having made the decision in light of the actions of the rest of their neighbours.

If departure united the rail workers studied here, their later trajectories also shared many elements. The maps presented here offer a geographical snapshot of the most common patterns of displacement. They show that these movements were not isolated journeys but rather they often constituted multi-stage journeys, in which circumstances obliged our protagonists to add new stops. In many cases, there is no information about the itineraries of the escapees, or all that we can verify is that the flight was brief, confined to local areas, and the return was immediate. Even if these wartime journeys were forged through numerous personal and collective decisions, the coup and the war served to limit the available options. All those who continued their journey beyond the first few days and the neighbourhood surrounding Altsasu passed into Gipuzkoa. The retreats prompted by the Gipuzkoa campaign meant that the rail workers had two possible routes forward. Three of them crossed into France after the fall of Irún and were taken afterwards to Catalonia along with hundreds of refugees. The rest continued their withdrawal towards the west and found themselves at the mercy of the advance of rebel troops during the northern campaign. Most got as far as Bilbao, while others kept going until the capture of Cantabria and Asturias during 1937, or later made it to France. Their professional activities and their enlistment in military units were additional spurs to mobility, and there were some who ended their wartime path in places as far away as Jaén or Extremadura.

In many cases, capture by the rebel authorities or the end of the war did not signify the end of the line for the rail workers. Analysis remains to be done on forced displacements or restrictions of the mobility of the population within the ambit of Francoist repression. In particular, there is room for studies that engage with these displacements alongside those population movements which preceded the repression. The present study contri-

butes to unravelling the long twists and turns—often never coming to an end—in the road home for those who had fled and were subjected to classification, suspicion, investigation, and repression. It shows, in turn, that unplanned population movements can be included amongst the varied features of repression but also that movements could constitute, in and of themselves, a form of regulated punishment. Thus, freedom of movement for many of the rail workers studied here would be limited by means of their internment in prisons, concentration camps, or work battalions. The captives would see themselves subject to several relocations, and some ended up in punitive institutions in very distant provinces. Finally, the result of the workplace purges of more than half of the escaped rail workers involved “forced relocation of residence”, a practice similar to penal exile. As a result, groups who had taken part in the social, economic, and political conflicts of the preceding years were isolated and dispersed. Often, these movements were the final consequence, and prolongation, of their initial displacement. For this reason, even if many who had not fled suffered similar forms of repression, the initial decision to flee became a serious charge through which accusations against rail workers were made even worse.

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