



THE TORRERO CEMETERY: A PLACE OF MEMORIES

The remains of several thousand people killed during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 and under the dictatorship of Franco lie in this cemetery. We remember them today, after decades of silence and neglect, offering information about where they were executed and the graves in which they were buried. And along with that past, the memories of the victors of the Civil War also appear, who honoured with monuments and commemorative plaques only their own dead, only the "heroes and martyrs fallen in the Glorious Crusade". They are different memories of that war and of the long post-war period – some omnipresent, while others silenced. There are six different locations that evoke the time of the forgotten and the remembered from July 1936 until November 2010.

FUNERARY ART WALKING ROUTE

The Torrero Cemetery comprises an excellent collection of artistic production – both from local artists and those from farther afield – dating from the last third of the 19th century until today. It includes outstanding examples of architecture and sculpture, which have converted it into a space for art.

From these, 25 enclaves have been selected (plus one as an introduction) which offer the most interesting examples of the funerary sculptural production conserved in the cemetery and of the architectural types found here. Some of them are also authentic monuments to the memory of outstanding citizens from different spheres of local or national life.

We will see the works of Ponzano, Lasuén, Clarasó, Palao and Bueno and large and "small" buildings by Fernando and José de Yarza, Felix Navarro, Ricardo Magdalena, Miguel Ángel Navarro and Marcelo Carqué, among others, in a selection that is only limited by the natural restrictions of time and space for a walking tour.

TORRERO CEMETERY

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Funerary complex

SERFUTOSA
Servicios Funerarios de Torrero, S.A.
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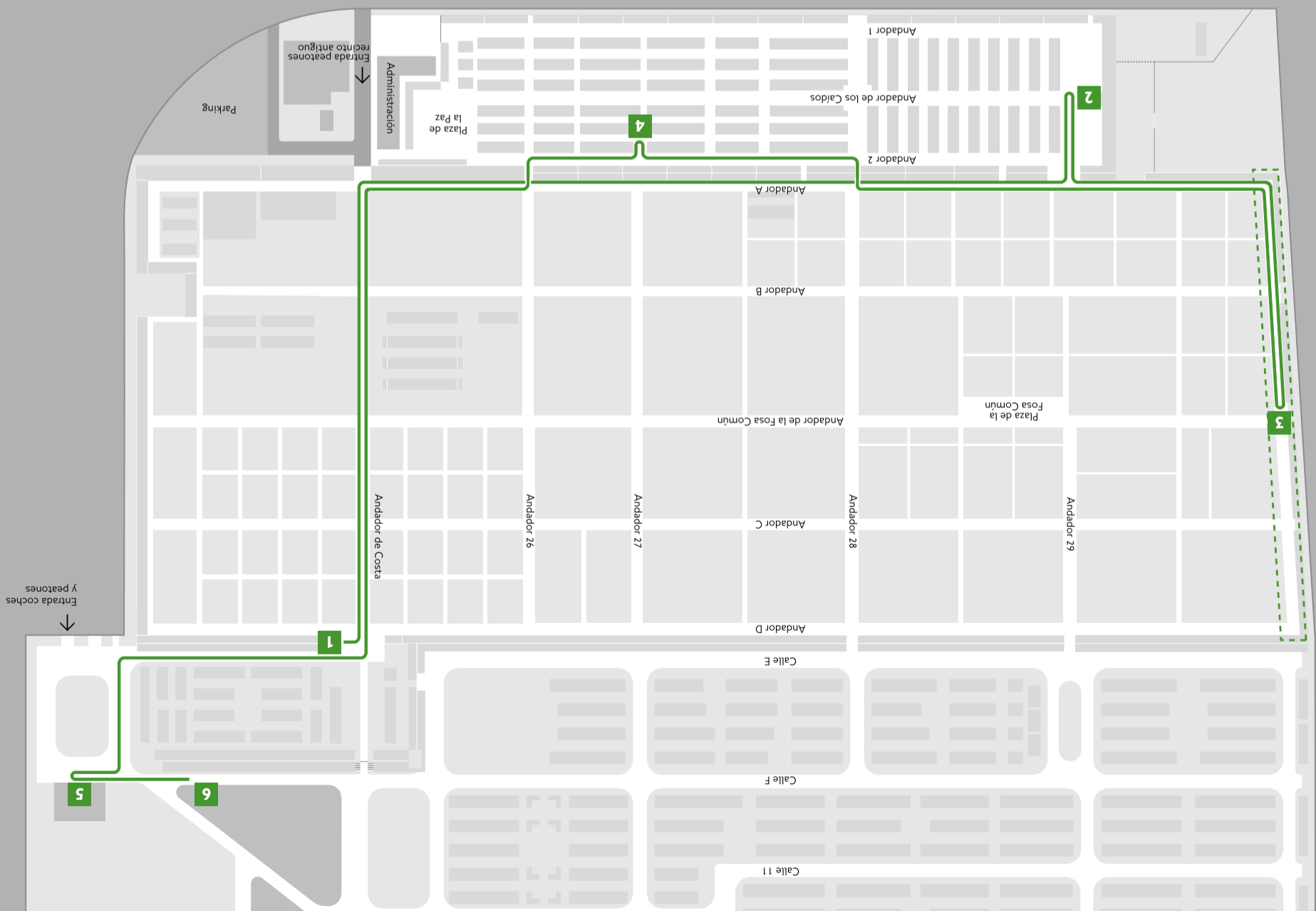
TORRERO CEMETERY
WALKING ROUTES

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1. EXECUTION SITE

From the first moment the military uprising began in Zaragoza on the morning of July 1936, the new authorities put a selective repression into effect to eliminate their political and ideological enemies. At first, in the months that followed the uprising, the detained did not appear before military tribunals or war councils and, after they were executed, their bodies were left abandoned on the banks of the Imperial canal, in the open air of Valdespartera or in the rural neighbourhoods that surrounded the capital.

Some months later, once the military courts were in operation, most of the executions took place at the back wall of the cemetery, next to the mausoleum of Joaquín Costa, in a ritual that was repeated time and again until August 1946. The accused came from the nearby and then newly built Torrero jail, which was opened by the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera in October 1928, and were transported to the wall by bus in the early morning hours. A priest went with them. They were bound and placed in a row facing the wall. After the shots of the firing squad left them lying on the ground, the priest would give them absolution and administer extreme unction before the lieutenant in charge came forward and delivered the coup de grace.



2. CHAPEL OF THE FALLEN

From the start the Catholic Church called the Civil War a “crusade for religion, for the homeland and for civilisation”. And during the war, on Franco’s side, the military chaplains and bishops dedicated numerous offerings and funeral ceremonies to the “Martyrs of the Crusade”, to fallen combat soldiers at the front and to civilians killed in the republican rearguard.

At the end of the war, the churches and cemeteries were filled with the memories of the victors. According to figures supplied by the Zaragoza city council in

different places in this cemetery there are 3,936 people buried who “fell in the Liberation Crusade at the front and in the hospitals of Aragón”. On 14 July 1942, the Municipal Assembly agreed to build a “religious chapel” and two blocks of niches, one on each side, to collectively honour “those who died in the Glorious Crusade”. The work was allocated a year later and, due to budget problems, was not finished until 1945. The expenses of exhuming the bodies and moving them to the niches were paid for by the municipal corporation. During the first few months of 1961, the remains of almost all of those victims, 3,560 to be exact, were moved to the Valley of the Fallen, which had been inaugurated two years before on 1 April 1959.



3. GRAVES

The bodies of most of the people executed at the back wall of the cemetery next to the mausoleum of Joaquín Costa were buried at that site, under the walkway of block 4, in two big trenches 500 metres long by two or four metres wide. As can be seen in the minutes of a session barely three weeks after the military uprising on 5 August 1936, when dozens of people had already been killed, García Belenguer, named councilman of the new city council by the rebels, requested that compressors be brought to the cemetery “to verify as quickly as possible the trench excavation work”. The victims lay here, forgotten, and no

authority did anything to remove them and give them a decent burial until February 1979, when the exhumation began of the remains, which were found in boxes stacked one on top of another in several rows. The remains of approximately 2,700 victims were recovered, all of them executed during the war and post-war period. Except for the remains of 175 people from Navarra and Rioja who were killed by Falangists in the voluntary military faction called the Segunda Bandera de la Legión Sanjurjo and whose families could remove them after the exhumation authorised by the then mayor Miguel Merino, all of them were moved to a common grave on the walkway of the fallen. The first mayor of the democracy, Ramón Sainz de Varanada, elected in April of 1979, order the construction of a simple monument there in their memory, a stone plaque with a monolith on which this inscription was engraved: “For all those who died for freedom and democracy, 1936-39 and in the post-war period.”



4. MONUMENT: “FOR ALL THOSE WHO DIED FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY, 1936-39 AND IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD”

Here lie the remains of 2,500 people executed at the back wall of the cemetery alongside the mausoleum of Joaquín Costa during the Civil War and in the first eight years of the dictatorship under General Franco. They were brought here after they were discovered in two large graves in 1979 under the walkway of block 4 where they had remained hidden for four decades. In the Spain of that time, recently released from the dictatorship, nothing was done to identify them, find their families or give them a decent burial and the remains,

with the exception of those killed by the Segunda Bandera de la Legión Sanjurjo, were moved to this common grave, buried once again in silence. Ramón Sainz de Varanada, the first democratically elected mayor after the death of Franco, wanted to rescue all these forgotten victims and ordered the erection of this monument, unveiled on 1 November 1980, in memory of “those who died for freedom and democracy, 1936-39 and in the post-war period”.



5. MONUMENT: “FOR THE HEROES AND MARTYRS OF ZARAGOZA: FALLEN IN THE FREEDOM CRUSADE, 1936-39”

The decree of General Franco of 16 November 1938, before the Civil War had ended, proclaimed that 20 November would be an annual national “day of mourning” in memory of the execution on that day of José Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1936. The decree established “in keeping with an agreement with the authorities of the Church”, that “the walls of every parish will carry an inscription containing the names of their Fallen, whether in this Crusade or whether victims of the Marxist revolution.”

This was the beginning of the placement of plaques in churches and of the construction of commemorative monuments to the fallen. By the end of the war, Spain was filled with the memories of the victors. In Zaragoza, in 1941, the mayor at the time, Francisco Caballero, proposed “eternalising the memory of our best” and one year later, the municipal corporation held a design competition for the erection of this funerary monument. After several unviable project proposals, due to their ambitious and very costly construction, this monument topped by a great cross was finished in 1954 and was placed in Plaza del Pilar, where the fountain of Hispanidad today stands, dedicated “For the heroes and martyrs of Zaragoza: fallen in the Freedom Crusade, 1936-39”. There, every 20 November until the end of the dictatorship, an event was held in homage to those “fallen in the Crusade”, in which the leading authorities of the National Movement participated. When the Plaza del Pilar underwent remodelling in 1990, the Urban Planning Department of the Zaragoza City Council proposed preserving the monument, moving it here to the main entry of the Torrero cemetery.



6. MEMORIAL: FOR THE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE UNDER FRANCO (1936-1946)

In July 1936 a significant part of the Spanish army took up arms against the republican regimen that had been democratically installed in 1931. The military uprising was victorious in the city of Zaragoza and from the first moment obedience to the law was replaced by the language of arms, disdain for human rights and the perpetration of acts of violence. After the war the executions continued for nearly another decade.

In this place of remembrance, built in the spirit of democracy through the unanimous agreement of the members of the Zaragoza City Council on 25

September 2009, appear the names of 3,543 victims of that repression, 3,096 who fell during the Civil War and 447 who died in the post-war period until 20 August 1946. At first, in the months that followed the uprising, the detained did not appear before military tribunals or war councils and, after they were killed, their bodies were left abandoned on the banks of the Imperial canal, in the open air of Valdespartera or in the rural neighbourhoods that surrounded the capital. A few months later with the military courts in operation, most of the executions were carried out at the back wall of this cemetery alongside the mausoleum of Joaquín Costa.

Information on these victims comes from civil death registries, the Torrero cemetery registry, court records and military archives. The count of these 3,543 victims was possible thanks to the research done by the historians Julián Casanova, Ángela Cenarro, Julita Cifuentes, M^a Pilar Maluenda and M^a Pilar Salomón and published in the book *El Pasado Oculto. Fascismo y violencia en Aragón (1936-1939)* (The dark past: fascism and violence in Aragón (1936-1939)).