

Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V.

Abstract

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The *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V.* is a humanitarian organization. They apply themselves by order of the Federal Republic taking care of registering the German war dead overseas and to acquire and to take care. The German Public Alliance advise relatives in any case of war grave care and they supervise public and private sites, they support the international cooperation and assist within the sector of war grave care and foster the encounter of young people at the last resting-place of the death.

Today the *Volksbund* includes 1.6 Million members and contributors. With their contributions and bounties as well as the income from house and street collections, which take place every year, the *Volksbund* finance their own activities by approximately 90 percent. The rest is covered up for public capital of the federation of the countries.

The non-commercial organization was founded December 16, 1919 by acting from necessity. The juvenescent imperial government was neither political nor economical in a position to take care of the graves of the soldier's killed in action. That was the main assignment the *Volksbund* was devoted to, which was understood as a citizens' action committee. Until beginning of the thirties, the *Volksbund* expanded numerous war graves. After 1933 it was synchronized. The construction of the military cemetery of the second world war was undertaken by the grave care service of the armed forces.

Not until 1946 the *Volksbund* could take up their humanitarian activity. In a little while, they managed to construct more than 400 war gravesites in Germany. In 1954 the Federal Republic commissioned the *Volksbund* seeking the German soldier's graves overseas to protect and to maintain.

Acting within the scope of bilateral agreements, the *Volksbund* started their occupation within Europe and Northern Africa, being in charge of 827 war gravesites within 45 countries including about two million war dead soldiers. More then 10,000 volunteers and 529 full time employees fulfil the various activities of the organisation today.

After the political turn within Eastern Europe the countries of the erstwhile Eastern Bloc were included by the *Volksbund*. Approximately three million German soldier's had lost their lives in the erstwhile Eastern Bloc in world war II. i.e. more then twice as much as rest on the war gravesites in the West, which assigns the *Volksbund* immense difficulties: Various, of the more then 100,000 graves are difficult to find, had been destroyed, had been overbuilt or had been plundered.

Regardless the *Volksbund* took care, fixed and constructed more then 300 cemeteries of world war II and the 190 grounds out of world war I in Eastern, Central and South Europe. Thereto rank 51 central accumulative cemeteries.

28 grounds are under construction or are mended currently. Approximately 546,000 war dead has been put into another bed.

The *Volksbund* founded the beneficence named (“Gedenken und Frieden”) “Remembrance and Peace” to guarantee long-term safeguarding.

The *Volksbund* enshrines the remembrance of the war dead by constructing and conserving the cemeteries. The huge burial grounds remind the people of the past and confront them with the consequences of war and violence.

To these purposes the *Volksbund* conveys trips to war graves and organizes national and international youth camps for caring and maintaining military cemeteries and it informs schools and school recreations. Motto of these activities: “Reconciliation above the graves”. Further the alliance founded meeting places and places for education for teenagers close to four cemeteries, where school classes/groups and youth groups come upon ideal conditions for peace pedagogical projects.

The *Volkstrauertag* (day of national mourning in Germany), which happens to be every year in November, is arranged by the *Volksbund* nationwide and solemnized by important political and social bodies as well as the German population. That day is a day of remembrance and a demand for peace.