Helmut Kohl and François Mitterand in Verdun (September 22, 1984)

Abstract

On September 22, 1984, seventy years after the start of the First World War, French president François Mitterrand and chancellor Helmut Kohl participated in a memorial service for fallen soldiers at Verdun. The Battle of Verdun (February–December 1916) had claimed the lives of more than 700,000 soldiers and came to symbolize the horror of war for both the Germans and the French. A catafalque with French and German flags was laid out in front of Douaumont Ossuary, which contains the remains of 130,000 fallen soldiers. As the national anthems of both countries played, Mitterand and Kohl joined hands—a gesture of friendship symbolizing the lessons learned from a frightful past.

Source

Source: Original caption: Chancellor Helmut Kohl (right) and French president François Mitterand (left) sealed Franco-German friendship in 1984 with a joint commemorative ceremony for the war dead at Verdun. Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Fotodienst 1 – 1985, Nr. 1865. IN-Press/ Bundesbildstelle.

Courtesy of the German Information Center

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