

Outrage as thousands of children run over the graves of fallen soldiers from WWI's Battle Of Verdun in stunt organised by German filmmaker during 100th anniversary commemorations in France

- Thousands of children ran across the graves of soldiers who died in the First World War's Battle of Verdun
- Some 330,000 soldiers, mainly French and German troops, died on the battlefield at Verdun in 1916
- The 3,400 children ran among the graves during commemorations, as part of a stunt by German filmmaker

By PETER ALLEN FOR MAILONLINE

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Images of thousands of laughing children jogging through one of the most sacred Great War battlefields in the world have caused outrage.

They were taken on Sunday during commemorations at Verdun - scene of one of the bloodiest battles in military history.

The Battle of Verdun between German and French troops lasted over 300 days, and saw the deaths of more than 300,000 soldiers on both sides in 1916.



Outrage: Thousands of children and teenagers took part in the stunt at the French National cemetery outside the Douaumont Ossuary during a remembrance ceremony to mark the centenary of the battle of Verdun



The stunt took place on during commemorations at Verdun - scene of one of the bloodiest battles in military history, where some 330,000 soldiers lost their lives most of them French and German troops, in 1916



Some 3,400 children ran among the graves of soldiers who died in the battle of Verdun as part of a stunt choreographed by German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff, who argued that he was 'trying to depict the chaos of the battle'

But on Sunday, as French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel paid tribute to the fallen, many said the 'commemorative run' was in poor taste.

It saw some 3,400 children from France and Germany ran among the graves at Douaumont, a village that was completely destroyed during the Battle of Verdun.

The stunt was choreographed by German filmmaker Volker Schlöndorff, who insisted he was trying to depict the chaos of the battle.

But National Front MP Marion Marechal-Le Pen said it 'violated the honour of our ancestors' and displayed 'immense contempt' for the unknown soldiers in the area.



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© AFP/Getty Images

Show of respect: French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel pay their respects at a German cemetery in Consenvoye, northeastern France on Sunday



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© AFP/Getty Images

Criticised: Many said the 'commemorative run' on Sunday was in poor taste and disrespectful to the fallen soldiers



Hitting out: French politicians in particular slammed the event, with National Front MP Marion Marechal-Le Pen said it 'violated the honour of our ancestors'

Ms Marechal-Le Pen, granddaughter of National Front founder Jean-Marie Le Pen, was joined by politicians from both Left and Right who complained about the 'bad taste' and 'lack of respect for the heroes of Verdun'.

Thousands of British people, including members of the Royal Family, will arrive in France in July to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme.

The Somme campaign was launched to take pressure off the besieged French at Verdun, as they were pulverised by German attacks supported by murderous cannon fire.

The Somme military battlefields are, like those all over France, viewed as sacred ground, and usually treated with honour and respect by all visitors.



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The run took place as the 100th anniversary of the horrific World War I battle was held



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For the cameras: The run, which involved both French and German teenagers, was filmed by Mr Schlondorff

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What persuaded these people to engage in this activity? Were they incapable of saying no?

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- [Dereckjames](#), West Sussex, United Kingdom, 42 minutes ago

A pathetic attempt by a nobody to get some recognition irrespective of the emotional hurt it caused!!

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- [Shortie](#), London, about an hour ago

Well, the parents of the children involved clearly didn't have an issue.

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- [John Anderson](#), Cambridge, about an hour ago

Totally unacceptable on every level. Appalling behaviour by so-called civilised people. A cemetery is not a playground but it says a lot about the German mentality.

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Why didn't they use their own war graves?

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- [Existencial](#), SAN JUAN, United States, about 2 hours ago

Children? This are young and adults, what the hell is going on here!?!?!?

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- [Existencial](#), SAN JUAN, United States, about 2 hours ago

Children? This are young and adults, what the hell is going on here!?!?!?

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ajara, Amsterdam, Netherlands, about 2 hours ago

Indefensible. Show some respect.

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calcot, Manchester, United Kingdom, about 3 hours ago

Its not the point that there dead and it cant hurt them, for gods sake its about RESPECT.

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schnurli, zenda, Austria, about 4 hours ago

I doubt if the occupants are bothered about this as, with a bit of luck, they're somewhere else!

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