

# MailOnline

## Dignity at last for the German soldiers killed in desperate battle against the Russians and never given a proper burial

- Search aims to give as many as 200 missing soldiers proper funerals
- Body was uncovered during dig in German town of Klessin
- Soldiers died in the battle of the Seelow Heights in the final days of the Second World War

By [David Baker](#)

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**Excavation: Guido Lewandowski, a member of VBGO, digs out the remains of a German soldier at a former army headquarter in Klessin, Germany**

The remains of a German soldier killed during the Second World War have been unearthed during an excavation by volunteers dedicated to giving dignified burials to the war dead.

Bones and personal belongings were dug up during the excavation near the eastern German town of Klessin, which lies about 50 miles east of Berlin.

The area around the small town which lies close to the Polish border was the place of a battle between German and Soviet forces between February and March 1945 - part of the final push into Germany known as the Battle of Berlin.

As many as 200 of the soldiers who were part of the conflict are still missing today - instigating the dig.

The excavation was carried out by members of The Association for the Recovery of the Fallen in Eastern Europe who have been carrying out digs to help identify those killed in both the First and Second World Wars.

Known in Germany as Vereins zur Bergung Gefallener in Osteuropa or VBGO, the group is made up entirely of volunteers, many of whom are from Russia, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and the US.

Since they were founded in 1992 the group has recovered more than 7,000 sets of remains all over Europe.

But due to the level of decomposition they are only able to identify around 25 per cent of those discovered.



**Discovery: An old German 'Wehrmacht' helmet lays on a pile of soil as members of the Association for the Recovery of the Fallen in Eastern Europe dig in Klessin**



© AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Findings: Personal belongings including glasses were also discovered during the groups most recent dig**

The group have dug up the remains of a number of nationalities and they state: 'We are not looking for soldiers of the Wehrmacht, not for U.S. GI's, Marines, soldiers of the red army or Polish Military- not for infantry soldiers, sailors or airmen- not for good or bad.

'We are looking for people - sons, fathers, brothers.'

The not-for-profit association has now carried out 100 searches since they were formed 20 years ago and now has more than 200 members.

The dig in Klessin, which belonged to a defence line during the Battle of Seelöw Heights, was the seventh carried out this year, following excavations in Poland and Russia.

The area was defended by 800 German soldiers, against three Soviet-divisions during the war.

The overall offensive saw the Germans outnumbered by almost ten to one, as a million soviet soldiers took part in the final push that hastened the end of the Second World War.



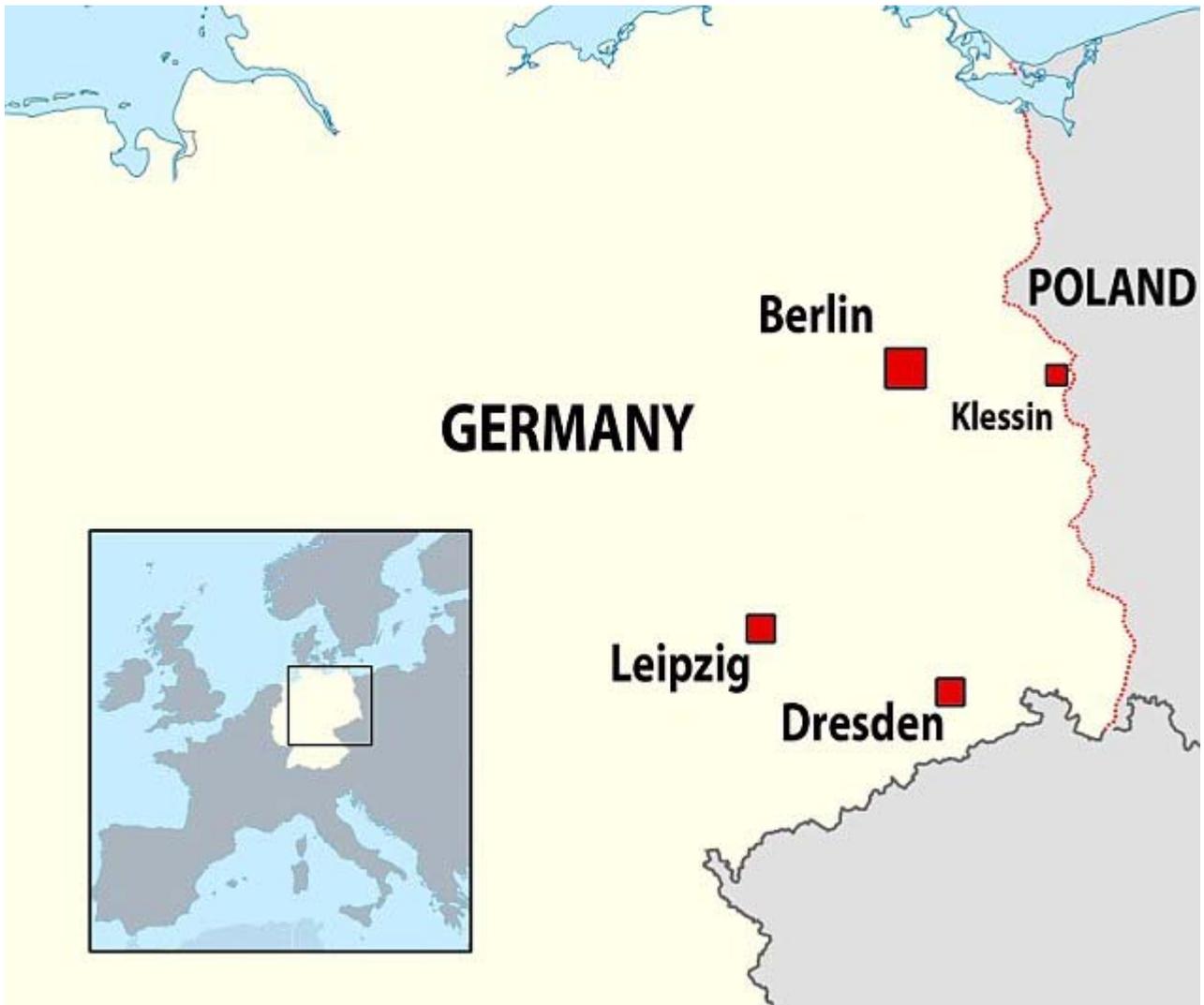
© Wikipedia

**Fire power: Soviet artillery bombard German positions during the battle for the Seelow Heights**



© EPA

**It is thought there are more than 200 soldiers in unmarked graves around the small town, which was the scene of battle during the Second World War**



Klessin lies around 50miles east of Berlin. when the German defences fell, it left a clear path to the capital for the Soviets

## THE BATTLE THAT BEGAN THE FINAL PUSH INTO BERLIN



A statue in Eastern Germany that commemorates Battle of Seelow Heights

The Battle of the Seelow Heights (fought over three days, from April 16 to 19, 1945) was a part of the one of the last assaults on large entrenched defensive positions of the Second World War,

Known as Seelow-Berlin Offensive Operation (which lasted until May 2, 1945), this battle is often incorporated into the Battle of the Oder-Neisse - only the opening phase of the Battle of Berlin, which was the name given to the final push of the Soviet forces into the German capital at the end of the war.

Seelow Heights was where the most bitter fighting in the overall battle took place, but it was only one of several crossing points along the Oder and Neisse rivers where the Soviets attacked.

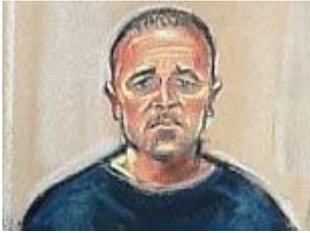
Close to one million Soviet soldiers, commanded by Marshal Georgi Zhukov, attacked the position known as the 'Gates of Berlin'. They were opposed by about 110,000 soldiers of the German 9th Army, commanded by General Theodor Busse.

By the end of 19 April, the German Eastern Front line had ceased to exist. All that remained were pockets of resistance, and the road to Berlin was wide open for the final assault.

Four days later the capital Berlin was encircled and the Battle of Berlin entered its last stage. Within two weeks, Adolf Hitler was dead and the war in Europe was effectively over.

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A worthwhile thing to do. It is a shame that the governments that sent these young men to die, did not care enough to recover their bodies.

- [JD](#) , London, 01/10/2012 14:23

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That's excellent, I've just had a look on their website - fantastic work and also very interesting!

- [Carrick85](#) , United Kingdom, United Kingdom, 01/10/2012 13:52

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Sadly, one look on facebook and on ebay where many grave relics are being sold, (rings and full german dog tags) will tell you that many are dug by unscrupulous grave robbers. At least these soldiers will have the dignity of a grave.

- [Kate](#) , York, United Kingdom, 01/10/2012 11:15

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their relatives should be found and they should receive a full military funeral from the German government

- [Tycho](#) , Holland, United Kingdom, 01/10/2012 10:46

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All soldiers who died in battle for their country deserve dignity in death - good on the Germans for doing the right thing here.

- [Mike](#) , York, United Kingdom, 01/10/2012 10:36

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i wish some of the funeral company's were so caring & considerate as these , after looking at tv documentary recently .....

- [js](#) , berks uk, 01/10/2012 09:46

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If you read the book The Fall of Berlin you will understand there are thousands upon thousands of unrecovered remains around the Seelow Heights area, war has no respect for the dead

- [pompeyboy](#) , Portsmouth, 01/10/2012 09:46

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Can you imagine the remains of your grandfather, uncle, or brother being recovered 70 years after they went missing? Incredible, well done men!

- [JustAGuy](#) , Hampton, United States, 01/10/2012 03:29

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All the fallen need a dignified burial. They all had mothers and people who loved them. RIP.

- [Jono from Coogee](#) , Coogee, Australia, 01/10/2012 02:53

Click to rate \_\_ Rating 34

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May he now be able to Rest In Peace!!!!!!!!!! Hope he can be identified so his decedents can be informed!!!!!!

- [William](#) , Up North, United Kingdom, 01/10/2012 00:12

Click to rate \_\_ Rating 242

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