



International Boundary Study

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Belgium – Germany Boundary

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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

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BELGIUM - GERMANY BOUNDARY

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BELGIUM - GERMANY BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

According to official German sources, the Belgium-Germany boundary is 167 kilometers (104) in length, while Belgian sources cite 162 kilometers (101 miles).¹

II. BACKGROUND

The Belgium - Germany boundary, as delimited by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, was declared to be the "historical line" of division between the two states.² Demarcated during the next year, over a century passed before revisions were made. Under the provisions of Articles 31 - 35 of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, the territories of Eupen-Malmedy and Moresnet were ceded to Belgium. In total, 1036 square kilometers (approximately 400 square miles) and 60,000 inhabitants were transferred. Although dissatisfied with the general territorial clauses of Versailles, Germany did not exert political pressure on the new Belgian frontier until World War II. In fact, peaceful negotiations in 1935 led to the transfer to Germany of two small parcels of land near Aachen to permit improvements in the layout of the freight yards.

On May 23, 1940, the Congress of Vienna boundary again came into force with the publication of an edict reuniting Eupen-Malmedy and Moresnet with Germany. The edict was invalidated with the end of hostilities and the territory reverted to Belgian sovereignty.

In the early post-war period both the Netherlands and Belgium proposed to the occupying powers that certain provisional rectifications be made along their boundaries with Germany. The "Working Party on Provisional Adjustments to the Western Frontiers of Germany" approved in 1949 the transfer of seven small parcels of land (20 square kilometers; 500 inhabitants) to Belgium:³

1. Bildchen
2. Lichtenbusch
3. Fringshaus
4. Leykoul
5. Elsenborn

¹ Boundary lengths are usually determined by map measurement and many factors affect the accuracy of the results: 1) the precision of the measuring tool; 2) the experience of the operator, 3) the scale of the map, 4) the degree of generalization followed by the mapping agency, etc. As a result, a certain margin of difference should be anticipated with all measurements. Since all maps are generalized, the larger figure is recommended as being more accurate.

² In actuality the boundary was between the Low Countries and Germany; Belgium was not separated from the Netherlands until almost 25 years later.

³ All of the post-war changes have been with the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

6. Losheim
7. Hemmeres

After a brief period of negotiation, Belgium and Germany signed on September 24, 1956, a "Treaty ... concerning the Rectification of the ... Boundary and Other Questions." The main purpose of the treaty was to solve the technical questions of frontier communications, drainage, and customs control which had been the underlying causes of the 1949 provisional rectifications. The treaty solution was an admirable compromise eliminating irritating inequities with a minimal transfer of territory (see orientation map).

The provisionally transferred areas of:

1. Bildchen
2. Lichtenbusch
4. Leykoul, and
7. Hemmeres

were returned to Germany intact. At Fringshaus (3), a complicated road junction, certain Belgian territory (I) was ceded to Germany while the road south to Konzen (A) was assigned permanently to Belgium as was the Elsenborn salient (B). At Losheim, an adjustment returned Losheim village (6) and the highway to Hollerath to Germany while the section enclosed by the highway and the railroad (C) was ceded to Belgium.

The adjustments became effective on September 10, 1958.

III. TREATIES

In the following discussion, the 19th century treaties are included only for historical background. Their provisions were totally negated by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and subsequent agreements.

A. General Treaty Between Great Britain, Austria, France, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Spain, and Sweden signed at (Congress of) Vienna on June 9, 1815.

The Congress of Vienna treated the boundary between Prussia and the Low Countries as the "historical" boundary. The provisions were placed in effect by treaty (B) below and ran from 1816 to 1919 and from 1940 to 1945.

B. Boundary Treaty Between Prussia and the Netherlands signed at Aachen on June 26, 1816.

This treaty incorporated the detailed delimitation and demarcation of the boundary established in more general terms by the Congress of Vienna.

C. Treaty Between Great Britain, Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia, on the one part, and the Netherlands, on the other, signed at London on April 19, 1839.

The division of the Low Countries was finally effected and the 1815 boundary was separated into two sectors, i.e., Belgian and Netherlands.

D. Treaty of Versailles signed at Paris on June 28, 1919.

The Articles 31 - 35 created an entirely new boundary by detaching Moresnet and Eupen-Malmedy from Germany. Delimitation of the boundary was totally lacking in the normal sense, but provisions for detailed delimitation and demarcation were provided under Article 35.

E. Report of the Belgian - German Boundary Demarcation Commission signed at Aachen on November 6, 1922.

The Report is the definitive document for the precise delimitation and demarcation of the Versailles boundary. The very detailed and technical report was published in the Moniteur Belge of March 7, 1925, as an annex to a law incorporating the ceded territory into the Belgian provincial structure.

F. Treaty Between the Kingdom of Belgium and the German Reich Relative to Effect an Exchange of Territory on the Belgian - German Frontier signed at Aachen on May 10, 1935.

Two small parcels of land, approximately 1.7 square kilometers in extent, were ceded by Belgium to permit an orderly expansion of the Aachen freight yards. The area involved was so small that the boundary representation, except for the largest-scale maps, was unaffected.

G. Report of the Western German Frontier Demarcation Commission - Southern Group - Belgian - German Frontier issued at Arlon (Belgium) on September 9, 1949.

The Report represented the detailed delimitation and demarcation work supplementing the "Communique of a Working Party on Provisional Adjustments to the Western Frontiers of Germany" issued in Paris on March 29, 1949.

Seven parcels of territory (20 square kilometers; 500 inhabitants) were provisionally placed under Belgian administration. The final disposition of the territory was accomplished by the 1956 Treaty cited below.

H. Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Kingdom of Belgium concerning Rectification of the German - Belgian Boundary and other Questions

signed at Brussels on September 24, 1956.

Minor but vexing problems of border administration, customs control, communications and stream pollution had, for a number of years, led to dissatisfaction with specific areas along the boundary. While the provisional rectifications of 1949 alleviated most of the irritating problems, they unfortunately created others of similar magnitude. The territorial provisions of the 1946 treaty represent a good compromise and should eliminate the causes of irritation:

Article 1

"(1) In order to establish a suitable boundary line between the two countries, eliminating irregularities and conforming to local conditions and the requirements of transportation, the High Contracting Parties have agreed upon the following boundary rectifications:

(a) Belgium relinquishes the exercise of governmental jurisdiction over the following sections of territory:

1. The town of Aachen - Bildchen, specifically that portion of its territory situated between boundary markers 1017 and 980 and between the provisional markers of 980/1 and 980/36;
2. The section of the Raeren highway and the forest of Freyen (south of Lichtenbusch) between boundary markers 943 and 920 and the provisional markers 919/1 and 919/55;
3. The highways from Rotgen to Fringshaus and from Fringshaus to Lammersdorf between boundary markers 812, 813 and 776, 775;
4. A portion of the hamlet of Leykoul, specifically the section of territory situated between boundary markers 652 and 648, and along the Breitenbach, from the provisional boundary marker 647/1 through 647/4 to marker 652;
5. The section of Highway L 25 and the triangular wooded tract belonging to Bulling (Bullange) Forest between boundary markers 493, 477/476 as far as marker 451 and the provisional markers 404/63 through 404/75 as far as 404/115;
6. The locality of Losheim, specifically that portion of territory situated between boundary markers 451 and 405 and the provisional markers 404/1 to 404/63;
7. The portion of the locality of Hemmeres between boundary markers

161/160 to marker 150 and the provisional markers 149/1 to 149/24.

(b) The Federal Republic of Germany cedes to Belgium the following Belgian-administered portions of territory:

1. The highway from Fringshaus to Konzen between boundary markers 813 C and 775 D and markers 761 A and 762;
2. The wooded tract between boundary markers 624 and 572 and provisional markers 572/1 and 572/32 (Wahlerscheid Forest);
3. The triangular tract southwest of Highway L 25 at the locality of Losheimer Graben between boundary markers 476 to 451 and a line running alongside the southwest edge of Highway L 25 parallel to the provisional boundary markers 404/63 and 404/75.

(c) Belgium cedes to the Federal Republic of Germany the portion of territory lying north of the highways from Rotgen to Fringhaus and from Fringshaus to Lammersdorf (between boundary markers 812 and 776) as far as the right-of-way of the railway line from Raeren to Kalterherberg (between boundary markers 800 and 787).

(2) These boundary rectifications are shown in detail on the maps attached to this Treaty as Annex 1 (a) to (h)."

IV. SUMMARY

Half-tone reproductions of the original treaty maps are annexed to this study.

Map 1b shows the Bildchen area which was returned to Germany. The boundary, as a result, is identical with the pre-1949 boundary.

Map 1c covers the Lichtenbusch area which was similarly returned to Germany sovereignty. The highway on the border and the Am Todtleger parcel had been under provisional Belgian administration.

Map 1d is of the very complicated road junction of Fringshaus. Before 1949 the three roads had been in Germany while the territory on all sides was under Belgian administration. In 1949 the roads were provisionally transferred to Belgium. The 1958 solution saw the cession of Belgian territory north of the roads and the return of the two east - west segments to Germany. In turn Germany ceded the north - south stretch of highway to Belgium.

On map 1e the return of the small Leykoul salient to Germany is represented. Map 1f

illustrates the return of the Udenbreth - Losheimer Graben road and the Losheim area to Germany as well as the cession of the forest area west of the road to Belgium.

The retrocession of the Hemmeres salient to Germany is shown on map 1g while the final map, 1h, represents the new boundary resulting from the transfer of the Monschau city forest to Belgium.

The remaining segments of the boundary were unaffected by the 1958 rectifications and official Belgian and German maps show these portions accurately at all scales.

Since Article 7 of the Bonn Convention on Relations provides that the final determination of the boundaries of Germany must await a peace settlement of the whole of Germany, these frontier arrangements are necessarily provisional.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared in the Office of the Geographer, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16, Exhibit D.

Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Office of the Geographer, Room 7334, State Department Building, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C. (telephone: Code 182, extension 4276). Unfolded copies of map enclosures may be obtained from the Map Library, Code 182, extension 3322.