Observations: Napoleon.

The situation right after the battle of Ligny.

As the Prussian right wing and parts of the Prussian centre had not been annihilated in the combination as Napoleon had planned it, the French victory at Ligny had not been a complete one. There was yet another element which made situation even worse: the total initial absence of any serious pursuit whatsoever. [1]
In fact, it was not long after the French reserves had broken through the Prussian centre that these very troops suddenly halted on the heights of Brye. After having driven the Prussian right wing from the villages there, the French left wing did the same. It was this situation which allowed the Prussian army to leave rear-guards at both Brye and Sombreffe, while the 3rd Prussian corps was able to assemble around Point du Jour. During the late evening and some time into the night, both armies were *nez-à-nez* on the heights of Brye.
As if this was not enough, the French did not take any efforts to chase these rear-guards away or to cut them off from their main bodies. In fact, the forces in and around Brye covered two army corps which were assembled between Tilly and Gentinnes, some five kilometres further north. Right at that moment, the Prussian army wasextremely vulnerable, having the 1st and 2nd corps between Tilly and Gentinnes, the 3rd near Point du Jour (and later near Gembloux) and the 4th along the Roman road further to the rear.
There could be reasons for Vandamme to halt his troops when they emerged from the villages which they had so long disputed with the enemy, but nor the Imperial Guard, nor Milhaud, nor the divisions of Durutte, Domon or Subervie did make any serious attempts to inflict to the enemy as much damage as they could as it fled back in disorder. In this sense, both Prussian rear-guards performed their duties well: to cover and protect the retreat of the army.
Apart from the fatigue of the infantry in particular, one of the reasons for this absence of even a weak attempt to pursue might be the resistance of the Prussian forces south of the Namur road. [2] Darkness could not have been a real reason for this inexplicable absence either, as the pursuit at Waterloo would show two days later. [3]
The absence of a proper pursuit was one thing, but what was to be of paramount importance later was that the French did not even attempt to stuck to their tail when it fell back from the battlefield of Ligny, thereby allowing Blücher to slip away unseen with his 1st and the 2nd corps. [4] Right then, it had been of prime necessity to ascertain the direction in which the Prussian army had retreated by patroling throughout the whole region, but it was not to be. [5]
The result was that valuable hours of the 17th June had to be used to look for the Prussian army. In itself, this was most unacceptable, but what made it even worse was that this search was strongly biased upon Namur only. This drew patrols in that direction, in stead of other directions as well. It remains a complete mystery why the focus upon Namur as the Prussian line of retreat was so strong, while it was very clear at the very end of the battle that large parts of the Prussian army had fled back across the Namur road to the north, as an inevitable reaction to the attack through the Prussian centre. [6]

The "pursuit" towards Namur.

By daybreak it was Pajol's corps - supported by Berton's brigade - which started what was to be a pursuit along the Namur road towards Mazy and beyond.
Since 1815, there has been a lot of discussion who actually ordered these forces to do this. First of all, it is important to stress here that the mission of this cavalry has been fully obscured by the mission as marshal Grouchy received later that day. Instead, it had a value of its own, and had no connection to Grouchy's mission as he got it later whatsoever.

It is no less than Grouchy himself who has contributed to the twist of truth when it comes down to orders for his cavalry to pursue Blücher. He claims that he went to Fleurus right after the battle to ask for orders; by the time he got there it was about 11 p.m. As Napoleon had no further instructions, Grouchy would have returned to his headquarters. Towards daybreak he got back at Fleurus to ask for instructions again but then the situation hadn't changed. [7]

Though both Le Sénécal and Bloqueville confirm Grouchy's version of these events, they are too much portrayed as a kind of excuse for Grouchy and an accusation towards Napoleon for not having taken the initiative to send out cavalry in pursuit. As such, they are pulled in the overall discussion about Grouchys'activities later in the campaign (see below).

Fact is, however, that the cavalry of Pajol and Berton were sent out by daybreak on orders of Grouchy, simply as he was their superior. [8] Whether Napoleon instructed Grouchy cannot be substantiated, but later that day Napoleon did not make any alterations in their instructions so it was most probably on his instigation. [9]

Whoever ordered the cavalry to follow the enemy, the truth is that it was ordered to do so hours after the battle and that it was focused upon Namur. Why this was remains a mystery, but what is important to state here is that this orientation was apparently approved by Napoleon as no patrols into other directions as well seem to have been sent out throughout that day. [10]

Due to this fixation upon Namur**,** it initially missed the Prussian forces near Gembloux and for that reason the action can not be considered a real pursuit. Let alone the lapse of time which had taken place between the end of the battle and this action, it was more an attempt to locate the enemy. But at the same time this attempt had no general orientation into different directions as coming from and along the Namur road, but one in which it was only through coincidence that Berton learned about an enemy's presence elsewhere, as the one presumed to be along the Namur road.

The capture of guns and bagagges by Pajol upon the Namur road near Mazy is often portrayed as if this was part of a full-scale pursuit, but the fact is that it took Pajol eight hours to cover the distance of about eight kilometres, until he halted near Mazy. Pajol himself also spoke of Prussian forces retreating upon Saint Denis and Leuze, but later this information proved to be incorrect. This situation is another indication that we are actually talking about an attempt to locate the enemy and not of a pursuit in the strict sense of the word, right after a successful battle.

Berton, and with him Exelmans, have been blamed for not informing Pajol about their wheeling left towards Gembloux on the presumption that Prussian forces were there. This would have been a good thing to do, but at the same time it should not be forgotten that there could also have been a role for Grouchy to coordinate this. Secondly, Pajol had a mission of his own: to locate any enemy forces further east along the Namur road.

Exelmans has also been unjustly blamed for not informing Grouchy of his whereabouts. This stems from the fact that the communication between Exelmans and Grouchy has not been properly identified. In fact, Exelmans made three reports: the moment he wheeled towards Gembloux, when he was observing the Prussians there and a third one when when they marched off.

On the 17th of June, Exelmans felt frustrated in two respects. First of all, part of his troops had barely slept because of outpost duties during the night. Secondly, his division had to manoeuvre without any infantry support, thereby paralyzing him in his actions. Other than that, more importantly, his dragoons were not the type of cavalry for the duties assigned to them.

This situation explains Exelmans' caution for just observing and not harassing the Prussians.

In criticisms against Exelmans one should also be aware of the fact that it was only by 7.30 p.m. that he was informed about Grouchy's command, so by the time he stood in front of Thielmann there was no such thing as a possible support of infantry coming up as Exelmans simply could have not a clue where this infantry could be. Now, Exelmans was far too weak to attack

Thielmann successfully and a major confrontation between both Von Thielmann and Von Bülow and Grouchy's forces was non-existant. [11]
This caution is in a lot of ways understandable, but to have Thielmann slip away unseen while Exelmans was in front of him is not. Even though he had no light cavalry, what he at least should have done was to stick to the Prussian forces so as to get an idea where they were heading to. Now it was as what happened when Thielmann slipped away from Point du Jour: some French cavalry followed at a distance, but didn't push through.
Additionally, the report as sent in by Exelmans in the late evening to Grouchy was not very informative. It basically only stated that the enemy had evacuated Tourinnes, but apparently no patrols were sent out in all directions. In that way at least the route the 3rd Prussian corps had taken would have been identified after all.

The farm De l'abbaye at Tourinnes.

The re-distribution of forces.

Grouchy's mission.

Introduction.

First of all, it is important to state again that from the morning of the 16th of June onwards, Grouchy had the command over the right wing, consisting of his cavalry and the 3rd and the 4th infantry corps. This didn't work that way, however, when Napoleon was around in person.
This situation hadn't changed during the morning of the 17th of June when Napoleon was the one who sent the 3rd and 4th corps of infantry to Point du Jour. At that time they still had not formally revolved back to Grouchy's command. By the time however that Napoleon was about to leave for Marbais, the command in its full extent fell back to Grouchy (except for the cavalry of Milhaud and Domon). This change centres around the order which Napoleon issued to Grouchy through Bertrand, an order which from now on will be referred to as the "Bertrand-order." It is for this reason that Bertrand in this order explicitly refers to Grouchy

to the division of Teste which was part of the reserve (6th corps) and which fell under Napoleon's direct orders.

The strategical background of the redistribution of forces and Grouchy's mission.

The Bertrand-order is of a profound importance in order to understand Grouchy's mission. As such, its true value has been grossly underestimated as the document has often been neglected or omitted in the historiography of the campaign altogether. [12]
This probably has to do with the way Grouchy has handled the order right from the beginning. In his early works he does not mention it at all; instead he claims Napoleon only gave him verbal orders when he received his command, no more.
In his first version of the events (1818) Grouchy depicts Napoleon's orders as: "[Napoleon] me donna ensuite l'ordre verbal de prendre le commandement des corps généraux Vandamme et Gérard, et la cavalerie des généraux Pajol et Exelmans, et de me mettre à la poursuite du maréchal Blücher." […]
"il me répéta l'ordre qu'il m'avait donné, ajoutant que c'était à moi à découvrir la route prise par la maréchal Blücher; qu'il allait combattre les Anglais; que je devais compléter la défaite des Prussiens, en les attaquant aussitôt que je les aurais joints, et que je correspondrais avec lui par la route pavée qui conduit du point peu distant de celui près lequel nous nous trouvions aux Quatre Bras." [13]
Later, in 1829, he cites the words from Napoleon as having been: "Mettez vous à la poursuite des Prussiens, complétez leur défaite en les attaquant dès que vous les aurez joints et ne les perdez jamais de vue. Je vais réunir au corps du maréchal Ney les troupes que j'emmène, marcher aux Anglais, et les combattre, s'ils tiennent de côté-ci de la forêt de Soignes. Vous correspondrez avec moi par la route pavée qui conduit aux Quatre Bras." [14]
In later versions slight variations upon these words have been used, but generally they come down to the following instructions: to observe and pursue the Prussians, to complete their defeat, not to lose sight of them and to keep up the communication with the main army. [15]
Basically, these instructions also formed part of the Bertrand-order (see below).
It is inconceivable to suppose that Napoleon would have sent similar orders in such a brief period of time (within an hour) and for that reason the conversation Napoleon had with Grouchy was not as Grouchy describes it. [16]
Instead, Napoleon must have told Grouchy that he was supposed to receive a mission in relation to the Prussian army, but before he would be able to work this out, further information was needed from Exelmans in particular. As an introductory measure the 3rd and 4th infantry corps would move to Point du Jour, and further instructions would follow as soon as this information would become available.
Point du Jour is the point from where the infantry could either move towards Gembloux or Namur. It was then either Grouchy himself who proposed to go to Gérard to meet him in person or that Napoleon sent him there. The question rises what reasons Grouchy could have had to keep silent about the Bertrand order. The answer lies in the so-called objections which Grouchy says he would have raised after he had received instructions during the conversation he claims he had with Napoleon. First of all, he would have mentioned the headstart the Prussian army had on him, having in all probability continued their retreat during the night of the 17th of June and during the morning of the 18th of June. Further, Grouchy would have added that his troops were only able to move late that day, due to the fact that units were scattered, they were preparing their meal and that weapons had to be cleaned and arranged. Other than that, in case the Prussians would have gone towards Namur – which was presumed to be the case - he feared he would get isolated from the main army. [17]

The Bertrand-order is an inconvenient document in relation to these objections: they simply make no sense. They could only be verbally expressed in case Napoleon would have given Grouchy his orders in the same way, but the fact was that he didn't. With that, these objections lose their ground. And if Napoleon did not assign him his mission verbally, how then could he have raised these objections in the same way ? [18]
More importantly, they do not fit into the context of the moment in any way whatsoever. In general, they give the impression of all things which could go wrong and which would then fall back on Grouchy's shoulders. There was no such thing as a burdened mission right from the start. There are also no indications for this in the reports and orders which Grouchy wrote later that day.
The objections are therefore a product of hindsight and have never been uttered by Grouchy at midday on the 17th of June. They have been made up by Grouchy in a way to excuse himself for things which became so important later. In that sense, Grouchy – in his later descriptions - fell for the shadow of hindsight already at the description of the very start of his mission when there was nothing to feel uncomfortable about. In 1842, when the Bertrand order was published for the first time, it did not lead Grouchy to make any excuses for keeping silent about it for so long. Strangely enough, it did not lead to any serious accusations of mendacity on his address either. [19]

It is necessary to enter upon it in further detail, as the Bertrand order was the one under which Grouchy acted until in the afternoon of the 18th of June. The first general goal of Grouchy's mission was to find out what the Prussians were up to. Secondly, it was to pursue them accordingly.
In his instruction to Grouchy to find out what the Prussians were up to, Napoleon saw two possibilities: they could either move away from Wellington, south-east towards the Meuse (Namur) or they could move north-east towards Maastricht in an attempt to link up with Wellington there. For that reason, Grouchy was to reconnoitre in both those directions, using Gembloux as a starting point. [20]
In the first case, there might be a chance that Blücher could return from Namur in order to fall upon the French line of communication. In the second, it was for Napoleon not unlogical to suppose that Blücher would attempt to make another stand deeper into the Netherlands, but now in conjunction with Wellington, for a large-scale battle somewhere between Brussels and Liège, probably in the vicinity of Tirlemont. [21]
Above all, and this is a crucial point in terms of time and space: in both scenarios it also meant for Napoleon that Blücher would not able to act again before at least the 19th of June, either way.
As Napoleon recognized some chance of a junction of his adversaries in the vicinity of Tirlemont, the Bertrand-order at the same time throws light upon Napoleon's idea about Wellington. From his letter of the morning of the 17th of June to Ney, it becomes clear that Napoleon clearly expected Wellington to pull back from Quatre Bras. After all, with the Prussians gone back towards Namur or the north-east, Wellington was left at Napoleon's mercy there. In Napoleon's mind, the most probable direction for Wellington to fall back to was Brussels, or beyond, to seek for a possible junction with Blücher. That is why he expected from Ney to establish himself at the crossroads, or – in case Wellington would be foolish enough to make a stand there after all – that he would support Ney and crush Wellington's army in the act. In any event, either Wellington's defeat at Quatre Bras or his retreat towards Brussels: it was Brussels Napoleon aimed at already from the very beginning of the campaign and now this was no different.
Precise instructions for Grouchy what to do when he would meet the enemy in force are lacking in the Bertrand-order,. Napoleon though makes two points clear to Grouchy: to keep

up a communication with him and to make sure that he would keep his forces well united, while having several routes open to fall back. This tends to indicate that Napoleon on the one hand saw Grouchy as strong enough to harass and impose himself upon Blücher while pursuing him, while on the other hand he took into account that Grouchy might have to fall back upon the main army at any time and from any position.
It is unclear on what strength of Wellington's army Napoleon determined the dividing of his army, but apparently he felt 69.000 were needed to handle with Wellington, if needed. His initial calculation in cavalry was lower as he added the cavalry of Domon and Milhaud to his main army some time later. Apart from where the remains of the Prussian army could be, it is from the evidence available also almost impossible to establish what Napoleon's impression was of its numerical strength after the battle of Ligny. Napoleon himself says about the strength of his right wing that it was "suffisant pour culbuter l'arrière-garde Prussienne dans toutes les positions qu'elle prendrait, presser la retraite de l'armée vaincue et la contenir." Though Napoleon mentions no total Prussian strength, he deemed that some 30.000 men were sufficient to pursue and oppose the Prussian army, independent of their line of retreat. [22]
The strength of Grouchy's detachment is often considered as too strong. This claim is built upon the presumption that he could have acted as a screen to the immediate right of the main army to protect it from a Prussian return there.Yet, this theory – as another product of hindsight - surpasses the very essence of Napoleon's idea of the Prussian whereabouts in time and space.

In the historiography of the campaign, the impression is often given as if there is a direct connection in time between the move of Napoleon towards Quatre Bras and the mission of Grouchy. Yet, there was no such connection.
Right at that moment the forces which had fought at Ligny were indeed split up, but to state that Grouchy then also received his definitive instructions for that day is taking facts out of their context. By the time Napoleon moved towards Ney, he left Grouchy near Brye with his former right wing (enlarged with the division Teste) to await further instructions. The only instruction Grouchy had by then was to move both his infantry corps to Point du Jour as an introduction to further movements. [23]
In reality, he received these instructions for that day through Bertrand and these followed after the news of Exelmans about the Prussian presence near Gembloux had reached Napoleon. This means that if this news would have dropped in later as it did now, Grouchy would have received his mission at a later stage as well.
The idea of Napoleon about the Prussian retreat developed from one as only moving towards Namur (by dawn), to one in which Gembloux could play a role (7 a.m.), and eventually to one in which it actually did play a role (around 11.30 a.m). This process explains the possible directions of the Prussian retreat as expressed by Napoleon in his order to Grouchy: that they either fell back upon Namur (as he originally thought they did) or towards Maastricht (through Gembloux). It also explains why it was only upon the road towards Namur that cavalry was sent off early that morning.

The communication between Grouchy and Napoleon.

By the time Grouchy reported about his situation to Napoleon, Napoleon did not do the same about his own to Grouchy. It meant that by the time the 17th of June ended, that Grouchy did not have a clue where Napoleon's main army was; his basic presumption was Quatre Bras, as Napoleon had told him, but it could also be probably further north towards Brussels. [24]
What was more, the notion which became apparent to the emperor in the course of the day that a major Prussian column had been retreating through St.Géry and Gentinnes towards

Wavre was not forwarded to Grouchy either, probably because of the presumption that Grouchy would already know about this and would be moving there as a result. [25] Eventually, though Napoleon had instructed Grouchy to place a chain of cavalry posts to facilitate the communication between Gembloux and Quatre Bras, it was only on the early morning of the 18th of June that Grouchy ordered general Vallin to do so. [26]

Grouchy and his march to Gembloux.

First of all, it should be repeated that though Grouchy claims that he sent the 3rd and the 4th corps of infantry towards Gembloux on his own initiative, it was according to the Bertrand-order that he did so. [27]
The movements of the 4th corps have been a subject of debate between Grouchy and Gérard. Grouchy, himself being under fire after the campaign of being too tardy in his movements, accused Gérard of having delayed his cops unnecessarily by leaving much later and by marching much slower as he could have done. In taking the time-frames of the marches, however, these were not excessively slow (2.5 kilometres per hour) compared to most other marches in similar circumstances that day. Napoleon's speed on the Brussels road was similar to that one of Grouchy, while the emperor moved over a cobbled road with his infantry. [28] Other than that, the commander of the vanguard of the 4th corps – Hulot - makes it very clear that his unit was immediately following Vandamme's rear-guard. In the arrangement of the positions of both corps on the battlefield, however, one could wonder why the 3rd corps had to leave first and the 4th second. Now, the corps of Gérard had to wait for the one of Vandamme to pass, as in the other situation it might have connected to its rear-guard right away. [29]
Grouchy has been reproached for not having marched in parallel columns when moving towards Gembloux so as to gain time in his pursuit of Blücher. First of all, it should be remarked that Napoleon didn't do so either that day. More important, however, is the fact that this an argument which stems from hindsight as by the time Grouchy moved there, the true state of the situation regarding the Prussian army was unknown to the French leadership. It was believed the Prussians were far away to the east, towards Namur or Maastricht.
Grouchy has also been reproached of not having moved further north towards Wavre that evening and night. [30] Apart from the impossibilities of such a movement in darkness, this criticism is also founded upon hindsight. At the moment his forces reached Gembloux, Grouchy was still in doubt whether he would have to turn with the majority of his forces there, or towards Perwez. His information was such that he decided towards 10 p.m. to march to Sart-à-Walhain first, as a halt for an eventual march upon Wavre or Perwez after all. [31]

Grouchy's performance.

Seen against the background of the Bertrand-order, the question is what kind of information Grouchy received during the day and how he used it. By mid-afternoon he was informed by Pajol that the enemy would be moving back towards Leuze; his latest information from Exelmans had been that a Prussian corps had been in the vicinity of Gembloux, but that it had pulled off to an unknown destination.
By the time Grouchy reached Gembloux he must somehow have been informed, possibly by residents of Gembloux, that enemy's columns would be moving towards Perwez as well. [32]
Grouchy's order to Exelmans from 7 p.m. makes clear that he was in a great hurry to acquire more information about the Prussian whereabouts. It also makes clear that he regarded Exelmans' information as decisive for his further decisions.

In this respect it is remarkable to note why Grouchy did not order him much earlier in a similar way - as he now did at 7 p.m. - right after having received the Bertrand-order. He also even might have used Vallin's division.
With Pajol, the situation in relation to the Bertrand-order was even worse. As Grouchy had received both this document and Pajol's report (dated noon), it was not until 10 p.m. that night that Grouchy actually forwarded the Bertrand-order to Pajol, i.e. to make a strong reconnaissance towards Namur. [33] It is most unfortunate that Exelmans' report of the evening of the 17th of June is unavailable, as this contained the decisive information for Grouchy to decide what to do.
On the other hand, the orders and reports written by Grouchy later show that Exelmans most probably hinted towards Sart-à-Walhain, as this became the extra main focus for Grouchy where the Prussians could have gone to, apart from Perwez and – in a lesser degree – Namur.
It was for this reason that he intended to go there as a halting place for further movements, either further north or further east. Within these three directions where Prussian forces would be moving, Grouchy saw Perwez as the one where the majority of the army was probably moving to. [34] Within the framework of the Bertrand-order, Perwez is on a line towards Maastricht. [35]
At the same time, Grouchy did not exclude that the majority of the Prussian army might move upon Wavre and beyond, possibly to unite with Wellington near Brussels. In that case he saw his own pursuit in that direction as a way of preventing this union. As Grouchy had missed the march of the 1st and 2nd Prussian corps towards Wavre, there was in his mind no such thing as a possible risk of a flank-march as coming from Wavre towards a position of Wellington south of the forest of Soignes. This, in its turn, however, all had to do with the basic concept of the Bertrand-order. [36]
By not being aware of the movements of the 1st and 2nd Prussian corps, Grouchy's idea about the Prussian whereabouts was based upon encounters with (parts of) the other two corps of the Prussian army. While units of the 3rd corps drew his attention towards Wavre, those of Von Bülow did so towards Perwez. Columns of baggage and guns made him also stray towards Namur.
Obviously, Von Thielmann could not know about the lack of knowledge on the French side about the presence of two corps of the Prussian army near Tilly, but fact is that the very halt of his corps near Gembloux triggered Napoleon to issue his Bertrand-order. This, in turn, gave Grouchy a foothold of where the Prussian army might have gone to, particularly when it came became clear that this wasn't Namur. In case Von Thielmann might have moved off much earlier as he did, the French might have pulled towards Gembloux much later.

On the morning of the 17th of June the focus was bent from Namur towards Gembloux as well, and now both Namur and Gembloux gave rise to the impression of where the Prussian army could have gone to (and as it was described in the Bertrand-order): either towards Namur or to the north-east, towards Maastricht. So, in general, these options on the Meuse were much further east as they in reality were, and this concept formed the very basis of the mission as assigned to Grouchy later in the day. The importance of this (incorrect) concept cannot be stressed enough in order to understand future events. [37]
In the historiography of the 17th of June this lack of awareness has led to serious distortions in the description of the events by both Napoleon and Grouchy. While Grouchy did so by initially omitting the Bertrand order altogether and by making up verbal imperial orders and his own objections, it was Napoleon himself who fabricated orders which would have been sent from Le Caillou by 10 p.m. to draw him towards the main army.
In this document Napoleon supposed both Blücher and Grouchy to be at Wavre, while he informed Grouchy that a great battle was to be fought the next day in the position of Mont Saint Jean. The actual order read: "[…] de détacher avant le jour de son camp de Wavres une division de sept mille hommes de toutes armes et seize pièces de canon sur Saint Lambert, pour se joindre

à la droite de la grande armée et opérer avec elle; qu'aussitôt qu'il serait assuré que le maréchal Blücher aurait évacué Wavres, soit pour continueer sa retraite sur Bruxelles, soit pour se porter dans toutes autres directions, il devait marcher avec la majorité de ses troups pour appuyer le détachement qu'il aurait fait sur Saint-Lambert." [38]
The right to exist of this order is not only undone by the context of the ideas on the French side about the Prussians, but also by its formalities: it cannot be found in the register of staff [[39]] and – what is far more important - Napoleon's orders of the 18th of June do not make any reference to it. [40] The fabrication is simply absurd. The sour thing with Grouchy is that by initially omitting the Bertrand-order, he cast away the most important evidence why he was sent the way he was, while it was just this document which was of great significance against the severe allegations made against him, as by the fabrication of verbal orders and his own resulting objections. [41]

Napoleon and Wellington.

As Ney had reported about the action at Quatre Bras by 10 p.m., there is no such thing from Soult about the battle of Ligny towards Ney around the same time. Though Joseph Bonaparte was informed about the victory while the battle had not ended, Ney wasn't. The other morning, Soult wrote to Ney, about eleven hours after the battle: "Monsieur le maréchal le général Flahaut, qui arrive à l'instant, fait connaitre que vous êtes dans l'incertitude sur les résultats de la journée d'hier. Je crois cependant vous avoir prévenu de la victoire que l'empereur a remportée." Soult wrote this down as if his message about the outcome of the battle of Ligny had been sent to Frasnes ages ago, while in reality the words he uses are a poor formulation to cover the fact that he had omitted to inform Ney, also after he had received his report towards midnight. [42] So, due to a breakdown in communication Ney was during the night of the 16th of June and on the early morning of the 17th of June unaware of the outcome of the battle which had raged to his right. It made him uncertain what to do and what to expect. [43] His target was clear: Quatre Bras – yet he did not know what Napoleon expected of him, the more if it seemed that Wellington was preparing to advance. [44]
At the early morning of the 16th of June Napoleon believed he would be able to reach Brussels in about 24 hours. Two confrontations at Ligny and Quatre Bras that day, however, made him change this perception. On the 17th of June, at 8 a.m., Napoleon did not speak a word to Ney about the fate of the Prussian army, but by that time he was under the impression that it was falling back to Namur. As a result, he presumed that Wellington, isolated he was, would evacuate Quatre Bras and fall back north towards Brussels and beyond. In this situation, in the belief he had plenty of time to prepare his advance to Brussels, the emperor allowed himself to use the 17th of June to complete the occupation of Quatre Bras and to re-organize his forces. Later that morning it became clear, however, to Napoleon that part of Blücher's forces seemed to have halted at Gembloux and, what was more, that Wellington still stood at the crossroads. The communication between Ney and Napoleon was of course most important, but a lack of confirmation from Napoleon's end what he had decided after the receipt of Ney's report on the one hand and the caution of Ney on the other delayed French operations on the French left wing.
In his turn, by the time Napoleon decided to move towards Ney (about 10.30 a.m.) his actual information about the Prussian army was pretty scarce, to say the least. Pajol had taken some guns and an immense quantity of baggage, but what counted were military forces. The general feeling was that Blücher fell back towards Namur, but this bit of information indicated that the situation might be different as Napoleon thought it was. [45]
Ney's request for clarity from Napoleon (dated about 8.30 a.m.) crossed Soult's letter which told him that Napoleon would support him in case it was not possible for him to take the crossroads. As it became clear from Ney's report that he couldn't, Napoleon took his

conclusion: he decided to support him to take Quatre Bras by moving along the Namur-road, as he had promised in the letter Soult had written earlier that morning and which Ney had received by 10 a.m. It would not have prevented Napoleon from expressing his dissatisfaction about the delay Ney had expressed in advancing from his position. [46]
By the time the French forces of both Ney and Napoleon developed in strength, Wellington had evacuated the crossroads. As his rear-guard fell back the French took it and a pursuit took place, but this stretched only as far as Genappe. Initially, the French cavalry moved along both sides of the Brussels-road but as it approached Genappe it centred towards this road. After the confrontation with the British cavalry north of the village, actual confrontations were avoided and the pursuit was limited to some skirmishing. [47]
In the process, the French main army was pulled north along the Brussels road not knowing where it would halt for the night. Obviously, this was a direction which Napoleon had planned to take, but in the situation as it developed that evening, the massing of the army along one road resulted in improvised bivouacs. [48] Obviously, the rain which had started to fall by 2 p.m. hindered both armies in their movements.

Final observations.

At this stage of the campaign, after the defeat of the Prussian army at Ligny, in the application of the strategy of the central position, the next step for Napoleon would be to leave a detachment to pursue its survivors and to counter-march with the remainder of his army against Wellington. In the strategy applied so far, the *manoeuvre sur les derrières* against Blücher hadn't worked out, but if he acted swiftly, it could work against Wellington at Quatre Bras, having to face both Ney and Napoleon alone.
Reality was different, however. Though aware of the opportunity, Napoleon's confidence in Wellington's retreat beyond Brussels was such that he did not feel the need to turn to Quatre Bras right away and by the time he did, it proved too late. So, essentially, the result of the strategy of the central position was left incomplete. [49] The occupation of Quatre Bras appeared to be easy after all, but that was not the merit of the French as by the time the French got there only a rear-guard was there to cover Wellington's retreat. [50]
By the very fact that by dawn of the 17th of June Blücher and Wellington were separated, it was *the* chosen chance to finish off with one of them once and for all. This was the very basic and key element on the 17th of June around which everything revolved.
As Napoleon knew about Wellington's forces at Quatre Bras since about midnight through Ney, it should have been upon *him* that the decisive blow should have fallen right in the early morning of the 17th of June. [51] The chance was there if he would act swiftly: to fix Wellington by Ney attacking him in front by dawn, while Napoleon would move with a part of his forces (at least the imperial Guard, the 6th corps and that of Milhaud) along the Namur road or further north towards Genappe to fall upon Wellington's flank and rear. [52]
In the current situation, in his optimism, Napoleon had lost the initiative as the allies had been able to disengage themselves from Napoleon's hands and to concentrate themselves virtually undisturbed there where they had planned to do so. Above all, they had done so with the purpose to fight Napoleon in a position of Wellington's own choosing: the one of Mont Saint Jean. [53] The next day would show whether Napoleon would be able to regain his loss of initiative or not.

As has been shown in former chapters, historiography of the 15th and (part of) the 16th of June has been - and still is - under the strong shadow of the actions at Ligny and Quatre Bras. In a similar way, that of the 17th of June has been - and still is – suffering from the one of the events of the 18th of June. At the same time, chronology of the events has often been portrayed insufficiently or incorrectly. [54]

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[1] Gneisenau, in his report of the 17th of June to the king, says the French followed the army for about half an hour, but this seems quite a lot in relation to the distance as covered by the French in rear of the former Prussian front line.

[2] Cf. Aerts, W. - Etudes etc. Livre IV (manuscript) p.3

[3] Gourgaud gives this as a reason for the absence of a pursuit right after the battle. In: Campagne de dix-huit cent quinze p.60

Though evacuation of the wounded of the French army from the battlefield may not have been a problem, the number of surgeons and their personnel to take care of them was as it was clearly insufficient to cope with their numbers. And if this was not enough, capacity in the hospitals along the line of communication of the army in France was deemed insufficient as well.
Disorder in the army during the night after the battle was another matter of considerable concern, in regard to the Imperial Guard in particular. Men plundered the belongings of locals and many officers did not prevent them from doing so, though the gendarmerie d'élite was there to maintain order as well. In some cases, disorder was such that even the gendarmerie was threatened or insulted. What measures were taken afterwards remains unclear.
Cf. reports of Soult to Davout and those of intendant Daure to Soult and Davout, dated 17th of June.
The fact that detachments of the army corps and of the gendarmerie d'élite were used to evacuate the wounded as well can also be taken from the order as issued by lieutenant colonel Guyardin to general Berthézène, as well as from the reports of Daure.
Cf. reports of intendant Radet. He felt most uncomfortable about the situation.

[4] Von Reiche says: "Merkwürdig bleibt es, dass der Feind unsern Marsch von der Römerstrasse ab auf Tilly nicht bemerkte, auch nachher nichts davon wahrnahm, so dass unser Armeekorps [the 1st] am Morgen in aller Ruhe nach Wavre weiter ziehen konnte." In: Memoiren etc. p.204

[5] Cf. Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.217
Pontécoulant, F.G. de - Souvenirs militaires p.170,210

[6] Ropes believes it was the presence of the Prussian rear-guards at both Brye and Sombreffe which enhanced Napoleon's belief that the Prussian army had moved to Namur or Liège.
Apart from the direction of the last French assault, it would however have been most unlogical for the Prussians to fall back perpendicularly to their front-line (i.e. Namur).
In: The campaign of Waterloo p.203

Damiens believes it was fog which prevented the French from knowing where the Prussian units went, but there is no witness mentioning this phenomenon anywhere and if it would really have been there, then it would have been mentioned somewhere by the French as an excuse for the absence of a proper pursuit. In: Prélude à Waterloo

7. Grouchy. In: Réfutations du livre Gourgaud. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.115
In: Relation succincte etc. p.17
Le Sénécal. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.128

Colonel De Bloqueville asserts that Grouchy was at Fleurus by midnight but that Napoleon was ill in bed. In: Mémoires etc. Vol.IV p.146

[8] Napoleon writes in his memoirs: "le lieutenant général Monthion fut dans la nuit chargé de poursuivre la gauche des Prussiens." These words have been used by historians that Napoleon would actually have reconnoitred to the north (as if this was the *left* flank of the Prussian army) and not only to the east. Other than that these directions do not match, it would be ridiculous to suppose that a member of the general staff would pursue the Prussians with a detachment.
At the same time, Coignet writes: "L'empereur se retira fort tard du champ de bataille et revint au village près du moulin à vent. Là, il fit partir des officiers sur tous les points; deux officiers partirent porter ordre au maréchal Grouchy de poursuivre les Prussiens à outrance, et de ne pas leur donner le temps de se rallier. C'est le comte Monthyon qui dictait ses dépêches par ordre du major général, et les officiers de service partaient de suite." In: Coignet. Les cahiers etc. p.401

If Monthion would have played a role at all, Napoleon most probably sent orders through him to Grouchy towards daybreak to have parts of his cavalry pursue the enemy towards Namur. In: Mémoires etc. p.97

[9] While Napoleon himself is not explicit about this, it is Thiers who claims that it was Napoleon who ordered Pajol "de se lancer, après un peu de repos, sur la trace des Prussiens." In: Histoire du consulat et de l'empire etc. Vol.VI p.467
Grouchy is clear: it was Napoleon who had ordered him to send out cavalry towards Namur. In: Réfutations du livre Gourgaud etc. In: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.174
In: Relation succincte p.17
In: Réfutation d'un long article etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal Grouchy Vol.V p.97

Colonel Biot shifts the responsibility for the initial lack of any pursuit clearly towards Grouchy by defending Pajol in stating that he would have asked Grouchy in vain for orders three times that night and that Pajol then decided to move towards the Namur road himself and that he reported about this to Napoleon accordingly. Obviously this is incorrect as Pajol could never do all this without the actual consent of Grouchy, his immediate superior. In: Campagnes et garnisons p.144

Colonel Matason seriously messes up events by stating that Grouchy received his mission at 11 p.m. on the 16th of June and that it was then that he made his resulting objections. Later, by 1.30 p.m. on the 17th of June, Grouchy would have received the Bertrand-order at Frasnes [!]. In: The Napoleon-Grouchy dispatches etc p.22

[10] Units of Pajol and Exelmans could have been sent out as patrols towards Gembloux and Namur, while those of for instance Jacquinot, Domon or Subervie – as coming from the French left flank - could have been sent out north and north-east.

[11] For this criticism see for instance:
Clausewitz, Von – Hinterlassene Werke etc.p.76-77
Wilson, P.E. - 17th June 1815: a day of delay and missed opportunity p.25
Pollio, A. – Waterloo p.333

[12] Cf. W.O.Morris. The campaign of 1815 p.p.171 In: Millar, S. - My duty is to execute etc.

p.4
Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.217
Due to the absence of Soult the moment it was written, it was not entered into the register of staff. Cf. Notes of Grouchy's son. In: Observations etc. p.160

[13] In: Observations sur la relation etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.117-118

[14] In: Fragments historiques etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.277-278

[15] Other versions as coming from Grouchy read: "Mettez-vous à la poursuite des Prussiens; attaquez-les dès que vous les aurez joints, complétez leur défaite et ne les perdez jamais de vue. Je vais rejoindre le maréchal Ney et livrer bataille aux Anglais, s'ils tiennent de côté-ci de la foret de Soignes.
Toutes les probabilités me portent à croire que c'est sur la Meuse et vers Liège que le maréchal Blücher effectue sa retraite; ainsi dirigez-vous de ce côté. Vous correspondrez avec moi par une route pavée." In: Relation succincte p.19
As a résumé: "de poursuivre, de retrouver et de rejoindre l'armée Prusienne, de la combattre quand il l'aura atteinte et de compléter la défaite de cette armée, et pour arrêter, de concert avec Wellington, les dispositions les plus avantageuses pour combattre Napoleon.[..] de marcher sur Namur, les Prussiens se dirigeant sur Liège et Maëstricht."
Grouchy to the Journal des sciences militaires – In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.479-480

In yet another version, Grouchy states: " Mettez vous à la poursuite des Prussiens; complétez leur défaite en les attaquant dès que vous les aurez joints et ne les perdez jamais de vue. Je vais réunir aux corps du maréchal Ney les troupes que j'emmène et attaquer les Anglais , s'ils tiennent de côté-ci de la foret de Soignes. Vous correspondrez avec moi par une route pavée qu'il montra du doigt, et qui était celle de Namur aux Quatre Bras." Cf. Grouchy, In: Appendice. Campagne de 1815. Pièces officielles etc. p.15
A similar version is in his speech as published in: Allocution du maréchal Grouchy. In: Le maréchal Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 p.117-118 This speech also contains parts of the Bertrand-order, but has no date.
Cf. Pontécoulant, F.G.de - Souvenirs militaires etc. p.176

The fact that Grouchy was of course well aware of the existence of the Bertrand-order can be taken from his letter as published in the Journal des sciences militaires in which he actually incorporates parts of the order into the words as spoken by Napoleon ! In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.482

[16] It is noteworthy to state here that virtually no other eye-witnesses accounts of the conversation are available, except for those of Grouchy himself.

Two persons of Grouchy's staff, his aide de camp Bella and his chief of staff, baron Le Sénécal, do not report directly about the conversation.
Bella cites Napoleon's words to Grouchy, but adds that he took them from Grouchy himself or someone who was there at the time. They would have been: "Chargez-vous de battre les Prussiens, moi je me charge des Anglais, ajoutant: dirigez-vous vers Namur, c'est de ce côté que se retire le maréchal Blücher." In: Relation succincte - 4e serie p.40
Le Sénécal says that "le maréchal me fit part des ordres verbaux qu'il venait de recevoir etc".

– so he was no eye-witness either. Napoleon would have ordered Grouchy "de se mettre à la poursuite des Prussiens, de tâcher de les joindre et de les attaquer." In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.128
Lieutenant colonel De la Fresnaye wasn't at the meeting either; he arrived shortly afterwards. Cf. his account. Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.IV p.136

Lieutenant general Baudrand, who was at about 20 or 30 paces away from Napoleon and Grouchy when they were talking, says he could hear Napoleon say to Grouchy when he was moving away from him: "Monsieur le maréchal, vous allez prendre les 3e et 4e corps d'armée, une division du 6e, la cavalerie de etc. … et vous entrerez ce soir dans Namur; je vous recommande, monsieur le général [sic], de m'amener beaucoup de prisonniers."
Again, it is no direct eye-witness, apart from the fact that it is a highly uninformative version of the conversation. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.158

A possible eye-witness, count Flahaut, claims Napoleon stressed to Grouchy the importance of a regular contact with the main army. He would have said: "Allons Grouchy, poursuivez les Prussiens, l'epée dans les reins; mais communiquez toujours avec moi par votre gauche."
This version, if Flahaut was an eye-witness, has a tinge of hindsight (see below) but other than it that adds nothing new, as it deals with communication which the Bertrand-order does as well.
Cf. his letters dated 1857 and 1861 to A.H.Brialmont and F.Lavalette respectively. In: the first Napoleon p.314, 316

Houssaye sees in Napoleon's verbal orders "des témoignages si intéressés et si contradictoires, qu'il faut, en bonne critique, s'en rapporter au seul ordre écrit.[=the Bertrand order]" Yet, he does not go that far to actually deny the orders as Grouchy claims to have been given to him verbally. In: 1815.Waterloo p.502
Ropes states: "the prominence assigned to the verbal orders to Grouchy, so common in most of the narratives, is not only utterly useless, but most misleading." In: The campaign ofWaterloo p.220

17. Grouchy, E.de - In: Réfutations du livre Gourgaud etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.117-118
Grouchy, E. de – Fragments historiques relatives etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.278
Observations sur la relation de la campagne de 1815 etc. p.117
Relation succincte p.19-20
Cf. Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.207
Charras - Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.239-240
Siborne, W. - History of the war in France etc. Vol.I p.294

[18] Pollio doesn't grasp the crux of the issue by declaring that we will never know Napoleon's intentions as the content of his oral instructions to Grouchy has not transpired. At the same time he undermines the value of the Bertrand-order by stating that the original is missing. This is correct, but the reference in the SHD makes clear that this document was / is in the possession of baron Du Casse (cf. note on manuscripts). In: Waterloo p.301

[19] Cf. extensive note on Grouchy's defence.
Cf. Forbes, A. - The inner history of the waterloo campaign p.425

Ropes, J.C. - The campaign of Waterloo p.358
It is in his publication of 1818 that he explicitly denied having received others orders of Napoleon as the ones which he received verbally. In: Observations sur la relation etc. p.135

[20] These points, Namur and Liège, also come back in Napoleon's letter of that morning to Ney, in the sense that Pajol was pursuing the enemy on those roads.
Grouchy's claims that Napoleon did not indicate to him where to pursue the Prussians is therefore incorrect. In: Doutes sur l'authenticité etc. p.234
Lenient, in analyzing the order, lays far too much weight upon Namur and thereby neglects Maastricht. He also regards Napoleon's belief that Blücher could not change his line of communication as the basis upon which the detachment of Grouchy was founded.
However, as the Bertrand-order shows, Napoleon most correctly did see that the Prussians had another operational line to their disposal if needed: the one towards Maastricht.
In: La solution des énigmes etc. p.375

[21] Ropes completely misses the crux of the grand strategical picture of Napoleon by thinking that the word "et" between "Bruxelles" and "Liège" should be "ou" as being an error in writing. Ropes clearly suffers from hindsight by automatically projecting a battle south of the forest of Soignes. In: The campaign of Waterloo p.210
This point is also missed by Von Pflugk Harttung, who only sees these words in a literal sense of the word, while a direction *north-east* was meant. Accordingly, Von Pflugk Harttung criticizes Grouchy for not having understood the Bertrand-order by not moving north, but it is Von Pflugk Harttung himself who has misunderstood the letter. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI nr.V nr.2 p.6
Damiens makes it even worse by stating: "Mais comment envisager une "nouvelle" bataille pour couvrir à la fois Bruxelles et Liège ? Voilà qui n'est pas clair et qui ne sera sans doute jamais éclairci, disons-le …" In: Grouchy et les ordres du 17 Juin 1815

[22] Cf. Mémoires pour servir etc. p.185-186
On the 18th of June, Grouchy wrote to Napoleon that a third corps had joined the two which had fought at Ligny (this was the corps of Von Bülow).
Napoleon was familiar with the composition of the Prussian army, but what his estimate of the strength of the Prussian army at Ligny was is unknown. Later reports are not a reliable source as these were sometimes written to artificially enlarge the success of the battle. If it is true that the French general staff thought there were eventually two corps, a figure of 70.000 men might have been possible, but during the morning hours, calculations of the Prussian losses can only have been speculations.
Late that evening, in his report to Napoleon, Grouchy came up with 20.00 men in casualties. This still would leave 20.000 unaccounted for, as it was thought some 30.000 had been massed near Gembloux.

Soult would have said to colonel Baudus "que c'était une grande faute de distraire des forces aussi considérables de l'armée qui allait marcher contre les troupes anglo-belges; que, dans l'état où la défaite de la veille avait mis l'armée Prussienne, un faible corps suffirait, avec la cavalerie du général Exelmans, pour la suivre et l'observer dans sa retraite."
On the one hand this fits into the general optimism about the situation, yet on the other this figure is much lower as Napoleon set it – if these words were true of course. In: Baudus, Etudes sur Napoleon p.222-223

Napoleon grossly exagerates Prussian losses as being 45.000-50.000 in total. He mentions a Prussian strength at Wavre of 75.000 men, of which 30.000 fresh troops (4th corps). Total: 120.000. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.115, 185, 195
Lenient incorrectly calculates Napoleon's impression of the remainder of the Prussian army as having been about 60.000 (30.000-40.000 of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd corps, plus 15.000-20.000 of the 4th). In: La solution des énigmes etc. p.339

[23] The fact that Grouchy was ordered by Napoleon to Point du Jour first can also be taken from the description under which the order issued through Bertrand was published in 1840, stating (italics are mine): " Ordre de l'empereur Napoléon au maréchal Grouchy, recu sur *la route de Namur, où Napoléon avait enjoint de se rendre au moment où il quitta le champ de bataille de Ligny pour se porter aux Quatre Bras*. D'après la lettre autographe du grand maréchal du palais Bertrand."
In: Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.26

[24] The very fact that Napoleon could not know that he would take up a position in front of Mont Saint Jean that evening is more proof that he could not have expressed himself verbally to Grouchy in these terms, as Grouchy claims he did.

[25] Cf. chapters below on the 18th of June.

[26] Cf. Pollio, A. – Waterloo p.344

27.Cf. Grouchy in Réfutations du livre Gourgaud etc. In: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy, Vol.V p.118-119
In: Fragments historiques etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.279, 317
It is in one of his accounts that Grouchy precisely describes the situation as it was, except in the fact it was *Napoleon* who ordered Grouchy to Gembloux and not that he did so himself: for Grouchy to lead both infantry corps to Point du Jour as an assembly point only and a halt for a march either to Namur or Gembloux, depending upon further intelligence to come in. The moment it did (through Pajol and Bella), both corps were moved towards Gembloux.

Grouchy also writes, after having mentioned his orders for Gérard to leave for Point du Jour: "J'ajoutai que je ne tarderais pas à luit transmettre de nouveaux ordres." So, here he also does recognize that he was awaiting further instructions. In: Relation succincte p.22-23, 26 (Grouchy denotes Point du Jour as "Maison Neuve").

[28] The 1st corps of d'Erlon left its positions near Frasnes by 2 p.m and arrived on the heights near Plancenoit by 7 p.m. This means that it took the corps 5 hours to cover a distance of about 13 kilometres.
The imperial guard left Quatre Bras by 5 p.m and reached the area around Glabais in the darkness between 11 and 12 p.m. – so, it took this corps about 6 hours to cover a distance of about 8 kilometres.

[29] Cf. Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA, VPH-HA nr.VI nr.V nr.2 p.10
He guesses that Grouchy might have chosen for this arrangement because of the temper of Gérard and / or the physical state of his forces.
In the dispute between Grouchy and Gérard about Gérard's delay, Grouchy claims that there was no need for him to wait for the 3rd corps to pass and then to link up with its rear-guard as both corps were apart from each other for quite a distance. Other than that, Grouchy states he

would have had the 4th corps march parallel to the 3rd when it left it positions. In: Fragments historiques etc. p.8
However, both corps were about 1000 metres separate and there was no simply no space west of Ligny and north of Saint Amand that they could move in parallel columns.

[30] Cf. Houssaye, H. - 1815.Waterloo p.503
Houssaye states that Grouchy was well aware of the dangers of a Prussian march towards Wavre and cites Grouchy's words about Wavre from his report of the evening of the 17th of June to Napoleon. Yet, he doesn't cite the other words which are equally important, i.e that Grouchy also thought that the Prussians might have gone towards Perwez instead and this has nothing to do with a march north.

[31] Cf. Grouchy himself, who also states he didn't yet know he had to go to Wavre by then. In: Observations etc. p.112

[32] At 7 p.m. he writes to Exelmans: "[...] l'ennemi, qui se retire par divers chemins, et a pris, m'assure-t-on, la route de Perwez-le-Marché et Leuze." In case he would have been informed by for instance Bella [=Exelmans] that the Prussians were moving towards Perwez, he would not have written to Exelmans in this way, so this information came from another source. In its anonimity ("on") he seems to refer to civilian sources.

[33] One wonders when Pajol actually heard of Grouchy's mission as the first communication between Pajol and Grouchy in that capacity only took place at 10 p.m. (when Grouchy sent his order for the 18th to Pajol), but even in that order he doesn't explicitly mention his mission.

[34] The kind of intelligence upon which this assumption was based remains unclear.
From the evidence available, for Grouchy there were two directions where the Prussians went to: Wavre and / or Perwez.
In that sense, it is surprising that Grouchy later mentions Louvain as well, in stead of Perwez.
This should be regarded as a product of hindsight, as a way to excuse himself for the measures taken the next day. Cf. observations on Grouchy on the 18th of June.
In: Observations sur la relation de la campagne etc. p.118
Relation succincte etc. p.24

[35] The intelligence which was added to Grouchy's report from Walhain for Napoleon on the 18th of June explicitly mentions the line Sauvenière / Baudeset – Grand Leez - Orbais – Perwez as being on the line towards Maastricht.
While Baudeset was seen as a point where major Prussian forces had passed (these were in reality those of the 3rd and parts of the 4th corps), it is unclear how the French could have regarded those forces passing there (these were in fact those of Hiller and Hacke) as moving in the direction of Maastricht, *so away from Wellington.* What may have played here, however, is the belief which Napoleon had projected upon Grouchy: that the Prussian also might be retreating towards Maastricht and that this belief was – in its turn – projected by Grouchy upon forces as seen along the Roman road. By the way, Grouchy was not aware of the junction of the 4th corps with the 3rd corps until the next morning.
Cf. chapter on Grouchy on the 18th of June.

[36] Apparently, the words as contained in Grouchy's intelligence that *"tous demandent le*

chemin de Bruxelles" were no wake-up call that much more forces could be drawing towards Brussels as Grouchy thought did.
As far as the speed of the Prussian retreat is concerned, it is sometimes represented much faster as it did in reality, only in order to put more of the blame of French defeat on the shoulders of Grouchy.

[37] Grouchy confirms Napoleon believed that the Prussian army was falling back upon the Meuse . In: Relation succincte p.22

[38] In: Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France etc. p.115-116
Those who unthinkingly take over this version of events are:
Gourgaud, C. - La campagne de dix huit cent quinze etc. p.69
Le Sénécal - Encore waterloo p.16-17
Camon - La guerre Napoleonienne p.193
Thiers, A. - Histoire du consulat et de l'empire Vol.VI p.474-475

According to Gourgaud it was sent again before 3 a.m., after the receipt of Grouchy's report from Gembloux. In: La campagne de 1815 p.70
According to Napoleon it was sent again at 4 a.m. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.117

[39] Cf. Grouchy. Observations sur la relation de la campagne de 1815 etc. and Doutes sur l'authenticité etc. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.V p.162-163, 179-180, 232-233

[40] Cf. Grouchy. In: Observations sur la relation de la campagne de 1815 etc. p.114, 162
In: Doutes sur l'authenticité etc. p.228, 232
Jomini mentions the order as well, but at the same time – in a footnote – expresses his doubts about its veracity. In: Précis politique et militaire de la campagne de 1815 p.164

[41] Cf. observations on Grouchy on the 18th of June.
Charras says about Grouchy's accounts in general: "C'est au point qu'il a négligé parfois de rapporter ou a mal rapporté des faits, des pièces officielles qui le justifient sur des points importants, et qu'il est tombé dans des variations, des contradictions choquantes." In: Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.281

Grouchy's aide de camp, Bella, is very much caught by hindsight in stating that Grouchy felt most uncomfortable in his mission being sent so far east and not along the left bank of the Dyle river, as Grouchy would have proposed. In: Relation succincte 4e série p.40

[42] Major Banner (23rd regiment of light dragoons) writes: "the night [of the 16th] passed of quietly, nothing material taking place in the immediate vicinity of Quatre Bras until 10 o'clock, when a most tremendous cheering, which continued for several minutes, was heard towards the right of the French position, and which was supposed to be the enemy's demonstration of joy for the fancied victory they had obtained in the hard fought battle of Quatre Bras, but in the morning it was ascertained that the acclamations and shouts of joy were proclaiming the decisive advantage they had gained over the Prussians at Ligny, in forcing them to abandon their position." If this is correct, then this joy about the result at Ligny was based upon rumours only. Cf. BL, Add.ms.34.706 p.316-320

[43] It was around midnight of the 16th of June that colonel Répécaud – of the engineers of the

2nd corps – received orders to leave with some other officers of the engineers plus two companies of sappers to entrench Gosselies. Répécaud had hardly got there, however, when he was called back again to Frasnes.
This is a hint that the French might have felt uneasy about their position in front of Wellington and that they took a possible retreat upon Gosselies in account. In: Napoléon à Ligny et le maréchal Ney à Quatre Bras p.42

In the evening of the 16th of June, Octave Levavasseur, an aide de camp of Ney, as coming from France, reached the battlefield of Ligny. The other day, in the morning, he went to French headquarters to find out where Ney was. After that he went to Frasnes. Levavasseur says nothing about any message he had to carry to Ney.
It may have been that he met central headquarters on the heights of Brye, as he claims that he saw during his trip to Ney enemy's outposts in the fields. This could mean that he may have passed along the Namur road and along the Bois Delhütte towards Frasnes. In: Souvenirs militaires etc. p. 291

[44] Gourgaud makes the incorrect claim that Napoleon, after having received Ney's report in the night, ordered him "d'avoir ses troupes sous les armes à la pointe du jour, et de poursuivre vivement l'armée anglaise, aussitôt qu'elle commencerait sa retraite, que nécessitait la perte de la bataille de Ligni [sic] par les Prussiens." In: La campagne de 1815 p.61

[45] Optimism about the damage caused to the Prussian army within the French general staff did not have a common ground as colonel Janin (corps Lobau) writes: "Napoleon, dit-on, avait résolu la destruction préalable de l'armée Prussienne. Il fallait donc qu'il complétât la victoire: s'il crut avoir rempli cet objet dans la journée du 16, il fut aveuglé par un excès de présomption que je ne lui supposerais pas. Personne ne crut qu'il eût mis cette armée hors d'état d'agir seulement pendant plusieurs jours. Les officiers de mérite avec lesquels j'étais alors en relation étaient loin de partager cette opinion." In: Campagne de waterloo etc. p.27

[46] For this claim, see:
Mémoires pour servir etc. p.110
Gourgaud - La campagne de 1815 p.66
Ney would have excused himself by stating that the complete Anglo-Netherlands-German army was at Quatre Bras and that he had been unsure about the outcome of the battle of Ligny.
Heymès pertinently denies any discontent as uttered by Napoleon. In: Documents inédits p.12

D'Erlon might have been one of those who had to hear about Napoleon's irritation. To him the emperor would have said: "On a perdu la France; allons mon cher général, mettez vous à la tête de cette cavalerie [Jacquinot ?] et poussez fortement l'arrière garde anglaise." In: Drouet d'Erlon - Le maréchal Drouet, comte d'Erlon p.96
According to Saint Denis, Napoleon would have expressed his strong discontent about Ney's lack of activity to a commander of some light cavalry of the left wing, but it would in my idea be very improbable that he would have done so to some colonel of cavalry. In: Souvenirs du mameluck Ali p.107

[47] Lord Uxbridge writes: "The moment the squadrons of the rear-guard halted and fronted, those of the enemy invariably avoided a collision and the retreat was conducted at a walk. The artillery, however, on both sides were occasionally at work, and our congreves rockets were

pitched into their squadrons with good effect." In: Uxbridge to Croker, dated 15th March 1852. In: Plas Newydd Papers. In: One leg p.362

[48] Napoleon describes the French operations to the north as if these were planned in this way: Napoleon towards Mont Saint Jean and Grouchy towards Wavre, having the result that by the evening of the 17th of June the French army would be "réunie sur une ligne de cinq petites lieues de Mont Saint Jean à Wavre, ayant ses avant-postes au bord de la forêt." An absurd claim which turns reality upside down and which surpasses the chronology of the events as they took place on the right wing. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.186

His brother Jérôme points to the fact that it took the whole night for the army to assemble and to prepare for the next day. Cf. his letter to his wife, dated 15th July 1815. In: Mémoires et correspondance du roi Jérôme etc. p.21 (original in Archives nationales, Paris 400 AP/88).

[49] Cf. Lenient, E. - La solution etc. p.340-341

[50] Ney has been blamed for inactivity on the morning of the 17th of June and as a result he has been defended by stating that if he would have attacked, it would have triggered Wellington to retreat.
This, however, is an approach in which the allied situation is not taken into account. Cf. Charras. Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.269

[51] Cf. Grouchy. In: Observations etc. p.151
Houssaye, H. - 1815.Waterloo p.494-496
He claims that – later that day - Napoleon would have secretly blamed himself for not having moved towards Quatre Bras at 7 a.m. with his reserve, a claim which cannot be corroborated with evidence.
Charras - Histoire de le campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.275
Ropes, J.S. - The campaign of Waterloo p.199
Logie, J. - Waterloo. La campagne de 1815 p.167
Pollio, A. - Waterloo p.285
Roberts, A. – Napoleon and Wellington p.156
By having the chance to crush Wellington right away, Wilson describes the 17th of June as a day of an "immense opportunity." In: 17th June 1815: a day of delay and missed opportunity p.26

[52] Cf. Charras - Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.274

[53] Cf. Lenient, E. - La solution etc. p.335, 389
Napoleon is simply turning the world upside down in stating: "Du 15 au 18 le duc de Wellington a constamment manoeuvré comme l'a désiré son ennemi; il n'a rien fait de ce que celui-ci craignait qu'il fit." In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.200

[54] Cf. for instance the chain of communication between Ney and Soult on the morning of the 17th of June, the reports as sent in by Exelmans and the orders as received by Grouchy that day.