

The Prussian flank-march. Observations.

The promise of support to Wellington.

Before entering into any observations relative to the Prussian flank-march on the 18th of June, it is necessary to have a closer look at Blücher's personal addition to the promise of support which was done the previous night at 9.30 a.m.

Usually, this letter is published in combination with the following reaction, as written to general Von Müffling by colonel Von Nostitz

Der General Gneisenau ist mit dem Inhalt dieses Briefes einverstanden, bittet aber Ew.Hochwohlgeboren, genau zu erforschen, ob der Herzog wirklich den festen Vorsatz hat, sich in seiner Stellung zu schlagen, oder ob es vielleicht blossse Demonstrationen sind, welche für unsere Armee nur höchst nachteilig sein können. Ew.Hochwohlgeboren werden wohl die Gnade haben, mir Dero Ansichten darüber mitzuteilen, da es von der höchsten Wichtigkeit ist, von dem, was der Herzog tun wird, genau unterrichtet zu sein, um darauf unsere Bewegungen basieren zu können.

Graf Nostitz ¹

It is suggested as if Blücher was dominated by Gneisenau's hesitations, which resulted in a promise which was actually limited to two corps only and not to the whole army. Two arguments are given for this statement. ² First of all, the order issued to Von Bülow. By using for the 1st and the 3rd corps the words "wenn es nöthig ist" it is suggested as if the promise did not apply to them. However, it does. What is meant that the promise was for the whole of the army, but if it would prove that these corps were not prove to be necessary to decide at Mont Saint Jean, that they would not follow in the wake of the other corps. This is something else that they did not form part of the promise as such. The idea contained in the note written by Nostitz would form the platform for this restricted promise.

The full argumentation, however, is simply contradicted by the very first formulation of the promise and that was the one as written down by Von Grolmann on the late evening of the 17th of June to Von Müffling. Here, there is no restriction in the extent of the army whatsoever and there is no doubt that this written was written with the full consent of Gneisenau and Blücher. If Gneisenau would have made any personal objections, he would made them at that time and not later, next morning, as Von Nostitz suggest with his note.

Apart from this argument, the attitude which Von Nostitz assigns here to Gneisenau feels like a stab in the back of his own commander which is unacceptable. It has become clear that Gneisenau, and others with him, had his reservations with Wellington, but as has been stressed more often before, Gneisenau and Blücher were very well aware of the basic principle for a possible success of the campaign and that was cooperation with Wellington. To have one of the allied armies face Napoleon alone was asking for very serious trouble. Only by cooperation of both armies in a grand battle, victory could possibly be achieved. It was Gneisenau himself who wrote to his wife on the 19th of June: "[...] Ihn [Wellington] allein den Kampf bestehen lassen, war Unglück weissagend, wir hatten Rache zu nehmen und beschlossen daher dem Herzog zu Hülfe zu kommen.[...]" ³

And Blücher wrote to his king on the 17th of June: "[...] So unangenehm der Vorfall ist, so kann er doch von keinen bedeutenden Folgen sein, da ich mich bis morgen vormittags mit allen vier Korps hier vereinigt haben werde und der Herzog Wellington mit seiner ebenfalls vereinigten Macht mir so nahe steht, dass *keine geteilte Schlacht* mehr vorfallen kann.[...]" ⁴

In case Gneisenau would really have uttered the words to Von Nostitz as he assigns them on the morning of the 18th of June, this would also have been very late to do so.

Other than that, it is militarily most uncommon for an adjutant of Blücher to write to Von Müffling on behalf of the chief of staff of the army, while he was present himself. If Gneisenau really would have felt the way as Von Nostitz claims, he would have written him himself, as he did before. Additionally, presuming the text was written on the same sheet of paper as the letter written by Blücher, Von Unger doesn't publish it and he has seen the original at the former Kriegsarchiv. In his writings, Von Müffling doesn't refer to any reservation as coming from Gneisenau's side.⁵ This all leads to the conclusion that the addendum as written by Von Nostitz is not authentic.⁶

One could wonder why Von Nostitz would have made up this note. There could be two reasons for this. First, as the main reason, in reading his diary it is not uncommon for Von Nostitz to enlarge his role wherever he can and this is most probably just another example. Secondly, even though Von Nostitz doesn't picture himself as being strongly anti-Gneisenau, he severely criticizes him in three points. First, for clinging to the position of Sombrefe (which Von Nostitz considers as one being too far in front). Secondly, for not taking any preparatory measures to have the troops assemble just before the French offensive started. Lastly, he blames for Gneisenau for *proposing* instead of ordering Von Bülow to move to Hannut, thereby triggering the delay of this corps to move west. It may be possible that Von Nostitz is critical here to Gneisenau in more covert terms.

As to the promise itself, it has been Von Pflugk Hartung who saw a resemblance to Von Wellington's letter to Blücher of 10.30 a.m. of the 16th of June. This in the sense that both promises created expectations which could not be fulfilled.

The context of both promises is impossible to compare, however. First of all, on the 15th of June, the moment Blücher decided to offer a battle, he could not be sure whether Napoleon would actually turn against him, while on the morning of the 18th of June there was no doubt for Wellington that Napoleon would attack him. Other than that, on the 16th of June, Wellington expected to have a joint battle against the emperor the next day, while now it was an open question for Blücher whether Napoleon would strike on the 18th or on the 19th of June.

Additionally, while Wellington gave a too optimistic impression of the concentration of his army on the morning of the 16th of June, Blücher did not do so two days later. The question was not so much whether the army was sufficiently concentrated, but whether it could arrive in time.⁷

The flank-march to the battlefield.

At sunrise of the 18th of June, by far most of the Prussian army was in positions around Wavre. Though about half of it (3rd and 4th corps) hardly had had any rest, the other half (1st and 2nd corps) had been in bivouacs here since midday the day before. On the other hand, these corps had been severely handled at Ligny. For the most part, ammunition had been replenished, but the supply of food had been far from sufficient.

As for the knowledge about the enemy's whereabouts, general headquarters was informed since the 17th of June that it seemed as if virtually all French forces had turned against Wellington; this proved correct in the sense that by dawn there was no trace of any French forces in pursuit south of Wavre whatsoever.

It was in this situation that Prussian high command had promised Wellington to come to his aid in case Napoleon would act against him. If this would prove not to be the case, then both allied armies would take the offensive. The promise itself as the very basis of the cooperation between both armies not only involved Blücher's moral responsibility to help Wellington, it also fixed Wellington at Mont Saint Jean to make a stand to enable the Prussian army to cooperate.⁸

At the same time, in case Wellington would be unable to maintain his position it was most significant for the Prussian leadership to make sure their army would not be compromised in any way. It was therefore decided in the original set-up to move half of the army (4th and 2nd corps) to a position on the heights of Chapelle Saint Lambert first and wait their until the French intentions would become clear.⁹ This halting-place would not only allow for assembling sufficient forces *à portée* to Wellington for an intervention in a future battle, it also allowed the army to pull out in case Wellington would be forced to leave his position before any Prussian intervention could take place. From Chapelle Saint Lambert, direct roads lead to the Brussels-road (through Bourgeois, Rosières and Tombeek) and Louvain (through Genval, Overijse, Huldenberg and Neerijse). This last route converges at Louvain with the one coming from Wavre through Ottenbourg and St.Achtenrode.¹⁰

To pull out had a double background. In case Wellington was forced to retreat, Blücher's army was meant to seek for a second opportunity to fight Napoleon together with Wellington deeper into the Netherlands (see above). Second, in case Wellington's army was annihilated, it allowed Blücher to seek for safety towards Louvain and beyond. In case Napoleon (and Grouchy) would move against him, the high grounds of Chapelle Saint Lambert would give Blücher a stronghold to resist the French. And finally, in case Napoleon would postpone any actions, it would give Blücher the chance to move against him in conjunction with Wellington on the 19th of June. After all, as it took place in real life, while Von Bülow was moving his forces towards Chapelle Saint Lambert, there was no sign of any battle ahead yet.

The original Prussian promise of support to Wellington involved two corps to move towards Chapelle Saint Lambert, while the other two would hold themselves into readiness. This restriction implied the need for a plan for the intervention, depending upon the way Napoleon would attack Wellington. As soon as the first draft for this plan reached him, it prompted Blücher to launch his 1st corps towards Ohain, while the 4th continued its course towards Chapelle Saint Lambert. By that time, though, there was yet still no sign of any battle at Mont Saint Jean. The 1st corps was summoned a few hours after the 4th and the 2nd as it wasn't in Blücher's mind until he had received Von Müffling's mind. The halt at Chapelle Saint Lambert for Von Bülow to collect his forces made up some of the difference for him and Zieten to reach the battlefield, but as the 4th corps was committed before it was assembled to its full extent, the delay of the 1st corps relative to the 4th was aggravated.

The arrival of a second version of the plan for the intervention in the battle, as adopted from Von Bülow by Von Müffling, at Prussian headquarters coincided with three significant circumstances and this situation led to the commitment of the army into the battle.

First of all, the presence by then of the majority of the 4th corps on the heights of Chapelle Saint Lambert. Second, Prussian observations and reconnaissance had revealed no French presence in the low grounds of the Lasne on the immediate left flank of the army as it was moving towards the battlefield of Waterloo. While the original course for the 2nd corps was maintained as a strong cover for Von Bülow's flank and rear (Wavre - Chapelle Saint Lambert - Sauvagemont - Maransart), by 3 p.m. the 3rd corps was summoned to leave for Couture. And third, though observations had revealed the imminent battle, the huge bombardment made it unambiguously clear that a battle was raging at Mont Saint Jean.

Taking all these elements together, it now led Prussian high command to take the ultimate decision: to enter the valley of the Lasne, thereby committing the 4th corps, and herewith the army, into a major intervention in the battle of Waterloo. From now on – it was 2 p.m. - there was no more point of return.

By that time, the grand design for the intervention in the battle had matured. Had it initially been limited to the actual involvement of two corps, it now comprised two elements: a direct and an indirect assistance to Wellington. The direct assistance would come from the 1st corps, entering the battlefield in Wellington's frontline. Indirectly, the 4th corps would fall upon the French right

flank and rear, as coming from the Bois de Paris, while being covered on its left by the 2nd corps which was due to move along Sauvagemont and Maransart. In the combination of these two corps, the 3rd would move to Couture as a reserve.

Sometime later though, this design of the Prussian intervention was changed by keeping the 2nd corps on the same track as the 4th and not to divert it to the left; a compromise was found in doing so with the 7th brigade only. It was most probably caused by the fact that by then it had become clear that the French formed no direct threat to Von Bülow as coming from the Lasne.

In a more general sense, based upon the way the army had left the battlefield of Ligny and the observations of Von Gröben on the 17th of June, the general impression at central headquarters on the early morning of the 18th of June was that the *armée du Nord* as a whole appeared to have wheeled towards Wellington. To make sure about the safety of the army around Wavre, an observation-post was established at the strong point formed by the low grounds of the Orne at Mont Saint Guibert. Additionally, Wavre was covered by the hilly and wooded area between the Orne and the Dyle, while it enjoyed extra cover from the Dyle on its right.¹¹

As has been shown, the role of the 3rd corps initially was to hold itself in readiness, if needed, to follow the other corps to the battlefield of Mont Saint Jean. This idea was based upon a total absence of enemy forces as far as the Orne and beyond. Some hours later, by 1 p.m. , the corps was intended either to defend the position at Wavre or to leave some battalions there and to march off towards the battlefield of Mont Saint Jean, to act as a reserve and a rear-guard. At this stage, there were some indications of some enemy presence south of Wavre, but its exact strength and location was hard to determine. By 2 p.m. the clash of some French forces with Von Pirch's rear-guard hinted to some pronounced French action, but by the time Thielmann actually saw the French deploy in front of his position at Wavre, he initially had the impression it was a mere demonstration, but this proved wrong.¹²

The development of some French force south of Wavre did not cause Thielmann to establish along the Dyle a line of observation-posts to make sure about its intention in relation to the flank-march of the other corps of the army. He could have done so at Limale, Limelette, Ottignies and Mousty.

As the French forces on the right bank of the Dyle might have been a risk for the Prussian forces in their march towards the battlefield of Waterloo, those on the left bank might be even more so. A reconnaissance sent out by Von Bülow to Couture and Céroux on the one hand confirmed a French absence there, while a French presence was found to be near Mont Saint Guibert on the other. Yet again, it was also not on the left bank either that a more systematic approach was used to find out about enemy's intentions along the Dyle, and herewith, along the Prussian left flank of the army. Von Falckenhausen did a great job, but his actions were erratic and isolated. And this isolation had also been a major problem for Von Ledebur.¹³ Anticipating a possible French presence on the left flank of the army as it was on the move, it would have been better if Prussian high command had established a more integrated observation screen to make absolutely sure whether and where its flank could become under threat or not. A line set up by Von Thielmann along the Dyle as far as Mousty / Court-Saint-Etienne could have been extended by Von Zieten by placing posts at for instance Céroux and Couture early in the day.¹⁴ This carelessness in the sector between Vieux Sart and Mont Saint Guibert had also allowed Exelmans to enter to the gap, thereby almost cutting off Von Ledebur's detachment.¹⁵

The slow speed with which Von Bülow's corps moved towards Wellington was influenced by numerous circumstances. To begin with, in the bivouacs the men were very much scattered. To some degree this had to do with the pedantry of Von Valentini, Von Bülow's chief of staff, who favoured formalities and provisioning of the men, instead of showing the pragmatism needed in a delicate situation as the army was in.¹⁶

The delay was also caused by the fatigue of the men, as most of them barely had had a proper rest during the few remaining hours of the previous night. In their fatigue, the men also had to cross roads which were in a terrible state due to heavy rains of the night before.¹⁷

Further, as the men had to cross the defile and the city of Wavre with its narrow streets, this impeded the march even further, not to speak of the fire which broke out there on top of it all.¹⁸

Additionally, in general, waggons taken along in the columns congested passageways and broke up the coherence of the columns even more.¹⁹

In terms of the terrain, two major defiles had to be passed: those of the Dyle and of the Lasne.

The delays in the movements of the 4th corps first of all had a bearing upon the halt Von Bülow was supposed to make at the heights of Chapelle Saint Lambert. On the one hand, he was not supposed to move as long as he did not have enough forces available and as long as the real intentions of the enemy were not totally clear on the other. In this sense, the delays were for some part neutralised by this last element: by the time the majority of the corps was assembled at Chapelle Saint Lambert (1.30 p.m.), Prussian high command had sufficient information to commit the army to the battle which was by now raging between Napoleon and Wellington.

In this step, the Prussians had the incredible luck that the French had not occupied the defile of the Lasne in any strength. The 2nd corps suffered from a strong delay as well, as it had to wait for the 4th corps to pull off completely. Other than that, it suffered the same kinds of delay as the 4th had done by also using the same roads. As a result, its column (brigade-wise) also showed gaps.

The 1st corps was ordered to leave much later as the 4th and 2nd, but in its departure itself it was already for about one and a half to two hours late. The circumstances of this delay cannot be adequately explained.²⁰ In its movements the corps faced, apart from the forests, obviously similar difficulties as the others did, such as the muddy roads and the steep slopes of the low ground of the Lasne.²¹ In its course, the corps eventually emerged in rear of Wellington's front-line instead of on its flank. From the fact that no witness involved expresses any surprise about it, it can be taken that this course was intentional, probably after the directions of Von Müffling on the spot.²²

The Prussian leadership has been criticized for the arrangement of the corps around Wavre in relation to the flank-march the next day and in this context alternative arrangements have been described. As has been shown, yet, the situation of the Prussian army the moment this was decided was far from unambiguous. First of all, Prussian headquarters had no idea what Napoleon was up to, let alone about the situation of Wellington the moment it was decided for this arrangement. Thus, there was no guarantee that a cooperation with Wellington south of Brussel would be possible at all and therefore all possible scenarios had to be kept open. At the same time, the logistics of the retreat, in the sense that the 1st and 2nd corps had already reached the Dyle by midday, while the 3rd and the 4th corps were still on their way there, had an impact on the arrangement of the corps along the Dyle. In conclusion, this criticism is a product of hindsight and neglects the strategic considerations the Prussian leadership had to take into account on the early morning of the 17th of June.

It could be argued though why the choice for those two corps destined for the intervention in the first place fell upon those which stood on the right bank of the Dyle, while those on the left were at least logistically in a more favourable position to come to Wellington's aid. In the promise as done in the night of the 17th it is suggested that all corps were virtually ready to march off, except for the 4th corps due to its fatigue. On the other hand, the 4th corps had not suffered from the battle at Ligny. Yet, it stood on the right bank of the Dyle. The 1st and the 2nd had suffered considerably at Ligny, but had had plenty of time to reorganize and rest during the 17th of June and at least the 1st corps was on the left bank, as well as the reasonably intact 3rd corps. There is no doubt that the Prussian leadership has thoroughly considered the pros and cons of the status of the different corps, but what triggered it to use the 4th and 2nd first remains unclear. It should also be noted in this respect that Wellington basically asked

for *two* corps and the promise comprised these two first, with two others ready to march off if needed.²³

A clear background for the eventual selection which corps to use first remains a mystery, but when it comes down to effectiveness in connection to the flank-march of the 4th corps there was an alternative though. As information was positive to Von Bülow that no French forces whatsoever were coming up from the south, he should have considered to move south of Wavre to Limale and to pass the Dyle there. Though it would have forced him to cross part of the bivouacs of the 2nd corps, it would have allowed him to avoid the cramped crossing at Wavre and to head straight from Limale to Chapelle Saint Lambert and thus gain time.²⁴

Evaluation.

The Prussian flank-march to Mont Saint Jean was part of the joint battle which the allies had envisaged right from the beginning of the campaign. This concept was the most rigid one to make sure they had any chance at all to beat the French. From this perspective, the grand decision for the march was a token of Prussian obstinacy to defeat Napoleon; as was of course Wellington's determination to make a stand at Mont Saint Jean. In this case, it was one in which Wellington would pin Napoleon in front, while Blücher would fall upon his right flank and rear. As Von Müffling phrased it as the "*fourches caudines*." Yet, it was not that simple as it seemed, as the moment the decision was taken to start it and after it had started, there was no clear idea about when and how Napoleon was going to attack. Other than that, the absence of French forces on the heels of the Prussian army was not their merit, so in that sense it was also a matter of sheer luck that they had the opportunity to carry it out, although not for the full hundred percent as it had been planned. Last but not least, it was fully depended upon whether Wellington would hold on and that is why its design contained guarantees for the safe-keeping of the Prussian army in case the allies would be split after all, either temporarily by Wellington's retreat to a position deeper into the Netherlands, or permanently by Wellington's full defeat.

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¹ Nostitz, Von Tagebuch etc. p.36-37

Its original number in the former Kriegsarchiv would have been VI.E.3.II.183 In: GSA, HA VI,nr.V.1.p.9

Siborne, W. History of the war in France etc. Vol.I p.311

Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleons Untergang. Vol.III p. 397

Ollech, Von Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.189

² Cf. Lettow Vorbeck, O.von - Napoleon's Untergang p.365

Aerts, W. - Etudes etc. Livre V (manuscript) p.85

³ In: Delbrück, H. Das Leben etc. Vol.IV p.525

⁴ The italics are mine.

A testimony as given by the earl of Stanhope and as emanating from colonel Hardinge, the British liaison at Prussian headquarters, stated in 1837 about events on the 17th of June: "He [Blücher] said to me that he should be quite satisfied if, in conjunction with the duke of Wellington, he was able now to defeat his old enemy. I was told that there had been a great discussion that night in his rooms, and that Blücher and Grolmann had carried the day for remaining in communication with the English army, but that Gneisenau had great doubts as to whether they ought not to fall back to Liège and secure their own communication with Luxembourg. They thought that if the English should be defeated, they themselves would be utterly destroyed." In: Ropes, J.C. The waterloo campaign p.230

It is inconceivable that Gneisenau would have uttered himself in the way as described above. It contradicts that what for instance Gneisenau wrote about already in April 1815 and that was that he fully realized that the only chance for the utter destruction of the French army in this war lay in the lap of one element: the cooperation with Wellington.

The authenticity of this account is therefore under suspicion, let alone the fact that Hardinge - having lost his hand a few hours earlier - was physically able to attend the meeting of Prussian high command at Mellery that night.

⁵ In his first version of the events he mentions the essence of the promise as written by Blücher on the morning of the 18th of June, without entering upon any remarks from Gneisenau's side. In: Geschichte etc. p.21

In 1849, Von Müffling however muddles things up by stating that it was Blücher who wrote him - through Von Nostitz - on the evening of the 17th of June "er werde nicht bloss mit Einem, sondern mit zwei Korps kommen." As I have shown, the letter involved was written by Von Grolmann, and not for one corps only.

Von Müffling continues in a half correct way mentioning the letter of 9.30 a.m. of the 18th in citing Blücher as "Ich komme nicht mit zwei Korps, sondern mit Allem, was ich habe." In: Hofmann, G.W. Zur Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.137

Also, in his recollections Von Müffling erroneously claims that Wellington told to Von Massow that Wellington would accept a battle in the position of Mont Saint Jean, if Blücher was inclined to come to his assistance even with one corps only.

After that, for Blücher's reaction, he refers to his former work as published in 1816, i.e. a full promise for the whole army. In: The memoirs etc. p.241

⁶ It is Pollio who also sets question-marks to the restrictions as put upon Blücher by Gneisenau. In: Waterloo p.380

⁷ Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA, HA-VI, nr.IV nr.1 p.66
Aus den Tagen des 17. Und 18.Juni 1815 p.183-184

⁸ Cf. Pflugk Harttung, Von –Aus den Tagen des 17. und 18. Juni 1815 p.185
And in: Wellington und Blücher am 17. Juni 1815 p.388

⁹ Von Bülow himself states: “Nach den vom Herzog Wellington eröffneten Aussichten sollte das IV Armeekorps bei Saint Lambert stehen bleiben bis die Absichten des Feindes sich aufklärten.”

For confirmation of Von Bülow’s statements. Cf. Hiller, Von – Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.240
Account of colonel Von Loebell, commander ad interim of the 15th brigade. In; MWB, 1904, nr.29 p.738

Memoirs of prince Thurn und Taxis, the Bavarian plenipotentiary at the Prussian headquarters. In: Aus drei Feldzügen etc. p.330-331

¹⁰ The strong significance of Louvain for the army becomes very clear from the disposition of the night of the 17th of June, stating: *Der Rückzug des niederrheinischen Kriegsheeres soll im Fall eines unglücklichen Ausganges über Ober-USchke [= Overijse] nach Louvaines [=Louvain] gehen.*¹⁰

It was also for this reason that the convoys of the 1st / 3rd and the 2nd / 4th corps were to be sent to this town over the left and right bank of the Dyle respectively.

¹¹ Cf. Aerts, W. - Etudes etc. Livre V (manuscript) p.88

¹² Thielmann based this upon a presence of 3 batteries and some 10 - 12.000 men and the fact that no parallel actions took place. Initially, he would have thought he could afford himself to detach some of his forces to Couture, but later he would have asked Zieten for support. Cf. Pflugk Harttung, Von - Aus den Tagen des 17. Und 18.Juni 1815 p.196

¹³ In such an advanced and exposed position, it would have been better to have cavalry there only.

¹⁴ Cf. Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA, HA-VI nr.V 4.F. p.14
Aus den Tagen des 17. Und 18. Juni 1815 p.194

This would put a defence of Von Stengel’s responsibility to hold Limale in another light. Cf. Leszczyński, R. von - 50 Jahr Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 2.Posenschen Infanterie-Regiments nr.19 – 1813 bis 1863 p.179-181

¹⁵ Cf. Von Pflugk Harttung. In: Aus den Tagen des 17. Und 18.Juni 1815 p.190

¹⁶ Gneisenau to Boyen, dated 25th June 1815. In: Delbrück, H. Das Leben des Feldmarschalls etc. Vol.IV p.541

¹⁷ Von Bülow’s report. In: Bas, F.de & T’Serclaes de Wommerson – La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.522

Von Losthin’s report and the diary of the 16th brigade. In: Pflugk Harttung, J. von – Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.503

¹⁸ According to Von Pflugk Harttung extra delay was caused at the exit of Wavre by a 12-pounder gun of which one axle was broken and which stood in the middle of the street (cf. report in former Kriegsarchiv, nr.VI.E.35.113). In: Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.414

¹⁹ Von Bülow's report. In: Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommerson – La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.522

Dörk speaks of convoys of the 1st corps which impeded the 15th regiment of infantry (Von Hiller's brigade). In: Das königlich Preussischer 15tes Infanterie Regiment Prinz Friedrich der Niederlande in den Kriegsjahren 1813, 1814 und 1815 p.128

²⁰ Von Pflugk Harttung mentions possible causes such as the actions of the 2nd corps south of Wavre, the replenishment of ammunition and the provisioning of the troops with food etc. In: Das I.Korps Zieten bei Belle Alliance p.206

²¹ Von Lettow Vorbeck launches a theory about the head-start of the vanguard which is impossible to maintain, as he bases himself upon the fact the routes of the 1st and 4th corps crossed each other. His theory is that Zieten's vanguard used the arrears of the 14th brigade to cross the road leading from Wavre to Neuf Cabaret, while the remainder of the 1st corps had to await the passage of the 2nd corps. Yet, Zieten used a route which led north from Bierges, while the 4th and the 2nd corps used one passing south along this village, so there was no case as he describes. In: Napoleon's Untergang Vol.III p.399

Von Pflugk Harttung gives two other reasons for the delay of the majority of the 1st corps in general. First of all, in his mind, Zieten would have to take into account the movements of the 2nd and the 4th corps and second because of his fear for a French threat from the rear.

Neither reason makes sense: Zieten followed an independent course, both in direction as in time. Apart from that, it was Thielmann's job to cover the rear of the army and Zieten knew that. In: Das I.Korps bei Belle Alliance p.208-209

²² Von Pflugk Harttung states that the route was supposed to have run to the south of Ohain, giving it a direction upon Fichermont and Smohain, but he gives no proof for it. In: Das 1e Preussische Korps bei Belle Alliance p.146

²³ In his comments for any alternative arrangements, Von Pflugk Harttung takes insufficient notice of the dilemmas the Prussian army was facing, as he too much influenced by hindsight. For instance, he suggests as an alternative for the delay due to the use of one road by both the 4th and the 2nd corps, the immediate departure of the 1st corps to Ohain, the advance of the 15th brigade to Chapelle Saint Lambert and two brigades of the 2nd corps to move through Limelette across the Dyle to the same place. In: Plancenoit. Besondere Bemerkungen. GSA, VPH-HA VI nr.V.4F.3.p.10

²⁴ Cf. Von Pflugk Harttung. In: Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.634-635

Aus den Tagen etc. p.187

Plancenoit. Besondere Bemerkungen. GSA, VPH-HA VI nr.V.4F.3.p.10