

Marshal Grouchy on the morning of the 18th of June.

On the evening of the 17th of June, Grouchy had ordered Pajol and Teste to go to Grand Leez by daybreak and to wait for further orders there. At 3 a.m. and some time later, Grouchy sent out another two orders to these commanders. The one to Pajol read:

Gembloux, le 18 juin 1815 [¹]

Veillez, mon cher général, partir de Grand Lez à la réception de présent ordre, et vous rendre à Tourinnes avec votre corps de cavalerie et la division Teste. Je me rends à l'instant à Tourinnes où vous recevrez de nouveaux ordres.

*Mille amitiés,
Grouchy ²*

Not long after, Grouchy received some information that a large Prussian artillery park had been found in the vicinity of Grand-Leez. As a result, he immediately sent a second order to Pajol, which reads:

Gembloux, le 18 juin 1815 [³]

Un avis, qui ne me paraît pas dénué de fondement, m'annonce, qu'un grand parc d'artillerie de l'ennemi doit être dans ce moment à une lieue de Grand Lez. Faites vérifier la chose, et si elle est aini, tombez dessus avec votre cavalerie et la division Teste. Si vous ne pouvez pas mordre à raison des forces trop supérieures qui escorteraient ce parc, vous seriez appuyé par des troupes que je vous enverrais de Sart-à-Walhain, où je me rends.

Le mouvement de retraite de l'armée de Blücher me paraît prononcé sur Bruxelles. Ainsi, dans le cas que l'avis que je vous donne serait dénué de fondement, arriviez en grande hâte à Tourinnes, afin que nous pussions en avant le plus promptement possible de Wavre.

Grouchy ⁴

The moment Grouchy wrote these orders, both Pajol and Teste were still at Mazy. On the evening of the 17th of June, Grouchy had instructed Gérard to send his cavalry-division of Vallin "à la petite pointe du jour" towards Grand Leez. Now, before 6 a.m. , Grouchy sent the following order to Vallin:

Veillez, mon cher général, partir de Grand Lez au reçu de la présente et vous rendre rapidement à Sart-à-Walhain et de là à Tourinnes, où vous rejoindrez le corps de cavalerie du général Exelmans, qui vous donnera de nouveaux ordres. De Grand Lez, envoyez 25 dragons, commandés par un officier, à Gembloux, où ils demeurent jusqu'à nouvel ordre, à l'effet de me relier avec l'Empereur, qui a marché par Marbaix sur les Quatre Chemins.

Grouchy ⁵

At 6 a.m. Grouchy wrote another report to Napoleon, which reads:

Gembloux, le 18 juin 1815

Sire,

Tous mes rapports et reconnaissances confirment que l'ennemi se retire sur Bruxelles, pour s'y concentrer, ou livrer bataille après s'être réuni à Wellington.

Namur est évacué, à ce que me marque le général Pajol. Les 1er et 2e corps d'armée de Blücher paraissent se diriger, le 1er sur Corbais, et le second sur Chaumont; ils doivent être partis hier soir à huit heures et demie de Tourinnes, et avoir marché pendant toute la nuit. Heureusement qu'elle a été si mauvaise qu'il n'aura [sic] pas pu faire beaucoup de chemin.

Je pars à l'instant pour Sart-à-Valhain, d'où je me porterai à Corbais et Wavre. J'aurai l'honneur de vous écrire de l'une et l'autre de ces villes.

Je suis avec respect, de Votre Majesté, Sire, etc.

P.S. Conformément à vos ordres, j'écris au Général commandant la 2e division militaire à Charlemont de faire occuper Namur par quelques bataillons de garde nationale et quelques batteries de canon qu'il formera à Charlemont. Je laisse ici 25 chevaux pour assurer la correspondance avec Votre Majesté.

Les corps d'infanterie et la cavalerie que j'ai avec moi n'ont qu'un approvisionnement et demie, de sorte qu'en cas d'une affaire majeure, il me paraîtrait nécessaire que Votre Majesté voulut bien faire approcher les réserves de munitions ou m'indiquer les points où l'artillerie pourrait aller prendre ses remplacements. ⁶

The letter from Grouchy to general Dumonceau, the commander of the 2e division militaire at Charlemont, and which Grouchy refers to in his report to Napoleon reads:

Gembloux, le 18 juin 1815

La victoire remportée par l'Empereur à Fleurus ayant amené l'évacuation de Namur, Sa Majesté m'a chargé de vous transmettre l'ordre de faire occuper Namur par quelques bataillons de garde nationale, et quelques batteries de canon que vous formeriez à cet effet à Charlemont. Vous donnerez le commandement de cette place à un Maréchal de camp que Sa Majesté vous autorise à désigner.

Avant de diriger les gardes nationales sur Namur, et de faire occuper cette place, vous la ferez reconnaître pour vous assurer que les Prussiens ne l'ont pas fait réoccuper par des troupes venues de Liège.

Recevez l'assurance de ma haute considération, et de mon sincère attachement,

*Grouchy*⁷

The order was a result of the instruction given by Napoleon to Grouchy through Bertrand.

There is no certainty about the exact time Grouchy left Gembloux, yet it was at a later moment as Grouchy wants us to believe. In his idea he was on the road around daybreak, which is around 4 a.m.⁸ Around 10 a.m. Grouchy joined Vandamme's vanguard just in front of Walhain. As the distance between Gembloux and Walhain is just 5 kilometres, this would mean that Grouchy left Gembloux after 9 a.m.⁹

The movements of Grouchy's forces during the morning hours of the 18th of June.

For this morning, Exelmans was supposed to be the vanguard for Vandamme's corps, which was supposed to leave at 6 a.m.¹⁰ Exelmans left at 6 a.m. (¹¹) and collected his corps at Walhain at 7 a.m.¹² Pajol had to move towards Grand Leez and wait for further orders here. Apart from that, he had to reconnoitre to Namur. Having received these instructions, Pajol wrote the following report to Grouchy:

Mazy, le 18 juin à 4 heures du matin.

Monseigneur,

J'ai eu l'honneur de vous rendre compte hier, que Namur était évacué et que j'avais poussé mes troupes au-delà de Temploux et de Meux, mais qu'apprenant qu'un corps de 25 à 30.000 hommes était réuni à Gembloux et que n'étant pas soutenu, j'avais cru nécessaire de me retirer à Mazy, ce qui est très malheureux, car je serais déjà à Grand Lez, où je me rends et où j'aurai l'honneur de vous voir.

*Pajol*¹³

His troops left for Grand Leez towards 5 a.m.¹⁴ They did so through Gembloux, but further details about the march are lacking.¹⁵ At some point of time Pajol received Grouchy's order to proceed to Tourinnes, which he did. From there, Pajol sent out patrols towards Libresart, Chaumont, Orbais and Malèves.¹⁶

The 3rd corps, in bivouacs north and north-east of Gembloux, north of the Orneau, had orders to leave its positions for Walhain at 6 a.m. and to halt immediately north of this village. It would

be preceded by the units of Exelmans and followed by those of Gérard. Gérard, in his turn, had to leave at 8 a.m. and follow the rear-guard of the 3rd corps. His infantry was scattered in positions south and southeast of Gembloux; his cavalry was at Bothey. While Vandamme had to cover approximately 5 kilometres, Gérard had to cover about 6. Both corps followed the same route: the track leading from Gembloux, east of Ernage to the south-end of Walhain.

However, things were not as they had been planned. First of all, the distribution of bread and brandy to the 3rd corps had been delayed (it was supposed to be distributed at 5 a.m.) but it was also due to the lack of discipline of the men that it was not until 7.30 a.m. that the first units of the vanguard left their positions.¹⁷ The march was a slow one: the tracks were in a deplorable state of the heavy rains and the Prussian marches of the previous day.¹⁸ There were frequent halts as well.¹⁹ In addition, the 4th corps had to wait for the 3rd corps to pull off completely. Gérard's order for the vanguard of his corps, the division of Hulot, reads:

au quartier général, à Gembloux, le 18 juin 1815

au maréchal de camp Hulot, commandant la 14e division

Ordre de mouvement

Aujourd'hui, le 18 juin, à huit heures du matin, l'armée de la Moselle se mettra en marche dans le même ordre qu'hier, pour se porter sur Sart-à-Walhain, en suivant le corps d'armée de M.le général Vandamme.

Il sera fait de suite une distribution d'eau-de-vie aux troupes et, à la première grand'halte, il leur en sera fait une seconde.

le général en chef,

*Comte Gérard*²⁰

Though the 4th corps was ready to leave at 7 a.m., it did so at 8 a.m. In doing so it entered the low grounds where Gembloux is located, marched through the small town and one hour later took up its positions at the assembly-point at about one kilometre north of Gembloux. Here it halted and waited in close columns until the 3rd corps had pulled off; by then it was 9.30 a.m. From that time on, Hulot's division closed in upon Vandamme's rear-guard.²¹ Vandamme's vanguard arrived at Walhain around 10.30 a.m. The main body of the 3rd corps filed through the village until about noon, when the front division of the 4th corps (the one of Hulot) got there.²² Now, the 3rd corps halted near Nil-Saint-Vincent where it awaited further orders.²³ This halt took a considerable time.²⁴ Gérard's cavalry-division of Vallin had to move from Bothey towards Grand Leez. Later, on the early morning of the 18th of June, Grouchy sent Vallin the order to proceed his march towards Tourinnes. When and where general Vallin received this second order is unknown; the division passed through Wichné and Longsée to Grand Leez, and from there on through Sart-à-Walhain to Tourinnes.

1. The remark here is: “On a ajouté au crayon: 3 heures du matin”

2. Copy in SHD, nr.C15/5

In: Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.42

G.de Grouchy leaves out the passage stating "Je me rends à l'instant à Tourinnes". Cf. Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.62

3. The remark here is: “On a ajouté au crayon: à la pointe du jour”

4. Copy in SHD, nr.C15/5

In: Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.42-43

Also see: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV, p.62-63 (though this version differs in details)

5. Copy in SHD, nr.C15/5

Grouchy. In: Ordres donnés par le maréchal Grouchy ou transmis etc. p.10

6. Original in SHD, nr.C15 -5

This version (a copy from the minute communicated by comte Du Casse) erroneously contains the name of Ottomont (corrected as “Hottomont” in the margin at a later date) instead of Chaumont. This can only be explained as an error in the transcription, probably due to the readability of the writing.

Copies of the document can also be found in:

Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.46-47

Lachouque, H. - Le secret de Waterloo, p.207-208

Bas, F.de & T'Serclaes de Wommersom - La campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.112

Aerts, W. - Opérations etc. p.199

Pollio, A. - Waterloo p.345

Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.65-66

These versions have slight differences as the one from SHD, which has not been dated – while the letter written by Soult at 1 p.m. clearly stated the report was dated at 6 a.m.

Some date the report at 2 a.m. or 3.00 a.m., but both hours are erroneous. First of all, there is the compelling evidence from Soult's letter dated 1 p.m. which clearly refers to a time of 6 a.m. Secondly, Grouchy writes in his report: " Je pars à l'instant pour Sart-à-Valhain ". Grouchy certainly did not leave at 2 or 3 a.m. (see below). In case the report was dated at 2 or 3 a.m. it would certainly have arrived at the heights of Rossomme or Le Caillou before 10 a.m. and in that case Soult would have referred to it in his letter dated 10 a.m.

For 2 a.m., see:

Le Sénécal,

Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France etc. p.117
Gourgaud Campagne de dix huit cent quinze etc. p.70
Grouchy himself. In: Observations etc. In: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.120
Petiet , A. - Souvenirs militaires p.217
Lieutenant general Von Boguslawski. In: Zur Auffassung des Feldzuges von 1815. In: Militär Wochenblatt nr.59 p.1567
Charras. Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.34
For 3 a.m., see:
Navez, L. - La campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.74
In: Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.46-47

7. Copy in SHD, nr.C15/5

8. Grouchy himself. In: Observations etc. In: Grouchy, G.de Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.120
According to major La Fresnaye, Grouchy left Gembloux before daybreak. In: Fragments historiques etc. p.42
Also see colonel Le Sénécal. Cf. his statement dated 2nd June 1830. In: SHD, nr.C15/5
Lieutenant Le Gouest says it was at an very early hour. In: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.IV p.141-145

9. Even an hour of 10 a.m. is given. Cf. Mémoires pour servir etc. p.153

10. There is no written order from Grouchy for Exelmans of the evening of the 17th of June. It might have been a verbal order instead.

11. Houssaye, H. - 1815.Waterloo p.295

He correctly takes the report of baron Bonnemains as a base for his calculation: that it would take Exelmans about one hour to cover the distance between Sauvenière and Walhain. (see below).

Berton says it was 8 a.m. that Exelmans left. In: Précis historique, militaire etc. p.54
Exelmans himself claims it was 7.30 a.m. In: Gérard - Dernières observations etc. p.24
Menuau also believes it was 7.30 a.m. Cf. Menuau, H. - Historique du 14^{me} régiment de dragons p.294

12. Baron Bonnemains. Cf. his account. In: SHD, nr.C15.5

¹³ Copy in SHD, nr.C15/5

Also in: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy. Vol.IV p.64
Grouchy. In: Ordres donnés par le maréchal Grouchy ou transmis etc. p.11
In: Le maréchal de Grouchy du 16 au 19 Juin 1815 etc. p.44-45

¹⁴. Berton, J.B. - Précis historique etc. p.54
Souvenirs du général baron Teste p.242

¹⁵. Cf. Colonel Biot – Souvenirs etc. p.249
Biot remains silent about a march to Grand-Leez: he even asserts the units marched from Gembloux to the north.
Teste claims his division marched through St.Denis. In: Souvenirs du général baron Teste p.242

¹⁶. Cf. Doorman, A.J. - *De gevechten bij Wavre op 18 en 19 Juni 1815*. In: *Militaire spectator* (1907) nr.5 p.203-217, 253-268, 325-336

¹⁷. According to Grouchy the corps had already left by daybreak. Cf. Grouchy in: Observations etc. In: Grouchy, G.de - Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.120
Also see: Fragments historiques etc. Barthélémy. 1829 In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.280
Ph.Gerbet (member of the 37th regiment of the line, division Lefol) claims it was 8 a.m. In: Souvenirs, p.14
For this hour, also see: general Berthézène. In: letter to Gérard, in the Dernières observations p.26
And this hour is also confirmed by colonel Stoffel (2nd regiment Swiss infantry, division Habert). Cf. his journal. In: “Waterloo” , manuscript file of colonel Eugène Stoffel. In: Collection D.Lérault, France.

Berton believes it was between 9 and 10 a.m. Cf. Berton, J.B. Précis historique etc. p.54

¹⁸. Gérard, E. In: Quelques documents etc. p.38

¹⁹ Colonel Stoffel (2nd regiment Swiss infantry) Cf. his journal. In: “Waterloo” , manuscript file of colonel Eugène Stoffel. In: Collection D.Lérault, France.

²⁰. Hulot, E. - Documents militaires etc. p.57

²¹. Cf. Hulot, E. - Documents militaires etc. p.27
General Gérard in a letter to general Hulot, dated 16th August 1819. In: SHD, C15/5
Gérard also states that the 3rd and his own corps left both at the same time, which is almost correct. Cf. his letter to colonel Simon Lorie, dated 10th August 1819. In: SHD, nr.C15/5
The fact that Hulot’s division was the vanguard is confirmed by Gérard in his letter to colonel Simon Lorie, dated 12th February 1280. In: SHD, C15.5
Captain Francois (30th regiment of the line – division Pécheux) claims his division left around 10 a.m. and this may very well be correct. It was Francois who served as an adjudant that day

for Pécheux. In: Journal du capitaine Francois p.887

Colonel Rumigny (aide de camp of Gérard) also mentions 10 a.m. Cf. Souvenirs du général comte de Rumigny p.104

It is not clear whether the division of Berthézène formed the rearguard, but lieutenant Putigny (33rd regiment of this division) states the division left at 9 a.m. In: Le grognard Putigny, baron d'Empire. p.171

Grouchy speaks about a departure of 7 or 8 a.m. In: Fragments historiques etc. De l'influence etc. p.10

In another publication Grouchy claims both the 3rd and 4th corps were on their way before daybreak, which is incorrect. In: Observations sur la relation de la campagne de 1815. In: Mémoires du maréchal de Grouchy Vol.V p.139

22. According to Houssaye, the 3rd corps was near Nil-Saint-Vincent and the 4th at Walhain around noon. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.457

General Hulot asserts his division got there at 12.30 o'clock. In: Documents etc. p.28

According to Ph.Gerbet (37th regiment of the line, division of Lefol) and lieutenant Putigny (33rd regiment of the line, division of Berthézène) the 3rd corps arrived at Walhain at noon. Cf. Gerbet, Ph. - Souvenirs d'un officier sur la campagne de Belgique en 1815 p.14

Putigny, B. - Le grognard Putigny, baron d'Empire p.171

Colonel Stoffel (2nd regiment Swiss infantry) speaks of a time between noon and 1 p.m. Cf. his journal. In: "Waterloo" , manuscript file of colonel Eugène Stoffel. In: Collection D.Lérault, France.

The division of Pécheux got there at 1 p.m. Cf. Captain Francois. In: Journal etc. p.887

23. Berthézène writes about Nil-Saint-Martin, which is close to Nil-Saint-Vincent. Cf. Berthézène, Souvenirs etc. Vol.II p.391

In another source, Berthézène claims a position a bit in rear of Sart-à-Walhain. Cf. Gérard. Dernières observations etc. p.25

24. Lefol, M. - Souvenirs sur le retour de l'empereur Napoleon de l'île d'Elbe et sur la campagne de 1815 p.75-76

Letter of general Berthézène. In: Dernières observations p.25

General Berthézène. In: Souvenirs etc. Vol.II p.391

It could be possible that both the 3rd and 4th army corps left Walhain from the centre and not through St.Paul. From there a direct road led to Nil-Saint-Vincent; it started at about 600 metres north of the church of Walhain and ended in the southwest point of Nil-Saint-Vincent.