

General outline of the definitive allied invasion-plan into France.

The invasion was based upon a grand, converging manoeuvre of three large echelons, with Paris as their common target. The one to the right was formed by the armies led by Wellington and Blücher coming from the Netherlands. The one in the centre was composed of prince Wrede's forces and came from the north part of the Upper Rhine. The echelon to the left was formed by Schwarzenberg's remaining forces, which were based in Switzerland. To the rear, the Russian army was approaching the Rhine on its extension between Koblenz and Mannheim.

In the plan, first of all, to the left, Schwarzenberg was supposed to cross the Rhine near Basle on the 24th of June. From there, he would move along Belfort to the Saône, where he would arrive by the 1st of July. Three days later he was supposed to have reached Langres, from where he would move towards Chaumont. Second, Schwarzenberg was to reserve 41.000 men for the encirclement the *places fortes* of Besancon, Belfort, Auxonne, Huningue, Brisac, Schelstadt, as well as the fortresses of Youx, Salins and Ecluse. He was also to block Landau and Strasbourg with 18.000 men coming from the garrison of Mainz and 11.000 men of the Russian army.

Marshal Wrede was to cross the Rhine near Mannheim and take positions at its left bank, ready to take the offensive the moment sufficient Russian forces (50.000 men) would have arrived to block the *places fortes* at the rivers Sarre, Moselle and Meuse.

Barclay de Tolly, the commander of the Russian army, was expected to arrive with 150.000 men of his army on the Rhine between Mainz and Mannheim in the period 21st to the 29th of June. From there, he was to manoeuvre through Triers towards St.Dizier. In this way, he army would be able to support the neighboring armies led by Blücher and Wrede on either flank, depending upon the circumstances. Additionally, he was to detach some 35.000 men to encircle the *places fortes* of Metz, Thionville, Saarlouis, Bitsch and Phalsbourg.

On the right, both Wellington and Blücher were to advance into France on the 27th of June, through Maubeuge and between Philippeville and Givet respectively.

In this plan, Schwarzenberg was to move first as he was the most remote from Paris. But at least in Wellington's mind, there was another important reason for him to do so. As he had expressed back in May, the echelon in the Netherlands was the most advanced of the general allied line while at the same time the greatest French force was opposed to it. He therefore believed that it could not move as long as others of the allied corps would have relieved it from part of the enemy's force here. At the same time, the centre collected upon the Sarre would have to cross the Meuse on the day the left should be expected to be at Langres. And if these movements would not relieve the echelon on the right, they would have to be continued; that is to say, the left would have to continue its movements on both banks of the Marne, while the centre would cross the Aisne. At the same time, Wellington realized that the most probable result of these first movements would be the concentration of the enemy's forces upon the Aisne. In that case he believed the allies then had to throw their whole left across the Marne, while the right and the centre would either attack the enemy's position upon the Aisne, or endeavour to turn its left or the whole should cooperate in one general attack upon the enemy's position.¹

In compliance with Wellington's wish to consider it a separate theatre, the operations from Switzerland and the Piedmont were not included in the formal invasion plan dated 10th of June. Yet, Schwarzenberg had included them in his draft plan of four days earlier, but how they relate to the final plan remains unclear. They basically implied an advance of 50.000 men, led by general Frimont, through Simplon to Genève, as well as one of 30.000 men of the army of Italy and Piedmont through Torino towards Coni. Lyon was their common general direction. The second column though was supposed to be on the defensive at Coni and

to be reinforced there by 25.000 men led by general Bianchi coming from Naples, so as to manoeuvre from into the Provence right after.

Schwarzenberg's plan also provided for those cases in which Napoleon would engage into offensive operations, but whether these scenarios were an integrated part of the final plan is not clear. For that matter, in case Napoleon would do so against Wrede and his supporting Russian corps, these were allowed to fall back to the Rhine. In this way, they would enable the Anglo-Prussian and Austrian armies to press their operations, envelop Napoleon's army and for Wellington and Blücher to march to the French capital and for Schwarzenberg to move through Epinal upon Nancy.

In the alternative case that Napoleon would fall upon Wellington and Blücher, the other armies were supposed to speed up their advance towards Nancy and Langres, or Langres and Luneville. And in case such an offensive would prove to be a French success, an allied advance against Lyon, Langres and Nancy was thought to be fatal for Napoleon after all.

Schwarzenberg also reckoned that in case Napoleon would assemble his forces in the interior of the country and strike against his army, there would be more than enough chance for the remaining allied forces to march against Paris and the Midi of France.

The only realistic chance of success for Napoleon against the sheer military strength of the seventh coalition lay in running down the allied flanks with armies of equal strength and from there attack their centre, but his adversaries knew that he lacked the number of forces to do so.² Yet, if they would advance in one single, huge mass, it would be tempting for Napoleon to encircle it or to fall upon its communication. In this context, it was Schwarzenberg who was particularly nervous about his left flank, in case Napoleon would cut him off from the army in Italy and would expose Switzerland, "ce boulevard de la monarchie Autrichienne."

In overlooking the process of how the final plan for the invasion was established, it becomes clear that Schwarzenberg laid the foundations for it aided by Wellington and Blücher and that in its further development Schwarzenberg - while rejecting the plan of Von dem Kneesebeck - integrated elements provided by Wellington and the Russian czar.

¹ Gneisenau had drafted a second invasion plan in which he had further worked out the scenario of Wellington where the French would have concentrated their main forces around Paris. Although he did not specify any routes and dates, he proposed to swiftly invade France up to these French positions and from there to slowly constrict Napoleon. In Gneisenau's mind, this would force the French emperor to give battle to one of the allied armies, after which the others would race towards Paris and capture it. As Gneisenau had drafted this (second) plan on the 8th of June, it was too late to be assessed in Heidelberg before the war started.

² The total strength of Wellington's, Blücher's, Barclay de Tolly's and Schwarzenberg's armies was more than half a million men (Wellington: 95.000, Blücher: 115.00, Barclay de Tolly: 150.000, Schwarzenberg: 210.000).