

30th of April – 6th of May

The secret memorandum.

For some days a report was prevalent in the country that Buonaparte was about to visit the northern frontier.¹

Apart from that, it was probably on the 30th of April that persons who had left Paris on the 27th of April reached Brussels informing Wellington that a part of the old guard was ordered on the 26th of April to march in the direction of Beauvais.

This can be taken from sir Charles Stuart's letter, dated 2nd of May, to lord Castlereagh in which he writes: "Persons have arrived at Brussels who quitted Paris on Thursday last [27th of April]; it appears that a part of the old guard were ordered the preceding day to march in the direction of Beauvais.

Bonaparte was expected on the second of May at Lille or Valenciennes for the alledged purpose of inspecting the frontier fortresses, although I believe in fact to extricate himself from the embarassment which he feels under the controul [sic] of the party which certainly exercises the principal influence in his councils.

The spirit of the inhabitants of the frontier provinces continues to be favourable to the King's cause, and no material increase of force has been remarked in the line immediately opposite the British cantonments. [..]"² It all led Wellington to issue a "Secret memorandum" on the 30th of April. It reads:

Secret.

Memorandum for H.R.H. the prince of Orange, Lt.genl. the earl of Uxbridge, Lt.genl. Lord Hill & the Quarter Master General.

1. Having received reports that the Imperial Guard has moved from Paris upon Beauvais and a report having been for some days prevalent in the country that Buonaparte was about to visit the northern frontier, I deem it expedient to concentrate the cantonments of the troops with a view to their early junction in case this country should be attacked, for which concentration the Quarter Master General now sends orders.
2. In this case, the enemy's line of attack will be either between the Lys and the Scheldt, or between the Sambre and the Scheldt, or by both lines.
3. In the first case I should wish the troops of the 4th division to take up the bridge on the Scheldt near Avelghem and with the regiment of cavalry at Courtray to fall back upon Audenarde, which post they are to occupy, and to inundate the country in the neighbourhood.
4. The garrison of Ghent are to inundate the country in the neighbourhood likewise, and that post is to be held at all events.
5. The cavalry in observation between Menin and Furnes are to fall back upon Ostend, those between Menin and Tournay upon Tournay and thence to join their regiments.
6. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd divisions of infantry are to be collected at the head quarters of their divisions and the cavalry at the head quarters of their several brigades and the whole to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice.
7. The troops of the Netherlands to be collected at Soignies and Nivelles.
8. In case the attack should be made between the Sambre and the Scheldt, I propose to collect the British and Hanoverians at and in the neighbourhood of Enghien and the army of the Low Countries at and in the neighbourhood of Soignies and Braine le Comte.

9. In this case the 2nd and 3rd divisions will collect at their respective headquarters and gradually fall back towards Enghien, with the cavalry of colonel Arentschildt's and the Hanoverian brigade.
10. The garrisons of Mons and Tournay will stand fast, but that of Ath will be withdrawn, with the 2nd division if the works should not have been sufficiently advanced to render the place tenable against a *coup de main*.
11. General Sir Wm.Ponsonby's, sir O.Vandeleur and sir H.Vivian's brigades of cavalry will march upon Halle.
12. The troops of the Low Countries will collect upon Soignies and Braine le Comte.
13. The troops of the 4th division and the 2nd hussars after taking up the bridge at Avelghem will fall back upon Audenarde and there wait for further orders.
14. In case of the attack being directed by both lines supposed, the troops of the 4th division and the 2nd hussars and the garrison of Ghent will act as directed in Nos. 3 and 4 of this memorandum. And the 2nd and 3rd divisions and the cavalry and the troops of the Low Countries as directed in Nos.8, 9,10,11 and 12.”³

The covering note for the memorandum sent to lord Uxbridge the same day explains a bit on Wellington's ideas about the situation: “I enclose a memorandum which will explain the cause of the movement of the cavalry, and what I propose to do in the first instance in case the enemy should attack us. All the dispositions are so made that the whole army can be collected in one short movement, with the Prussians on our left. If the attack should be made between the Lys and the Scheldt, I shall, if strong enough, cross the latter and attack the enemy.”⁴

And after lord Hill had received it, he wrote to general Colville on the 1st of May as a result: “Should any attack on this country be attempted, it may be either between the Lys and the Scheldt rivers, or between the Sambre and Scheldt, or by both these lines. In the former case the troops of the 4th division to assemble at Audenarde, taking up the pontoon bridge at Avelghem. Those at Courtrai with the cavalry there to fall back also on Audenarde. The country about that place to be inundated, as also that about Ghent. These points Ghent and Audenarde to be held at any rate. In case the attack should be made by the line between the Sambre and Scheldt only, particular orders will be sent to the 4th division. Should the attack be made by both the supposed lines, the 4th division is to observe the instructions contained in no's 3, 4, and 5 of this memorandum.”⁵

It was also on the last day of April that the prince of Orange requested his brother Frederik to move his headquarters to Braine le Comte.⁶ This was accordingly carried into effect the day after; it was established at the Grand Place in the hotel Le Miroir, of a man called Simon.⁷



The 1st corps headquarters, Le Miroir, at Braine le Comte at the grand-place. It is the building in rear of the small pole which stands on the square in front.

And one day later, on the 2nd of May, the prince of Orange arrived at Braine le Comte with his staff.⁸ On the 1st of May, Wellington went up and down to Ath, but the reason for him to do so remains unclear.⁹ Some time later, Wellington expressed his idea of a threat on the 2nd of May to earl Bathurst: “It appears, by all accounts from France, that Buonaparte is about to attack somebody. It is here thought it will be us, but I am inclined to think it will be the Bavarians first, who have crossed the Rhine, and are between Germesheim and [...] to the amount of about 25.000 men. We may be attacked afterwards.”¹⁰

Still, after having received Von Dörnberg’s information, dated 2nd of May, about Napoleons departure from Paris on the 2nd of May, the presence of part of his equipages at Senlis and the movements of troops from Cambrai towards the frontier in the north [¹¹], Wellington felt the necessity on the 3rd of May to order inundations, as he wrote to the prince of Orange:

“I enclose the copy of a note I received in the night from Dörnberg. I think your Royal Highness had better order that the inundations should be formed immediately at Mons and Ghent, and that everything should be done that is practicable in the same way at Tournay. I will send orders upon the same points to Ypres, Nieuport and Ostend, with fresh water, though, as the governors are of the Low Countries, they had better be sent likewise by Your Royal Highness.”¹²

As a result, the same day, the prince ordered Von Dörnberg to form the inundations at Mons.¹³ Yet, as far as Nieuport was concerned, inundations must already have been formed by the 17th of April as a result of a French threat as coming from Dunkirk. As the approaches of the town had been inundated, a possible attack could only be possible at two points. The inundations extended nearly to Dunkirk on the one side and to Dixmuide on the other.¹⁴ In their turn, the inundations could be connected to those of Ostend.¹⁵

For the protection of the means for inundations near Mons, by serving as a keep or citadel, redoubts were constructed on the road from St.Ghislan and at Mont Palizel.¹⁶

By the beginning of June Wellington had to deal with complaints which had reached him from ministers of the government of the Low Countries about the inundations at Ostend and Nieuport, as ordered by Wellington, as the commander in chief of the army of king Willem. The duke

clearly felt irritated by the tone the ministers had used in these complaints and as a result he wrote to sir Charles Stuart on the 30th of May:

“The order for forming the inundations was given at the moment it was expected, from the intelligence received, that the enemy was about to attack this country; and the order was given the sooner, because it was known that time would be required to form the inundations of fresh water, and it was determined not to do the country the permanent injury of letting in the salt water.”

Wellington had expected protests of the local inhabitants, as it happened, “but did not expect that such conduct would be encouraged by the language used in a report by a minister of state.”¹⁷

Other information sent in on the 30th of April from Von Dörnberg didn't confirm any threat from the north of France, but information dated 29th of April and 1st of May forwarded by earl Bathurst did. This intelligence read:

“Hier, 28, les officiers supérieurs de la Garde Impériale ont été prévenues par un ordre secret (ordre que nous avons lu) de faire leurs dispositions de départ attendu qu'ils ne recevoient celui de partir que douze heures avant. Buonaparte doit partir sous deux ou trois jours: déjà une partie de ses domestiques et de ses équipages sont en route. Son projet est, dit-on, d'attaquer de suite si les alliés ne sont pas prêts.”¹⁸

“Les journaux ont annoncé le départ de Napoleon dans le nord, dans le but d'aller inspecter les frontières de cette partie de la France, ainsi que la situation des places fortes qui s'y trouvent; mais il est très probable qu'il ne reviendra pas à Paris, et qu'il se mettra à la tête de l'armée. Il vient d'ordonner la réunion des 1^{er}, 2^{me}, 4^{me} et 6^{me} corps, qui se trouvent cantonnés dans ce moment, le 1^{er} à Lille, le 2^{me} à Valenciennes, le 4^{me} à Metz et le 6^{me} à Paris et les environs de toutes ces places, Ces 4 corps réunis ensemble formeront sans doute la grande armée, dont il prendra le commandement, [...] Comme Napoléon a toujours sa garde avec lui, il faut encore ajouter à la force de la grande armée celle de la Vieille Garde, qui est au moins de 10.000 hommes dans ce moment.” The army would count 114.200 men.¹⁹

The meeting at Tirlemont.

It was probably on the 29th or possibly on the 30th of April that it was Wellington who proposed Blücher to meet at Tirlemont, halfway on the great road between Brussels and Liège, on the 3rd of May.²⁰ The actual invitation and idea about this meeting has probably not been put down in writing. Yet, the fact that it was most probably initiated by Wellington on one of these days can be derived from the letter of colonel Hardinge of the 30th of April to lord FitzRoy Somerset which says: “Prince Blücher will be at Tirlemont on Wednesday next [3rd of May] at eleven o'clock”.²¹

The actual meeting took place there on the 3rd of May in the Hôtel du Plat d'Étain.²² It probably took place between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.²³ A report on the meeting as published in the Staatscourant newspaper states: “[Wellington and Blücher] kwamen bijna terzelver ure, hieraan aan, verzeld [sic] van verscheiden generaals en opper-officieren. Na eene conferentie van twee uren, hebben dezelve zamen ontbeten, en zijn vervolgens weder vertrokken.”²⁴



The Hôtel du Plat d'Étain in Tirlemont.

It can be taken as a fact that from the Prussian staff at least Blücher, Gneisenau, Von Müffling, colonel Hardinge and colonel Von Nostitz were present, but from those present of Wellington's staff there are no details, apart from those related to general Von Röder.²⁵

Though there is no report on what has been discussed there, a few sources make a reference to the meeting. First of all, Wellington wrote the same evening to the earl of Clancarty:

“we hear of Buonaparte's quitting Paris, and of the march of troops to this frontier, in order to attack us. [²⁶] I met Blücher at Tirlemont this day and received from him the most satisfactory assurances of support. For an action in Belgium I can now put 70.000 men in the field, and Blücher 80.000; so that, I hope, we should give a good account even of Buonaparte. I am not satisfied with our delays.”²⁷

And to the prince of Orange he formulated the meeting briefly by stating: “My meeting with Blücher was very satisfactory.”²⁸ And to prince Hardenberg Wellington remarked that same day, as most probably referring to the meeting he had that day with Blücher: “Il m'est entièrement égal que j'aie beaucoup ou peu de troupes étrangères sous mes ordres; et, comme il paraît que le prince Blücher et les officiers Prussiens ne sont pas disposés à me laisser battre par des nombres supérieurs, je suis satisfait.”²⁹ And to Blücher he then wrote at 9 p.m:

“Je viens de recevoir une lettre du prince d'Orange de Braine le Comte, qui revenoit de Mons où il n'y avoit rien de nouveau de frontières. J'ai des nouvelles aussi des autres postes et il n'y a rien de nouveau.”³⁰

It would have been on the 4th of May that Wellington received baron Binder. Binder was minister of Austria at the court of king Willem. Binder reports about this meeting on the 9th : “[...] Le duc de Wellington est entré, vis-à-vis de moi, dans beaucoup de détails sur la force et la composition des armées respectives. Il porte la sienne, dans le moment actuel, à 70.000 hommes effectifs, dont la moitié Anglais, le reste Hanovriens, Belges et Hollandais, sans compter les garnisons. Il est très content des Hollandais. Il calcule, d'un autre côté, que l'armée française est forte de neuf divisions de 5.000 hommes chacune, faisant 45.000 hommes, et sept divisions de cavalerie faisant 10.000 chevaux; le tout à 55.000 hommes placés entre la Sambre et la mer, les garnisons des places non comprises. Cette armée est commandée par les généraux Erlon et Reille. Il croit que les Français, en se renforçant de tout

ce qu'ils ont de troupes disponibles entre Paris et la frontière, et même des gardes, ne pourraient pas attaquer ici avec plus de 80.000 hommes. L'armée prussienne, d'après le duc de Wellington, est forte de 100.000 hommes, sans les Saxons et un corps prussien destiné à les surveiller [...]"³¹

On the 5th of May, Wellington asked to earl Bathurst whether it would be possible to keep colonel Hardinge at the Prussian general staff as "in the interview which I had with Blücher the day before yesterday, he expressed himself much satisfied with him, and he begged that he might be allowed to remain."³² On the same day, Blücher himself wrote to Wellington: "Je suis bien redevable à la bonté de Votre Altesse de m'avoir donné toutes les nouvelles qui ont eu lieu devant la chaîne de vos troupes, et je ne manquerai pas d'avertir, Monsieur le Duc, de tout ce qui se passera ici. Dans ce moment il n'y a rien de nouveau: l'ennemi est toujours dans la même position, excepté de petits mouvemens [sic] qui signifient rien, et presque de même force. L'affaire avec les Saxons sera terminée aujourd'hui sans qu'il ont osé de s'opposer aux mesures que j'avais pris."³³

And Von Brockhausen wrote to the Prussian king about the meeting at Tirlmont: "In jeder Hinsicht war es nützlich, dass sich die beide Oberfeldherren sahen und verständigten, sie haben sich unter allen Zeichen der Freundschaft und des Vertrauens getrennt."³⁴

Finally, Wellington wrote to Hardinge on the 8th of May: "When I was at Tirlmont the other day, I explained to the Marshal [Blücher] in what manner I had arranged respecting the placing the King of France's officers upon the frontier, in order to receive the deserters from the French army etc."³⁵

Colonel Von Nostitz, aide de camp of Blücher, wrote in his diary: "Der Herzog von Wellington war für den folgenden Tag nach Tirlmont zu einer mündlichen Besprechung eingeladen worden. Wir begaben uns des Morgens früh dahin, und der Herzog liess nicht lange auf sich warten."

After extensively sketching what was discussed on the Saxon mutiny, Von Nostitz writes: "Nachdem mit dem Herzog von Wellington für den gemeinschaftlich zu führenden Feldzug die nöthigen Verabredungen getroffen waren, kehrten wir nach Lüttich zurück [...] Wenige Tage nach dem hier geschilderten Ereignis [the Saxon mutiny] verlegte der Fürst Blücher sein Hauptquartier nach Namur und ordnete demgemäss eine andere Dislokation der verschiedenen Korps an. Der Herzog Wellington hatte ihn dazu auffordern müssen, da nur durch eine genaue Verbindung beider Armeen eine Vertheidigung Belgiens gegen die Streitkräfte Napoleons möglich war."³⁶

Though he was not present at the meeting, it was later prince Thurn und Taxis, a Bavarian observer attached to Prussian headquarters, who wrote about it in his memoirs: "Ich erfuhr dass die Rüstungen des Feindes in den letzten Tagen bedeutend stärker geworden seien, und dass deswegen zwei Tage zuvor eine Zusammenkunft mit dem Herzog von Wellington in Tirlmont stattgefunden habe, bei welcher man übereingekommen, dass, falls der Feind die Offensive ergreifen sollte, man sich vereinigen und ihm eine Schlacht anbieten wolle. Es schien mir jedoch, dass die Sache noch nicht so nahe sei. [...] After describing the options for the invasion into France, he continues: "So wie aber schon damals dasselbe häufig im Blücherschen Hauptquartier bekämpft worden, so war dies auch diesmal der Fall und, wie oben gesagt, war man mit dem Herzog von Wellington übereingekommen, dem Feinde, wenn er über die Grenze ginge, ein Dezisionsgefecht anzubieten (wohlverstanden nach Vereinigung der beiden Armeen, und dann konnte man dies auch ohne grosses Risiko tun, indem man selbst im schlimmsten Fall dem Feinde an Anzahl gleich, ich glaube selbst etwas überlegen war). Indem Ich mich aber hier gleichsam für letzteres System erkläre, muss ich jedoch, um ganz unparteiisch zu sein, hinzusetzen, dass mir scheint, dass die zwei Armeen für diesen Zweck nicht gehörig konzentriert worden waren."³⁷

Intelligence.

On the 4th of May Von Dörnberg informed lord FitzRoy Somerset about the recent forced march of 6000 men of the Imperial Guard towards Charleville, and that all the troops from Cambrai, Douai, Valenciennes all marched by Avesnes and Solesmes in the direction of Givet and Charleville, where 60.000 to 80.000 were supposed to be assembled. Nobody would remain at Cambrai, Valenciennes, Bouchain etc.³⁸

The same day, the prince of Orange wrote to Wellington that Napoleon's departure from Paris had been postponed and that the strength of the French army would amount to about 243.000, artillery included.³⁹

On the 5th of May there is no trace of any concern of a possible French attack in Wellington's letter to his brother Henry. Actually, Wellington writes: "I have but very little to tell you since my last. All the preparations are continuing actively, and we shall soon commence our operations with an enormous force. Buonaparte has certainly no party in his favour excepting the army, and many of them, with the Jacobins, are looking to the duc d'Orléans as a kind of middle term between Buonaparte and the Bourbons. Some of the allies, including the emperor of Russia, are looking the same way; but I am inclined to hope we shall establish the Bourbons after all, which certainly will afford us the best chance of peace."⁴⁰

Yet, on the 6th of May Wellington wrote to sir Charles Stuart: "I beg leave to inform you that I have thought it expedient to lodge in the fortress of Maestricht one million rounds of musquet ammunition, in order to provide for any possible occurrence, which might take part of the army in that direction, and I shall be much obliged to you if you will apply to the government of the King of the Netherlands for permission for that ammunition to be received in the stores at Maestricht"⁴¹

Headquarters of the army of the Netherlands.

In the headquarters of the army of the Netherlands the situation was different though. Here, an alert was still in the air as on the 4th of May Constant Rebecque sent a similar order to *all* units of this army:

"Ingevolge de orders mij door Zijne Koninklijke Hoogheid gegeven, verzoek ik U.H.Ed.G. mij onverwijld of met den meesten spoed in te zenden een gedetailleerd rapport:

1.wegens den tijd in dewelke uwe divisie, hetzij aan uw hoofdkwartier of op eene plaats in de nabijheid van hetzelfde, zich verzamelen kan;

2.welke middelen U.H.Ed.G. in hare cantonneerings-kwartieren voorhanden vindt, om de troepen zoo dicht mogelijk bij elkaar te logeeren;

3.en eindelijk of het U.H.Ed.G. niet mogelijk is deszelve in groote gebouwen bij elkander te brengen, zonder echter het welzijn of de gezondheid van den soldaat te benadeelen.

*Tot dit laatste bij U.H.Ed.G. de mogelijkheid zijnde, zoo is het begeerte van Z.K.H. dat uw troepen dadelijk of zoo spoedig mogelijk doenlijk zoodanig geplaatst en gecantonneerd worden. [...]"*⁴²

And for the 2nd division, high command even went a step further, as Constant wrote De Perponcher on the 6th of May:

"Accuserende den ontvangst uwer missive van gisteren, kan ik niet af UH.Ed.G. te kennen te geven, dat het nodig is dat uwe divisie meer geconcentreerd worde, ten einde in geval van attaque met een veel meerdere spoed zich te kunnen verzamelen.

Het is de wil van Z.K.H. de prins van Oranje dat ingeval van alarm de eerste brigade haare verzamelplaats hebbe te Nivelles en de tweede aan de Quatre-Bras en dat op die plaatze ieder brigade hunne orders afwagte.

Ik verzoeke UH.Ed.Gestr. mij bij meerdere concentreering uwer divisie te melden, hoeveel tijd ieder brigade van noden heeft om zich na de door U ontvangen order op de aan haar aangewezen verzamelaatsen te bevinden – en mij wijders eene nieuwe Tabelle der cantonnementen in te zenden, wanneer de veranderde en meer ineen gedrongen kantonnementen door uwe divisie zullen betrokken zijn.

*Ik heb de eer u wijders te informeeren, dat op den 9en deze, een batterij artillerie te voet onder bevel van den kapitein Stevenaar te Nivelles zal arriveeren en zig onder uwe orders stellen, onder welke dezelve met de rijdende van den kapitein Bijleveld blijven zal tot nader order.”*⁴³

Resulting, De Perponcher issued an order for the concentration of his division on the 7th of May. For the 1st brigade this was in and around Nivelles and for the 2nd brigade at and around Quatre Bras.⁴⁴

Wellington and the army of the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, the problems Wellington had experienced with king Willem, his surroundings and officers of his army culminated in the duke writing on the 4th of May to earl Bathurst: “I am sorry to say that I have every day more reason to be dissatisfied with the King [Willem I], and with my situation here.

I have, however, this day sent him word by Nagall [sic], that if he does not forthwith put me in a situation which shall enable me to guard the British interests from the effects of the treachery of those by whom he is surrounded, and he does not carry into execution the measures settled between us according to their spirit *con amore*, I will have nothing to say to him, and will carry on my concerns with his son as I do with Blücher or any other foreign general.

To tell you the truth, I am not so very well pleased either with the manner in which the Horse Guards have conducted themselves towards me. It will be admitted that the army is not a very good one; and, being composed as it is, I might have expected that the generals and staff formed by me in the last war would have been allowed to come to me again: but instead of that, I am overloaded with people I have never seen before; and it appears to be purposely intended to keep those out of my way whom I wished to have. However, I’ll do the best I can with the instruments which have been sent to assist me.”⁴⁵⁻⁴⁶

Through time, it had become clear that the arrangements which had been made before to settle the relations between the army of the Netherlands and the forces which were under Wellington’s immediate command had been insufficient and that they led to mutual irritations and discussions. Instructions issued by Wellington to British officers in places where persons of the army of the Netherlands were in command had put the situation further to the extreme onto the test. All in all, it led Wellington to write in the strong words to Bathurst as the ones cited above.

It was just within this context that earl Bathurst had pointed Wellington out again about the importance of the specific British presence at Antwerp and Ostend, in relation to the role of king Willem I. He wrote on the 2nd of May: “Your Grace is well aware of the importance which we have always attached to the possession of Antwerp and Ostend, not only as the means of providing for our communication with the army, but as securing a retreat in case of mischance.

It is, therefore, very probable that His Majesty may be advised by those who were recently in the French interest to press for the occupation of these places, hoping either by our acquiescence to find a favourable opportunity to surrender them to the French, or, by our refusal, to create disunion between us and His Majesty.

However the latter is to be deprecated, the occupation of those fortresses by British commanders, considering the prevailing spirit of the officers of His Majesty’s army, is so important, that the prince Regent has commanded me to instruct your Grace to resist, with all

possible respect, any demands which His Majesty may make to deliver up the command of Antwerp or Ostend to officers belonging to his service.

Militarily speaking, it is evident that our possession of these fortresses is most desirable for the security of our forces on the continent. If there are any political reasons which His Majesty should urge against our occupation of them, your Grace is aware that the proper channel for the communication of any representations of that description is either through Sir Charles Stuart, or His Majesty's ambassador resident at the court of London."

And: "I have sent you a despatch authorising you to decline the surrender of Antwerp and Ostend. I thought it desirable that you should have such an instruction to plead, as in your correspondence with His Majesty you appear to be willing to give them up if the Dutch officers are persons who had not served under Buonaparte. You are enabled in the despatch to make His Majesty over to Sir Charles Stuart, if he continues to press the matter unpleasantly. I take it for granted you will do what you please with the Dutch troops when you have advanced into France."⁴⁷

Wellington's irritation about the situation had become that strong that he sent for baron Van Nagell whom he accordingly sent to Willem I to explain about it. This conversation was that clarifying and convincing, as right after Willem I wrote to Wellington:

"Le baron de Nagell m'a rendu compte de la conversation qu'il a eu ce matin avec vous. Je ne peux pas que regretter infiniment que des mésentendus occasionnent des difficultés qu'une explication franche préviendrait sur le champ. Dès votre arrivée en ce pays je me suis occupé de la manière convenable à remettre en vos mains un commandement que les arrangements précédents me fesoient juger être déjà entre vos mains. Il a été écrit au gouvernement Britannique au sujet de la forme à donner à semblable mesure, et dans l'attente de la réponse j'ai cru ne pouvoir préjuger la question.

Connoissant maintenant vos désirs, je me suis empressé de passer sur toute autre considération, et je prendrai encore aujourd'hui les décrets dont traduction ci-jointe, pour autant que vous me ferez savoir qu'ils remplissent vos idées, je suis prêt d'y porter toutes les modifications que vous jugerez convenable, attachant trop de prix au bonheur que mes fils ont de servir sous les ordres du grand capitaine qui a bien voulu former l'aîné, et à l'honneur et à la gloire que mon armée pourra recueillir sous votre commandement, pour ne pas aller au devant de vos désirs quand seulement je parviens à en avoir connoissance. Je me flatte que mon armée rendra digne d'un pareil chef, et que vous prendrez à son égard les arrangements dont il a été précédemment question que vous avez jugé convenables, et de l'exécution desquels je ne me suis pas occupé, jugeant que le généralissime donneroit des ordres quand il le jugeroit nécessaire."⁴⁸

As far as his position was concerned, it meant that Wellington was now nominated field marshal over the king's field army of the Netherlands, a command which was formally confirmed the day after.⁴⁹

Yet, the situation got so much out of hand that Van Nagell, in his turn, got a letter, dated 9th of May and stated as being "très confidentielle" from the Dutch ambassador at London, Hendrik Fagel, stating: "Lord Castlereagh me confia ce matin que le duc de Wellington était extrêmement mécontent et changrin des entraves et des difficultés qu'il éprouvait, et qui étaient telles qu'il (Lord Castlereagh) pouvait me dire, mais absolument entre nous, qu'il n'en avait pas rencontré de plus grandes en Espagne, ce qui était tout dire, et que si elles devaient durer il (le duc) serait dans la nécessité de résigner son commandement; que chaque mesure à prendre éprouvait de l'opposition et devenait l'objet d'une sorte de négociation qui, indépendamment de toute autre considération, faisait perdre un tems précieux. Il m'a bien paru par ce que Lord Castlereagh m'a dit que dans sa toute dernière dépêche le duc donnait à connaitre qu'il espérait un peu mieux de l'avenir, ce qui s'accorde avec ce que vous me marquez, mais j'ai compris cependant que les sujets de plainte n'avaient nullement cessé. Ce qui parait le contrarier le plus c'est une sorte de

jalousie et de méfiance dont il se croit l'objet et qui entrave toutes les mesures qu'il propose, tandis qu'il n'a que l'avantage de la cause commune et de notre roi lui-même en vue.[..]"⁵⁰

Just before, on the 5th of May, it still had led Wellington that day to write to earl Bathurst:

"till now I have no command whatever over the Dutch troops; and the screw with which I have operated upon the King is to threaten to make the real state of my relations with them known to the public and to the British government; but I believe now that I shall settle the matter in such a manner as that not only they will be effectually under my command, but that I shall be able to prevent any rascality in the garrisons by the King's revolutionary ministers. I will not, however, give up the prospect of English governors in our garrisons, if sir C. Stuart should think we can carry that object without difficulty."⁵¹

The nomination led Wellington to express himself in formal terms to the king on the 5th of May:

"J'ai eu l'honneur de recevoir la lettre de votre Majesté du 4, hier au soir, et je suis flatté de la confiance que votre Majesté est disposée de peser en moi, que j'espère pouvoir mériter par le dévouement avec lequel je la servirai.

Votre Majesté verra par les ordres que j'avais donnés aux commandans [sic] des troupes de Sa Majesté Britannique dans les places d'Anvers, Ostende, Ypres et Nieuport, combien il est nécessaire qu'il y eût enfin quelque chose arrangée sur le rapport dans lequel je devais me trouver avec l'armée de votre Majesté; car je peux assurer votre Majesté, que, jusqu'à ce moment-ci, je n'ai eu aucun rapport avec elle, excepté ceux que je dois aux bontés et à la grace de Monseigneur le prince d'Orange.[..]"⁵²

And on the 6th of May, Wellington asked earl Bathurst for the last formalities to be dealt with in writing: "I enclose you the copies of the King's decrees, by which you will see that the army is placed entirely under my command. The King alleges that one cause of the delay has been, that he has received no answer from England to the application he made for permission for me to accept the commission of General of his armies. I can accept the command, or rather, undertake the guidance of his armies, without such permission; but I cannot accept a commission from him without it."⁵³

The same day, the duke went to Ghent, to visit Louis XVIII, probably to report to him on his nomination; he went back to Brussels on the 7th.⁵⁴ Finally, it was on the 8th of May that Wellington wrote to earl Bathurst: "I have the honor to enclose the copy of a commission sent to me by the King of the Netherlands, by which His Majesty has appointed me to command his army as a Field Marshal in his service, and I request your Lordship to apply to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent for permission to accept the same."⁵⁵

Six days before, on the 2nd of May, the prince of Orange had taken over the command of the mobile forces of the army of the Netherlands from his brother Frederik.⁵⁶

Plans for the invasion into France.

Meanwhile, at Vienna, Von Knesbeck (on the 18th and 24th of April) and Schwarzenberg (on the 28th of April) formulated their plans for the invasion into France. Both documents probably reached Wellington and Blücher towards the 6th of May.

Those for the duke were accompanied by a letter written by lord Stewart. After having stated his impression that Knesbeck had great influence upon the Prussian king and the Russian emperor, Stewart writes: "[...] I am persuaded his [Knesbeck's] most anxious desire at present is to have a perfect understanding with you. You know there is a strong party in the Prussian army, and generals Gneisenau and Knesbeck are declared rivals, and are jealous of each other's influence. On the present occasion, however, it appears to me that general Knesbeck is ready to lend himself to counsels which emanate from you, and which he believes will have the approval of those with whom you are acting in the most immediate

communication. The Prussians are also anxious to have the glory of Blücher going hand in hand with you in the new campaign, and believe, not without some truth perhaps, that your two armies will be the most efficient and the most greedy for the contest. They prefer thus a projected operation in which you and Blücher would bear ostensibly the most prominent part; and there is no doubt your names untied would have a great effect on the morale of the enemy.”⁵⁷

And it was on the 5th of May that general Toll, as ordered to do so by the emperor Alexander, drafted his plan for the invasion of France. “Danach sollten Wellington, Blücher und Schwarzenberg auf drei Operationslinien zugleich vorgehen, die beiden ersteren aus der Gegend von Namur, höchstens drei Tagemärsche von einander. Schwarzenberg habe ungesäumt bei Mannheim und Speier [=Speyer] den Rhein zu überschreiten, 50.000 Mann in Elsass zu lassen, und mit dem Hauptheere über Châlons-sur-Marne auf Paris zu halten. Das Österreichische Heer in Piemont solle gegen Lyon vordringen, um die französischen Streitkräfte im Süden zu beschäftigen. Der Marsch auf Paris wurde von einer grossen Schlacht abhängig gemacht. Die Russen sollten nur als Rückhalt dienen, um dem Reiche neue Opfer für eine ihm fernliegende Sache zu ersparen.”⁵⁸

The situation of the 1st Prussian corps.

While the duke of Wellington had his eye fixed upon French activities on the border late April and taken his precautions, it was Zieten who did so on the 2nd of May.

That day he wrote a disposition for his army-corps what to do in case Napoleon would advance either from Binche or Maubeuge on one side, or from Beaumont or Philippeville on the other. It reads: “In dem eintretenden Falle, dass der Feind auf der Strasse von Binche oder Maubeuge vordringt, und seine Überlegenheit einen Rückzug der Vorposten und eine Allarmierung des ganzen Corps nöthig macht, versammelt sich:

die 1ste Brigade hinter Fontaines l’Evêque [sic]

die 2te Brigade hinter Charleroy

die 3te brigade hinter Fleurus

die 4te Brigade hinter Onoz⁵⁹

die Reserve-Kavallerie hinter Gembloux, woselbst sie die weitere Ordre erwartet,

die Reserve-Artillerie hinter Egheze

Die 2te Brigade lässt in Chatelet, Charleroy und Marchienne in jedem dieser Orte ein Bataillon, und die 1^{ste} Brigade in Fontaine l’Evêque 2 Compagnien zur Aufnahme der Vorposten zurück, wozu diese anzuweisen sind.

In Hinsicht der Vorposten, so ziehen sich die 2 Schützen-Compagnien der 1ten Brigade bis hinter das Defilee der Haine. Das Gros des 1ten schlesischen Husaren-Regiments setzt sich hinter Lerunes, wohin auch die Vorposten dieses Regiments sich in schräger Richtung wenden. Der Posten von Lobbes geht hart auf dem linken Ufer der Sambre zurück.

Das gros des Uhlanen-Regiments nr.6 geht auf Charleroy zurück, und schliesst sich an die 2te Brigade an. Der bei Thuin stehende Posten dieses Regiments wartet den Posten von Lobbes ab, und zieht sich mit demselben am linken Ufer der Sambre nach Marchienne. Alle Übrigen zwischen Thuin und Ham sur heure stehenden Feldwachen ziehen sich über Montigni de Thigneu auf Marchienne, die zwischen Ham sur Heure und Gerpennes stehenden Posten ziehen sich gerade auf Charleroy.

Die in Presle Sart St.Eustachée stehende 1^{ste} und 2te Esquadron des westphälischen Landwehr-Kavallerie-Regiments passieren die Sambre bei Chatelet, und schliessen sich der 2ten Brigade an, die 3te und 4te Esquadron passieren die Sambre bei Fallizole, ihre Vorposten nehmen denselben Weg und schliessen sich an ihre Esquadrons an, welche sodann auf dem linken Ufer der Sambre sich mit der 1sten und 2ten Esquadron wieder vereinigen.

Die Übergänge über die Sambre, die sich im Bezirk der respektiven Brigaden befinden, bleiben so lange besetzt, bis die Brigaden von ihren Sammelplätzen abzumarschieren beordert werden. Die Baggage (und der) Train wird bis Temploux zurückgeschickt.

Sollte der Feind eine weitere rückgängige Bewegung veranlassen, so ziehen sich:

Die 1^{ste} Brigade, nachdem sie ihre Artillerie schon nach Gosselies vorausgeschickt hat, über Roux auf Jumet und Gosselies zurück, und stellt sich hinter Gosselies als Avantgarde, und zur Unterstützung der Posten am Piéton Bache auf. Die 2te Brigade setzt sich vor Fleurus, diesen Ort im Rücken behaltend. Die 3te Brigade stellt sich hinter Fleurus rechts von der Strasse.

Die 4te Brigade links derselben in Kolonnen auf. Wenn die Brigaden den Befehl zum fortgesetzten Rückzug nach Fleurus bekommen, so behalten die 1^{ste} und 2te Brigade die Übergänge über den Piéton Bach besetzt, und zwar die 2te Brigade von Roux bis zum Einfall dieses Wassers in die Sambre.

Die 1^{ste} Brigade von Roux bis an die Römerstrasse. Das 1^{ste} Schlesische Husaren- und das Uhlanen-Regiment nr.6 bleiben als Soutien der am Piéton Bache aufgestellten Infanterie. Die Reserve-Kavallerie rückt nach Sombreuf [sic], die Reserve-Artillerie geht auf der Römerstrasse vor, bis in die Richtung diesseits dem Defilée von Gembloux, um sich im Fall, dass man in der Position von Fleurus das Gefecht annehmen will, a portée zu seyn, oder das ein weiterer Rückzug angeordnet werden müsste, von Gembloux über Temploux in die grosse Strasse auf Namur einfallen zu können.

Die Bagage der Brigaden geht gleich über Namur hinaus, wenn ein weiterer Rückzug nöthig seyn sollte, es befindet sich bei derselben per Brigade ein Offizier mit der nöthigen Bedeckung.

II. In dem Fall, dass der Feind von Beaumont oder Philippeville vorrückt, so bleibt die vorige Disposition ganz dieselbe.

Die 2te Brigade hingegen behält alsdann die Übergänge über die Sambre bei Marchienne, Charleroy und Chatelet so lange besetzt, bis die 1^{ste} Brigade von Fontaine l'Évêque in gleicher Höhe mit ihr angekommen ist, der Rest der 2ten brigade bleibt als Unterstützung der drei genannten Posten, und als Avantgarde des bei Fleurus versammelten Armee-Korps hinter Gilly auf der Strasse von Charleroy nach Fleurus Position fassend, bis auf weitere Ordre stehen.

Wenn der Feind von Philippeville kommt, und die Vorposten der 4ten Brigade werden zurückgedrängt, so muss diese Brigade die Übergänge über die Sambre so lange vertheidigen, bis das Armee-Korps versammelt ist.

Wenn einzelne französische bewaffnete Truppen auf den Vorposten ankommen, so werden solche, wenn sie nicht Überläufer sind, zurückgewiesen, wenn sie aber hierauf nicht achten, so muss man suchen sie einzufangen, und sie nach dem Hauptquartiere transportiren lassen. Auf keinen Fall muss zugegeben werden, dass eine Vedette sich auf friedfertige Weise zurückzieht.

Wenn der Fall eintritt, dass sich das 1^{ste} Armee-Corps bei Fleurus zusammenzieht, so begiebt sich das Hauptquartier nach Fleurus.

Charleroy, den 2ten May 1815. Von Zieten Für gleichförmigkeit der Abschrift der Chef des Generalstabes, v. Reiche”⁶⁰

As a result, it was nine days later that a detailed disposition was written for the 2nd brigade what to do for the defence of the passages over the Sambre (excerpts):

“Instruktion der 2. Brigade zur Vertheidigung der Sambre-Übergänge.

Da die Brücken von Stein sind und nicht ruiniert werden können, auch nicht mit Geschütz besetzt werden sollen, so muss sich die Vertheidigung auf ein wirksames Tirailleurfeuer einschränken. Im Speziellen war dem Kommandeur des Füsilier-Battalon 1. Westpreussischen Infanterie-Regiments, welches ursprünglich Marchienne vertheidigen sollte (was aber später abgeändert

und dem 2.Bataillon dieses Regiments übertragen wurde, gemäss einer späteren Disposition für die 2. Brigade vom 14. Juni) überlassen die Vertheidigungsanstalten der Stadt anzuordnen und es hiess wörtlich weiter:

“Da das Bataillon sich wieder ohne Verbindung mit der 1.Brigade von der Sambre zurückziehen kann, so wird ein berittener Offizier zum Oberst v.Hoffmann (kommandirte bis zu der in die Tage vom 17. Bis zum 20.Mai fallenden Ankunft des General v.Steinmetz die 1.Brigade) nach Fontaine l’Evêque geschickt, der fleissig hin- und her reitet und dem Kommandeur Nachricht bringt, welche Massregeln die 1.Brigade nimmt, und wenn eher dieselbe sich hinter den Piéton-Bach abzieht.

Verlässt die 1. Brigade Fontaine l’Evêque, um ihren Rückzug nach Gosselies anzutreten, und ist sie bis ohngefähr in die Gegend von Judonsart [?] angekommen, so zieht das Bataillon die Posten von Monceaux und Zoone [?] ein und tritt den Rückzug nach Damprémy an. Greift aber der Feind Marchienne mit Übermacht an, so muss die 1.Brigade avertirt werden, dass dieser Posten nicht länger gehalten werden kann, und von uns nunmehr aufgegeben wird, und nur dann erst kann der Rückzug auf Damprémy angetreten wrden, weil sonst die 1.Brigade abandonirt sein würde etc. etc.”

Über die Vertheidigung des Piéton-Baches von Damprémy bis Roux ist noch gesagt, dass das Terrain sich dazu sehr vortheilhaft eignet. Unterzeichnet ist diese Disposition: Marchienne au Pont, 11 Mai 1815, und nicht von dem General v.Pirch II, sondern von dem Generalstabsoffizier der Brigade Decker.”⁶¹ Additionally, Pirch II had issued the same day, the “Instruktion für den Artillerie-Posten bei Mont-sur-Marchienne.

Dieser Artillerieposten von 2 Kanons ist dazu bestimmt, 3 Signalschüsse zu thun, sobald der Feind wider Vermuthen unsere Vorposten-Chaine durchbrechen, und die Kantonirungen der Brigade bedrohen sollten.

Zu gleichem Zweck sind 2 Kanons von der 1.Brigade ohnweit Fontaine l’Evêque postirt, und da dieselben der französischen Grenze näher stehen als die von Mont-sur-Marchienne, so ist es wahrscheinlich, dass der Allarm von dort aus gegeben wird; in diesem Falle müssen die Signalschüsse ohne Verzug bei Mont-sur-Marchienne widerholt, und dadurch der Allarm auf der Seite nach Charleroy und Châtelet verbreitet werden.”

Additionally, the artillery-posts were warned not to induce an unnecessary alarm. In front of the artillery-post stood a cavalry-post at Nalines, and which was supposed, in case of alarm, to warn the artillery-post.

The instruction says further: “Die 3 Schüsse müssen in regelmässigen Pausen von einer Minute zwischenzeits gegeben werden; die Kuglen werden angebunden und starke Verschläge gebraucht. Die Kanonen bleiben jederzeit abgeprotzt und geladen.” Marchienne-au-Pont den 30.April 1815. V.Pirch II”⁶²

It was on the 5th of May that Zieten wrote to Gneisenau what he proposed to do in case the French would attack from Givet towards Namur. “[..] sollte wieder Vermuthen es sich bestätigen dass der Feind sich bei Givet sammelt, und er demnächst über Namur vordringe, so scheint es mir zweckmässig das I.Armeekorps zu sammeln und etwa zwischen Fleurus und Gembloux aufzustellen, um entweder bei dem weitem Vordringen des Feindes ihn entweder im Rücken anzugreifen oder nach Tirlemont zu gehen, wo nach früheren Ideen die Hauptschlacht angenommen werden sollte.”⁶³ The same day he wrote a disposition for his corps, as:

“Vorposten. Von der Römerstrasse Bonne Esperance bis an die Sambre nach Lobbes inclusive besetzt das schlesische Husaren-Regiment und berichtet an den General v.Steinmetz nach Fontaine l’Evêque.

Die zur 1ten Brigade gehörnden Schützen aus Thuin, werden auf das linke Ufer der Sambre verlegt, dergestalt, dass von der 1ten Brigade keine weiteren Posten auf dem rechten Ufer der Sambre verbleiben.

Rendezvous für die Brigaden:

1^{ste} zwischen Anderlues und Fontaine l'Evêque

2te Charleroi auf dem linken Ufer der Sambre

3te zwischen Lambusart und Fleurus

4te bei Gembloux

Reserve-Kavalerie bei Gosselies

Reserve-Artillerie bei Sombref”⁶⁴

Prussian general headquarters.

Based upon intelligence provided by Zieten and Wellington on a French collection of forces in and around Maubeuge, Blücher issued several orders the same day. To Zieten he wrote:

“H.Q.Lüttich, 5.Mai 1815

Euer Excellenz ersuche Ich Ihrem Vorschlage gemäss, sich sogleich nach Angesicht dieses bei Fleurus dergestalt zu konzentriren, dass Sie in wenigen Stunden nach empfangenem Befehl aufbrechen können, indem die mir von Ihnen eingesandten Nachrichten durch den Herzog Wellington bestätigt werden, und den Bewegungen des Feindes Gegenbewegungen folgen müssen.

Ob Sie es vorziehen wollen mit sämtlichen Truppen ein Bivouak zu beziehen, oder sie nur enge kantonieren zu lassen, ist Ihrem Ermessen ganz allein überlassen.

Der General v.Borstell hat einen ähnlichen Befehl zur Concentrirung seines unterhabenden Armeekorps bei Namur erhalten.

Ich ersuche Sie zugleich eine genaue Verbindung mit der Anglo-Batavischen Armee fortdauerend zu unterhalten, ebenso mit dem II.Armeekorps. Sollten dieselben angegriffen werden, so würden Sie die Entwicklung des Feindes bei Fleurus in jedem Fall abwarten, dem Herzog Wellington und mir so schnell als möglich Nachricht geben. Ich würde dann sogleich mich zu Euer Excellenz Korps verfügen und das Weitere anordnen.”⁶⁵

At the same time, the 2nd corps got the order to concentrate near Namur “so dass Ew.Excellenz nach Verlauf von 6. Stunden nach erhaltener Ordre aufbrechen können. Die Vorposten dagegen bleiben stehen. Die hierher detachirten Brigaden werden unmittelbar von mir Befehl empfangen. Eine weitere Disposition werde ich Ew.Excellenz geben, sobald Ich die feindlichen Bewegungen genau übersehen kann.”⁶⁶

Finally, it is the order to Von Kleist, dated 6th of May, which also throws light upon the orders which had gone out that day to Thielmann and Von Hacke (the future 4th corps):

“Ew.Excellenz benachrichtige ich hiermit, dass auf die erhaltenen Nachrichten der Bewegungen der französische Armee gegen die Niederlande der General Thielemann mit seinen unterhabenden Truppen von mir den Befehl erhalten hat, sich im Luxemburgischen bei Arlon und Bastogne zu konzentrieren, und ebenso den Generalleutnant von Hake die Ordre ertheilt habe, mit allen zu seiner Disposition stehenden Truppen von Koblenz nach Malmédy zur Bezwingung der aufrührerischen Sachsen zu marschieren, und ersuche ich demnach Ew.Excellenz um die Geneigtheit, mit allen Ihnen bereits disponibeln Truppen den Rhein zu passieren und bis Trier vorzugehen, wo sich zwei Divisionen des General Wrede zur Bewachung der Saar an Ihren linken Flügel und der General Thielemann an Ihren rechten Flügel anschliessen werden. Die noch obwaltenden Schwierigkeiten wegen Besetzung des uns

zugefallenen Teils am rechten Ufer der Mosel sind gehoben, und wird Trier und der Hunsrück uns am 7. Mai übergeben.”⁶⁷

By 7 p.m. it was colonel Hardinge who sent the duke a resumé of the Prussian measures that day: "The military dispositions made in the course of this day are the following: general Zieten's corps to concentrate in the neighbourhood of Fleurus. General Börstell's [sic] at Namur (deducting the twenty bataillons around Liège). General Bülow's (the 4th corps) has been ordered from Coblenz to Malmedi, where it is to arrive on the 11th, on which day it will be 14.000 strong, and on the 13th 23.000 or 24.000 strong.

General Thielmann's corps (the 3rd) will, on the 7th or the 8th, be concentrated at Arlon.

With regard to intelligence of the movements of the enemy on this front, I cannot ascertain that there is any information to be relied upon excepting some reports, not of a very clear nature, that the enemy is collecting a large force in the neighbourhood of Maubeuge. I requested to have a copy to forward to your Lordship of such a report, but I believe the stated collection at Maubeuge comes from your Lordship's neighbourhood rather than in front.”⁶⁸

As soon as Zieten had received Blücher's order on the 6th of May, he wrote him: "Euer Durchlaucht Befehl vom 5.Mai habe Ich soeben erhalten den Vorzug gehabt, und in Folge dessen die Konzentrirung des 1sten Armee-Korps dergestalt angeordnet, dass es sich bei Fleurus aufstellen kann. Nach denen diese Nacht bei mir eingegangenen Nachrichten, sollen 20.000 Mann über Avesne nach Givet marschirt sein, angeblich von Valenciennes kommend. Die 1. Und 2. Brigade habe Ich bestimmt als Avant-garde in Fontaine l'Evêque und Charleroy konzentriert sich auf zu stellen, um in Folge der Bewegung des Feindes, oder Euer Durchlaucht Befehle nach Fleurus ebenfalls aufzubrechen. Um die Nachrichten schneller vom Feinde erhalten zu können, werde Ich bei der Avantgarde und hier in Charleroy verbleiben.”⁶⁹

And, resulting, Zieten wrote the following disposition for his brigades:

“Disposition für den 6ten Mai. H.Q.Charleroy, 6.Mai 1815

Des kommandirenden Fürsten Blücher Durchlaucht haben die Konzentrirung des I.Armee-Korps bestimmt. Ich ersuche dieserhalb die Herren Brigade-Chefs in der Nähe der zum Rendez-vous ihrer resp.Brigaden in der schon früher gegebenen Disposition bestimmten Punkten die Truppen in enge Kantonnierungsquartiere zu verlegen, so dass die Brigaden sogleich versammelt sind, um nach Fleurus abrücken zu können.

Sämmtliche Bagage geht gleich nach Temploux und fährt dort zu beiden Seiten der Strasse, wo möglich auf einem nicht besäten Platz auf, per Brigade wird hierzu ein Lieutenant und von der 3ten brigade ein Premier Kapitain kommandirt.

Die Verpflegung der Truppen geschieht wie ferner aus den ihnen angewiesenen Magazinen, und müssen die von den Truppen verlassenen Quartiere zur Lieferung desnöthigen Gemüses herangezogen werden. Die Herren Brigade Chefs schicken, sobald sie beisammen sind, einen berittenen Offizier hierher um die weiteren Befehle zu empfangen. Die Vorposten bleiben unverändert stehen, und müssen Massregeln getroffen werden, dass sie bald an ihre respektiven Brigaden herangezogen werden können. Gez. V.Zieten”⁷⁰

As soon as the chief of staff of the 1st brigade, Von Hoffmann, had received his orders he wrote to Zieten: "Da die Truppen der mir anvertrauten Brigade theils schon enge bei dem Rendezvous kantonieren, theils auf dem befohlenen Abmarschweg über Gosselies – so bin ich gegenwärtig schon im Stande, Euer Excellenz; hohe Befehle jeden Augenblick zu vollstrecken. Die Vorposten, die stehen bleiben, sind so geordnet, dass sie bald wieder zu dem Gros stossen können. Fontaine l'Evêque den 6.Mai 1815. (gez.) v.Hofmann”⁷¹

For the 2nd brigade it resulted that day in the following positions:

“Tableau wie die 2. Brigade am 6. Mai konzentriert worden ist.
 Brigadestab in Marchienne-au-Pont
 1 Westf. Regt. 1 Batt. Charleroi & Marcinelle
 2 Batt. Dampremy, Charleroi – für den Piéton-Bach bestimmt
 Fusiliere – Marchienne-au-Pont, Monceaux, Hameau; 1 Comp. In Montigny-
 le-Tigneu zur Aufnahme der Posten von Ham-sur-Heure
 28 Regt. Châtelet, Bouffieux, Châtelineau
 2 West. Landwehr Regt. Gilly, Montigny sur Sambre
 Fuss Batterie nr. 3 Lodelinsart
 Train-Colonne Ransart
 Bagage Temploux.”⁷²

And as a result of the orders given, Von Thielmann wrote to Gneisenau on the 7th of May:
 “Die Kavallerie meines Korps wird den 8. d. Mts. enge Kantonnirungen um Arlon beziehen.
 Die Infanterie lass ich am 10. d. Mts. in ein Lager bei Martelange an der Sure, zwischen
 Bastogne und Arlon, rücken. Einen Posten detachire ich nach Neufchâteau, an dem Wege von
 Bastogne nach Bouillon. Vorposten stelle ich von Arlon gegen Longwy und Montmédy aus
 (westlich von Longwy). Mein Hauptquartier verlege ich den 9. nach Bastogne. Mein Korps
 besteht bis jetzt nur aus 7200 Mann Infanterie, 1800 Mann Kavallerie und 3 reitende
 Batterien.”⁷³

For the Prussian high command, the first days of May were dominated by a mutiny of some of
 the Saxon troops which formed part of the Prussian army.⁷⁴

Observations.

The secret memorandum.

A document which stands out in the time-frame of this chapter is the Secret memorandum
 which was issued on the 30th of April by the duke of Wellington. In the literature about the
 campaign of 1815 this document has never been put in a wider context.⁷⁵ Yet, the document
 deserves a thorough attention as it not only provides fundamental information about the actual
 composition and locations of Wellington’s army late April, but also about Wellington’s
 strategical ideas of that moment.

The moment the memorandum was written, the duke had about 60 to 70.000 men available.
 These were distributed over all divisions which the duke had at his disposal on the outbreak of
 hostilities on the 15th of June, except for those of the reserve which arrived late May. Of the
 divisions present, numerous regiments may not have been in the strengths they would have
 mid-June, while other ones were not present.⁷⁶

Through the memorandum, in combination with data of around the 9th of May (see below)
 most of the (general) positions of the divisions of the Anglo-Hanoverian-Netherlands forces
 can be located, apart from those of the forces of the army of the Low Countries. It results in
 the following picture:

Anglo-Hanoverian forces:

-1st division in and around Enghien

-2nd division in and around Ath

-3rd division in and around Lens

-4th division in the area between the Scheldt river and Grammont

Cavalry:

- the 2nd regiment of hussars (Grant) at Courtrai.
- some units were in observation between Furnes and Tournai. These were probably posts of the 2nd hussars (from Courtrai), the 12th light dragoons (at Renaix) and the 16th light dragoons (near Audenarde).⁷⁷
- the brigade of colonel Von Arentschildt. This was the 3rd regiment of hussars, but its position is unknown
- Vivian's and Ponsonby's brigade: both probably near Ninove
- Vandeleur's brigade: the 16th regiment of light dragoons stood near Audenarde and the 12th regiment of light dragoons at Renaix.⁷⁸
- Von Estorff's (2nd Hanoverian) brigade: these were the Prince Regent and Bremen & Verden hussars and they probably stood in the front of the 2nd and 3rd British divisions⁷⁹

Forces of the army of the Low Countries:

- 1st division between Mons and Charleroi (headquarters at Le Roeulx)
- Indian brigade in and around Genappe
- 2nd division between Nivelles and Tilly
- 3rd division in and around Braine le Comte

Cavalry:

- Van Merlen's brigade east of Mons, in front of the road leading to Binche
- De Ghigny's brigade south of Soignies, towards Mons
- Trip's brigade in and around Braine l'Alleud

The garrisons as mentioned in the memorandum (at Ath, Ghent, Mons and Tournai) consisted of units of the Low Countries, but these formed no part of the mobile army.

According to the introduction of the memorandum, it was based upon the intelligence that "the Imperial Guard had marched from Paris upon Beauvais and [that a] a report had been for some days prevalent in the country that Buonaparte was about to visit the northern frontier". Coupled to this intelligence, Wellington took into account that Napoleon might attack either "between the Lys and the Scheldt, or between the Sambre and the Scheldt, or by both lines." Apparently, the intelligence he had was such that no actual direction in his own front could be foreseen and that it could come from the line between Lille and Maubeuge.

In this sense, the memorandum should be regarded as a document which contains the duke's general idea how to cope with a French offensive on his own front (resulting in the different scenarios) and which he had established at an earlier date, but that the actual threat of late April induced him to reveal it.⁸⁰

In the first scenario, an attack between the Lys and the Scheldt, a French attack was expected to take place from the frontline between Lille and Valenciennes. First of all, this scenario shows the importance of Ghent (i.e. the court of Louis XVIII).

Secondly, it does the same for Audenarde, as the allied bridgehead on the Scheldt between Gent and the French border and as a protection for Ghent, also because of the role of additional inundations.

In this scenario, Wellington used the Scheldt river as a defence line, and that is why the (pontoon) bridge at Avelghem was to be taken up. This measure had to do with the fact that the high ground opposite the village was very strong, so therefore the position and passage could be well guarded and secured.⁸¹

Yet, the heights between Avelghem and Audenarde were not well suited as a defensive position as they formed no range. It was as colonel Chapman of the engineers who recorded in 1814 "the country recedes from the Scheldt, presenting only points of high ground and extensive valleys between them."⁸²

As for Audenarde as such, its value as connecting the heights on both sides of the Scheldt in one system of defence (as Wellington proposed to 1814) was limited. Yet, it would form a good *tête de pont* upon the Scheldt, especially if the inundations were completed and the city garrisoned.⁸³

While having the Scheldt river to delay the advance of the enemy and the inundations at Audenarde and Ghent to give these places extra protection, Wellington would concentrate most of his units on their headquarters only, probably to be flexible to meet the precise direction of the French attack as it developed.⁸⁴ In this scenario, he placed his units on the frontline stretching from Audenarde - through Ath and Soignies - to Nivelles, with cavalry at Tournai as an outpost and to cover the passage over the Scheldt. The garrisons of Mons and Tournai had no specific role.

In this way, the following roads leading from the north of France towards Brussels were covered:

The one from Lille-Tournai-Ath-Enghien-Brussels

The one from Valenciennes / Maubeuge- Mons-Soignies / Braine le Comte – Halle – Brussels

The one leading from Binche-Nivelles-Brussels.

The general accent was clearly directed towards the protection of Brussels, with an open left flank towards the Prussian army. Striking detail is that in case he felt he was strong enough, Wellington intended to pass the Scheldt and attack the French, thereby moving away from the Prussian army.

The second scenario supposed a French attack between the Scheldt and the Sambre and as coming from the frontline between Valenciennes and Maubeuge. From this sector the distance to Brussels is shorter and there are no rivers in between. Mons is opposite this frontline.

The general accent, again and now even more, is clearly directed towards the protection of Brussels, with an open left flank towards the Prussian army. Wellington now concentrated his forces in a more concentrated area south-west of Brussels, which was basically a triangle having (the garrisons of) Mons and Tournai as most important points at the flanks of the base and in front to delay the French advance, and with the major part of the army in the area of Enghien, Soignies and Braine le Comte and the cavalry in reserve in the third line at Halle. In this way, the roads leading from the north of France towards Brussels were covered:

The one from Lille-Tournai-Ath-Enghien-Brussels

The one from Valenciennes / Maubeuge- Mons-Soignies / Braine le Comte – Halle – Brussels

The 4th division was kept at Audenarde in a flexible position, to use it possibly for the defence of Ghent or Brussels in case the French might make an irruption with a detachment over the Scheldt at Audenarde, or further south.

Striking detail in this scenario is that the units of the army of the Netherlands were pulled towards Soignies and Braine le Comte and not to Nivelles and this is what one would expect in having the French attack further east. And this while Nivelles (in stead of Braine le Comte) is mentioned in the first scenario where the French attack is supposed to take place further west.⁸⁵

Additionally, in the second scenarion, no defence is taken into account of the roads leading to Brussels through Binche – Nivelles and Charleroi – Quatre Bras, so on Wellington's extreme left flank.

The scenario as sketched allowed the duke the chose a battleground in the area of Enghien, Soignies and Braine le Comte and the cavalry in reserve in the third line at Halle, and this with the possibility to link up with the Prussians who were on his flank.

On the 10th of April Wellington already wrote to Gneisenau:

“Si l’ennemi nous attaque, ce qui, dans les circonstances où nous nous trouverons demain, n’est guère probable, il débouchera probablement entre la Sambre et l’Escaut. Dans de cas-là le corps du général Ziethen formerait la gauche de l’armée, et se rassemblerait à Charleroi; et je crois qu’il serait à propos que les autres troupes de votre Excellence se rassemblent à Namur.”⁸⁶

The third scenario basically integrates both other scenarios in the sense of having the second one as a basis, added by the extra defences taken for Audenarde and Ghent (through inundations as well) and of course the removal of the pontoon bridge at Avelghem.

The whole memorandum confirms the general picture of the defence of Belgium by Wellington: the accent in defence by the field army is clearly east of the river Lys, so as to cover Brussels and Ghent, while Flanders (i.e. the area west of this river) was defended by garrisons in strong places like Ostend, Furnes, Nieuport, Courtrai and Ypres. Yet, linked to this system Wellington doesn’t distinguish any possibilities of a French main and feint attack.

There is another most important document related to the memorandum and that is its covering note written to Uxbridge. This note, however brief, contains two vital elements upon which the memorandum and - with this - Wellington’s concept of the defence of his sector was based. The first one was speed, i.e. that the army could be collected in one short movement and the second the proximity of the Prussian army on the left of Wellington’s army, i.e. that a concrete cooperation with this army was feasible.

However, whatever importance the memorandum in itself may have, the way it was followed up remains unclear. In the introduction it is stated: “Having received reports that the Imperial Guard had marched from Paris upon Beauvais and a report having been for some days prevalent in the country that Buonaparte was about to visit the northern frontier, I deem it expedient to concentrate the cantonments of the troops with a view to their early junction in case this country should be attacked, for which concentration the Quarter Master General now sends orders.”

As the Quarter Master General was supposed to send orders right away, it can be concluded that they were issued the same day or the day after, on the 1st of May. Yet, until now, such orders never surfaced and if they were issued, when were they undone ?

From the way the situation is described it becomes clear that Wellington felt there was yet no immediate threat as neither Napoleon, nor the Imperial Guard had arrived on the frontier.

And it was two days later that Wellington thought that the threat of an attack might materialize on the Bavarians first, and on him even later. Yet, having received Von Dörnberg’s information, dated 2nd of May, about Napoleons departure from Paris, the presence of part of his equipages at Senlis and the movements of troops from Cambrai towards the frontier in the north, Wellington felt the necessity on the 3rd of May to order immediate inundations at Mons, Ghent, Tournay, Ypres, Nieuport and Ostend.

The only orders available are those to the army of the Netherlands army of the 4th of May, but these may have been the result of the order of the duke to the prince of Orange of the 3rd of May which was based upon intelligence of Von Dörnberg. Additionally, these orders were no direct concentration orders, but orders for the preparation of a possible concentration. Other than that, if they were linked to the secret memorandum, they would probably have been issued on the 1st or on the 2nd of May, at the latest.

As far as the structure of command within Wellington’s army was concerned, it should be pointed out that, although he was in command of the 1st corps since the 11th of April, the prince of Orange led this corps in April while being in Brussels and not from some place in the middle of its cantonments (like lord Hill did from Grammont).⁸⁷

It was only by the 2nd of May that the prince got in Braine le Comte as commander of the 1st corps and it was also then that he took over the command over the field army of the Netherlands from his brother Frederik.⁸⁸

It should be stressed further that since mid-March both the northern and southern component of the army of the Netherlands had been mobilised and that they had to be amalgamated into one army. Further, the establishment of the 1st corps on the 11th of April was one on paper only and had to be worked out in the coming weeks.⁸⁹

As long as Wellington had no command over this army (and he hadn't until the 5th of May) all issues related to this army were dealt with, i.e. prince Frederik and general Constant Rebecque. Some matters may have been advised upon by Wellington (such as the changes of positions of the army in the second week of April which was worked out by prince Frederik and Constant Rebecque -⁹⁰), but all were matters of the army of the Netherlands in the strict sense of the word. It was for this reason that Wellington, while having no command over this army, was obliged to work with king Willem I and this was hard enough for him.⁹¹

This situation was the main reason for Willem, the prince of Orange, to stay in Brussels as an intermediate between Wellington and king Willem. The duke needed him to get things accomplished with the army of the Netherlands over which he had, until then, no full control as the arrangements between both the army of the Netherlands and the forces under the immediate command of Wellington had been insufficient.

This situation changed early May, when king Willem finally gave him the full command over his army. The fact that the prince of Orange left for Braine le Comte on the 1st of May, so still before this transfer of command had been settled, may have had to do with the French threat at that time, however.⁹²

The meeting at Tirlemont.

An event which clearly stands out in the time-frame of this chapter is the meeting of Blücher and Wellington at Tirlemont on the 3rd of May 1815.

Initiated by Wellington on the 29th or 30th of April [⁹³], the meetings background was formed by several elements.

First of all, it was the first meeting of both commanders after Blücher's arrival at the army on the 19th of April. For the practical points of a daily exchange of information between both headquarters, Blücher asked Wellington to keep colonel Hardinge as a liaison between both headquarters.⁹⁴ The result was that from the 4th of May onwards, lieutenant colonel Hardinge reported to the duke almost daily (most of the time in the late afternoon or early evening), while Wellington did the same back to Hardinge the other day.⁹⁵

What actually triggered Wellington to arrange for the meeting were two situations: the threat upon his own army on the one hand and the news from Vienna about the date set for the invasion into France (1st of June) on the other.

As far as the first point is concerned, the moment both Gneisenau and Wellington met in Tirlemont, their last contact had been a confirmation - as Gneisenau's had phrased it to Wellington - that he could *en cas d'attaque*, compter sur l'assistance de toutes nos forces disponibles ici, et nous sommes décidés à partager le sort de l'armée sous les ordres de Votre Excellence." Yet, the most important issue was in this promise that Wellington would maintain his position in front of Brussels and not fall back beyond it or to the sea.

Wellington, in his turn, accepted and confirmed his position under the circumstances of that moment (mid-April).

Yet, now that the situation *had* changed (i.e. that Wellington was under threat), the duke felt he had to make sure about the Prussian promise under the current circumstances.

The significance of the link between the former agreements as both commanders had them and the initiative for the meeting of Tirlemont should be emphasized. There can be no doubt that the general outline and concept of Wellington's secret memorandum was discussed in relation to any potential French attacks. The letter of Wellington to Clancarty actually points to a Prussian assurance of support to Wellington and not the other way around and this was, in the situation of that particular moment, therefore the most logical line to expect.

In a general sense it came down to the confirmation of the agreement of both commanders, in case of a superior French attack, to engage a *combined* battle as it was felt that only in a *combined* battle the war could be won. That's also why the concern of Wellington at this particular moment. At the same time, there are no indications that this general agreement was worked out regarding time and space in further detail.

The meeting Tirlemont, as far as Wellington is concerned, is framed in time by the secret memorandum on the one hand and by another important document on the other.

It is the letter which the duke wrote to the prince of Orange on the 11th of May, in which he says: "In the situation in which we are placed at present, neither at war nor at peace, unable on that account to patrol up to the enemy and ascertain his position by view, or to act offensively upon any part of his line, it is difficult, if not impossible, to combine an operation, because there are no data on which to found any combination. All we can do is to put our troops in such a situation, as, in case of a sudden attack by the enemy, to render it easy to assemble, and to provide against the chance of any being cut off from the rest." It is a reaction to the prince's fear of the French making their principal effort along the road leading through Binche and Nivelles, so on Wellington's left flank and towards the Prussians.

This most important part of this letter shows that Wellington's mind was fixed upon two elements: to have his army easy to assemble, and to provide against the chance of any units being cut off from the rest of the army. Further, it shows the duke's pragmatism in relation to any cooperation with the Prussians: though he was fixed upon the possibility of having their support in general, at the same time he wasn't intent upon fixing himself upon any special arrangements in his sector nearest to the Prussian army or towards it.⁹⁶

In the context that the threat was felt upon Wellington's army, not on Blücher's, Wellington promised to Blücher at Tirlemont that he would inform him about his situation as soon as he would return to Brussels. He did so that same evening by writing to Blücher that there was, as he had understood through the prince of Orange, no news from the border. This signal is another confirmation that the threat was felt from Wellington's side in particular, and not from Blücher's.

Taking Wellington's words to Clancarty further, it would seem that the Prussians, from their side, did not bind themselves in their promise for support upon any specific positions from where they would possibly be able to support the duke.

Within this context, reference should be made to two Prussian documents which were drafted almost parallel in time to the meeting in Tirlemont.

The first one is the disposition as issued by Von Zieten to his corps on the 2nd of May. It instructed the 1st corps what to do in case of a French attack coming from either Maubeuge towards Binche, or from Beaumont or Philippeville towards Charleroi.

What caused Zieten to issue this disposition remain unclear, but it may very well have been intelligence received through his own means and through Wellington's about the French forces concentrating around Maubeuge and Valenciennes.

Basically, the disposition describes a defensive movement, which was intended to protect the assembling of the whole army somewhere east of Fleurus against an enemy which was coming in a main attack from the (south) west.

In its details, the disposition contains two steps in defence: the first (and temporary one) along the Piéton and the Sambre, and the second one at Fleurus.

As such, no account is taken with Wellington's army; the protective movement is directed east, leaving Wellington on his own.⁹⁷

It should be stressed that the disposition was based upon an attack upon the Prussian army, while the Secret memorandum was based upon one on the Anglo-Netherlands-German army. In this sense they didn't prescribe any possibilities of cooperation; they each prescribed measures to be taken within their own sectors. What is meant to show here, however, is that Fleurus was a focus for Zieten to turn to in case the French attack would come from the directions as sketched.

The same element, a concentration of at least the 1st corps, can be found in Zieten's letter of the 5th of May for Gneisenau, thoughbeit in connection to a French offensive through Namur. At the same time Blücher wrote to Zieten in the same sense, i.e. to prepare a concentration near Fleurus and to take up a waiting position there, depending on what would happen: either a French offensive on Wellington from Valenciennes / Maubeuge or one upon his own army, through Namur.

In either case, Blücher himself would leave for Fleurus and take further measures from there.

Taking all these documents together, there was for the Prussians a connection between a French offensive upon Wellington on the one hand and a focus upon a position near Fleurus (better: between Fleurus and Gembloux, i.e. around Sombreffe) on the other. At the same time as well, surveys were done by Von der Gröben on the position of Point du Jour as a possible one to face the French. Concluding, this area was certainly on the Prussians' mind and not only in connection to a French attack upon their own section alone.

Taking these elements together, it is not unlogical to suppose that the sector around Sombreffe and further east towards Gembloux, has been mentioned at Tirlemont by the Prussians as a possible point from where they could come to support the duke, as he was facing Napoleon in the area between Enghien, Halle and Braine le Comte (according to his scenario as sketched in the Secret memorandum, in case Napoleon would attack between the Scheldt and the Sambre).

The meeting at Tirlemont was not intended, as sometimes it is being depicted, as one in which both commanders drafted a long-term and detailed defence-strategy, covering all possible eventualities of a French invasion into the Netherlands. The reasons for and the character of the meeting should be sought for the most part in the events of that particular moment and not so much in a desire to more detailed arrangements for the defence of the Netherlands.⁹⁸

And these events were not only related to a French threat upon Wellington in particular only.

As stated above, the imminent invasion into France was a subject at least as important as a defence strategy for the Netherlands. It was late April that both Blücher and Wellington had received the news from Vienna that the invasion had been set for the 1st of June. Until that date, at least Wellington lived in the hope that it might have started much earlier, i.e. the beginning of May as he had suggested himself.

The invasion was another reason to meet, but what has been discussed in detail – apart from this new date and the present plans of the duke, Gneisenau and Von Kneesebeck - remains a mystery.⁹⁹

Yet, the spirit in which at least Wellington entered the meeting -one of deception about the decision taken, but yet again pointing out to the necessity of the Austrians to be present for the invasion – is sketched by baron Binder to Metternich on the 4th of May:

“J'ai vu, dans un assez long entretien, que j'ai eu hier avec le duc de Wellington en sortant de table chez l'ambassadeur d'Angleterre, que ce maréchal, en regrettant la décision du conseil de guerre tenu à Vienne, le 20 avril, au sujet de sa proposition de commencer les opérations le 1er mai, n'en a pas moins toute confiance dans l'activité, l'énergie et la solidité de nos mesures; je me suis convaincu, d'un autre côté, qu'il tient encore beaucoup à l'idée de prononcer le rétablissement des Bourbons comme but politique de la guerre et qu'en

convenant qu'il a été d'un avis différent à la fin de la dernière campagne, avant la signature du traité de Paris [...], il est d'avis, aujourd'hui, qu'il est de l'intérêt des souverains alliées de rattacher leur marche à ce traité, dont les avantages n'ont été accordés à la France qu'à la faveur de la reconnaissance de la dynastie légitime." ¹⁰⁰

On the 30th of April colonel Hardinge gave his opinion on the state of the situation regarding the invasion of France to sir Hudson Lowe: "I hear from Vienna that at a military conference it was decided operations could not commence before the beginning of June. That the Austrians could not be on the Rhine before the end of May, and we may therefore, knowing their slowness, calculate upon the middle of June as the period of a general movement unless indeed during this important interval there should be any patching up of peace." ¹⁰¹

Last but not least, by the time the meeting at Tirlemont was about to take place, the Prussians were in the middle of the Saxon rebellion which had broken out. The event could have been reason enough for Blücher to call the meeting off, but yet he deemed it of more importance to attend it.

One of the very first, if not the first, account of the meeting at Tirlemont is given by Von Clausewitz (1835). After having sketched the different points from which Napoleon could attack (from Lille, from Maubeuge-Valenciennes or further east, against Charleroi and Namur) and Wellington's resulting movements, he writes:

"Les dispositions du duc semblent suffisantes pour ces hypothèses, car un ou deux jours ne pouvaient lui faire défaut.

C'est à ce but qu'ont aussi tendu les conférences que le duc eut à Saint-Trond, au commencement de Mai, avec le prince Blücher, lorsqu'il promettait, en pensant à la position choisie par Blücher près de Sombreffe, de concentrer son armée près de Quatre-Bras et de venir à son secours au cas où la masse principale de l'ennemi se tournerait contre lui; il faut donc comprendre par l'expression "armée" la majeure partie seulement de celle-ci, ce que Wellington pouvait lui-même nommer sa masse principale: la réserve jointe au corps d'aile gauche." ¹⁰²

Two years later Von Damitz (1837-1838) wrote: "Es war in den letzten Tagen des Monats Mai, als der Feldmarschall Blücher mit dem Herzoge v. Wellington eine Zusammenkunft hatte, um die gegenseitige Hilfsleistung bei einem Angriffe Napoleons nochmals bestimmt festzusetzen. Man nahm bei diesen Unterredungen an, dass Napoleon bei einem Angriffe der Niederlande den Gewinn von Brüssel als erstes Objekt ansehen würde. Die Richtung, welche er seinen Streitkräften zur Erreichung seines Zwecks geben dürfte, war nicht genau vorher zu bestimmen. Nach der Aufstellung der französischen Corps und nach der Lage der Verhältnisse, musste man darauf gefasst sein, in der Richtung von Valenciennes gegen Ath und Brüssel, oder in der Richtung von Maubeuge über Mons auf Braine le Comte oder Nivelles gegen Brüssel angegriffen zu werden. Auch blieb die Angriffs-Direction von Philippeville über Charleroi gegen Brüssel dem Feinde offen.

In den Richtungen über Ath, Braine le Comte und Nivelles galt der Angriff der englischen Armee. Wählte Napoleon dagegen die Direction auf Charleroi, so traf das Preussische Heer der erste Stoss und die Verbindung beider Armeen wurde bedroht.

Von preussischer Seite machte man sich anheischig, im Fall Napoleon seine Streitkräfte gegen die englische Armee auf Ath, Braine le Comte oder Nivelles dirigiren würde, welche Punkte die Engländer festzuhalten versprochen, dass man sich auf der Flanke der feindlichen Operationslinie bei Sombref concentriren wolle, und dann nach Maasgabe der Umstände zur Unterstützung herbei zu eilen entschlossen sein werde.

Sollte Napoleon indess in der Richtung auf Charleroi vordringen, so galt dem preussischen Heere der erste Angriff, und dann wolle man preussischer Seits die Schlacht annehmen und das Schlachtfeld so wählen, dass die Hilfsleistung der Engländer gesichert bliebe. Für diesen

Fall versprach der Herzog v. Wellington sein Heer bei Quatrebras zu sammeln, und die Armee des Fürsten Blücher zu unterstützen.”¹⁰³

Though Von Damitz mentions late May as the date at which the meeting took place, without mentioning any place where it was held, it can be presumed that he refers to the meeting of Tirlemont of the 3rd of May.¹⁰⁴

As he puts the weight in the issue for both commanders upon Brussels as being the main goal of the French and in this connection to Wellington’s section in particular, he suggests at the same time that the meeting was some kind of detailing of former more general arrangements for defence.

As has been shown, this was not the case. Von Damitz’ version, however, shows that Wellington would be fixed upon holding the places of Ath, Braine le Comte and Nivelles and this more or less matches the area as Wellington focused upon in the Secret memorandum in case Napoleon might attack between the Scheldt and the Sambre.

In this connection Von Damitz binds the position of Sombreffe to this position of Wellington as being one as promised by the Prussian high command from which they intended, according to circumstances, to support the duke.

In this, Von Damitz goes a step further in mentioning not only Sombreffe but also a promise, but the fact that the Prussians actually did make this promise cannot be fully ruled out that Sombreffe was a concentration point in their mind in this period of time. It also fits into the general picture of the moment: the threat upon Wellington and not upon the Prussian army.

Yet, Von Damitz takes this element in as well, and it is here that he starts projecting later events – a French attack upon the Prussian army through Charleroi - into the meeting. By that time this threat upon the Prussian army was no specific issue, but the one upon Wellington, however, was. In what follows, Von Damitz does the same again: projecting later events into the meeting in this case by having Wellington make the promise to Blücher that he would in that case collect his army at Quatre Bras (there where the roads Nivelles – Namur and Charleroi – Brussels crossed), so as to be able to support the Prussian army. It presumes a position of the Prussian army there where this could be possible, but here Von Damitz doesn’t mention it by name; he describes it as a choice of the Prussian leadership in such a way “dass die Hülfeleistung der Engländer gesichert bliebe.”

This description reflects a more general approach which was the baseline of the arrangements of both commanders: to choose their battlegrounds in such a way that cooperation could be possible without going into details on time and space.

As for Quatre Bras, within the context of the moment, this point had no special importance at all. For that reason the mutual agreements were far too general. It also didn’t fit in with Wellington’s ideas on mutual support on his left flank at that time. And, above all, the threat was felt upon his army, not on Blücher’s, let alone the place where the threat then would have been on Blücher, as this could also come from Givet towards Namur.

It is in this connection that it is necessary to refer to what Von Clausewitz says on the meeting at Tirlemont.¹⁰⁵ He suggests as if the meeting was one meant to set arrangements for all eventualities of a French attack, thereby using Wellington’s sector as a starting point. But then he suddenly turns to a promise of Wellington to Blücher, in case of a French attack upon him. Apart from this highly contradictory element in this short version of the events, Von Clausewitz is also hindered by hindsight, as Von Damitz is, by projecting later events into the meeting by using the combination of the terms Quatre Bras – Sombreffe.

Some years later Siborne described an arrangement between both commanders, without however mentioning the meeting at Tirlemont as such, nor when or where it was held as:

“Blücher had decided, in the event of an advance by the French across the line of the Sambre, by Charleroi, upon concentrating his army in a position in front of Sombref, a point upon the

high road between Namur and Nivelles, about fourteen miles from the former place, and only eight miles from Quatre-Bras, the point of intersection of this road with the one leading directly from Charleroi to Brussels, and at which Wellington had agreed, in that case, to concentrate as large a force as time would admit, in order to check any advance in this direction, or to join Blücher's flank, according to circumstances.”¹⁰⁶

Whether Siborne is mentioning the meeting of Tirlemont or not, this version of an arrangement between both commanders is for the most part probably copied from Von Damitz and is herewith merely a projection of later events into those which had a completely different background as those in June 1815.¹⁰⁷

In 1870, Chesney, like Von Damitz, depicted the meeting as one intended to establish a long-term and detailed arrangement for defence of the Netherlands, thereby at the same time projecting later events into the meeting as well, as he binds these arrangements to a French attack through Charleroi only, while this was not the point where a French attack was expected late April / early May. For the arrangement in itself, he takes the words as used by general Von Müffling in his memoirs (1851).¹⁰⁸ Because of their importance, the passage is quoted in full:

“Dies [a defeat of one of both armies] zu vermeiden, wass alle Regeln empfahlen, und die Vereinigung der englischen und preussischen Armeen zu einer Defensiv-Schlacht, aus welcher in die Offensive übergegangen werden konnte, war durch die Verhältnisse und Localität so deutlich vorgezeichnet, dass darüber gar kein Zweifel aufkommen konnte.

Stand die englische Armee bei Gosselies, die Verbindungs- und Rückzugslinie über Brüssel nach Antwerpen hinter sich, die Preussische Armee bei Ligny, die Verbindungs- und Rückzugslinie, die Römerstrasse nach der Maas hinter sich, so waren sie in ihrer Fronte durch die Sambre völlig unangreifbar. Wurde aber Napoleon genöthigt eine der beiden flügel anzugreifen so konte er auch nicht hindern, dass der andere Flügel mit gesicherter Rückzugslinie ihm vorwärts entgegenschwenkte und von der Sambre abschnitt.

Nördlich der Chaussee von Sombref nach Quatre Bras, also im Rücken dieses Versammlungslagers, wurde die Dyle in einer tiefliegenden und wasserreichen Niederung gebildet, ziemlich senkrecht auf die Sambre nach Löwen abgeführt, und in ihrer ersten Hälfte von 5 lieues bis Wavre für grossere Truppen-Abtheilungen mit Artillerie ganz unpracticabel, diente dieses Hindernis dazu, die strategische Aufstellung beider verbündeten Heere zu verstärken. Hiernach war für die preussische Armee als Versammlungspunkt vorgeschrieben: zwischen Sombref und Charleroy, und für die englische Armee in letzter Instanz zwischen Gosselies und Marchiennes.”

After having criticised Wellington for not having left his headquarters on the 14th of June, he claims that if he had “so konnten am 15ten Abends sämmtliche Korps der englischen Armee innerhalb des Dreiecks Frasnes, Quatre-bras, Nivelles bivouakiren und am 16ten Morgens die englische Armee in der Offensive bei Gosselies sein.

So hing es also von dem kleinen, unbedeutenden Umstand ab dass der Herzog am 14ten Brussel verliess und Napoleon wäre am 16ten Juni in die caudisnischen Gabeln gefallen !”¹⁰⁹

From the use of the word “vorgeschrieben” in designated concentration-areas on the one hand and the principle of a defensive battle on the other, the suggestion is given as if this had been something which was agreed upon in a meeting of both Wellington and Blücher. As such, it has been linked by Chesney (and others) to the meeting of Tirlemont.

However, from the text as it is there is no reason to make this connection. The word “vorgeschrieben” is indeed misleading and suggests as if there was some kind of protocol for the combination as described by Von Müffling. Yet, the passage cited has in a number of ways nothing to with the meeting at Tirlemont.

First of all, within the total text of the recollections it comes out of the blue and Von Müffling gives no reference to some kind of meeting or so at all. Further, there is no reference either to elements discussed in the meeting as I have described it.

What makes the essential difference is the starting point from which Von Müffling has written and that is where Napoleon would strike. Was this at the end of April / early May against Wellington (along the line Valenciennes – Brussels), this is not the one Von Müffling is dealing with. As a starting point he sketches the line Charleroi – Brussels instead. But if this statement of Von Müffling has no relation to the Tirlemont meeting, what is then its status ?

Von Müffling's statement should only be regarded as a pure strategical one, as a description of a position he felt by far the most suitable for a defensive battle and in which Napoleon would have "fallen into the Caudin forks", i.e. would have suffered a humiliating defeat.¹¹⁰

As such, it is not linked to the meeting of Tirlemont, but stands on its own. After touching upon the absolute need for cooperation in order to carry out a defensive battle which could be turned into an offensive one and therefore into victory, it is for Von Müffling self-evident where this would be possible: in the triangle Sombreffe – Gosselies – Charleroi. Having Wellington's army around Gosselies and Blücher's army around Sombreffe, so with their communication lines at right-angles to their front and at the same time having the Sambre in front, he regarded this arrangement as the ideal position to beat the French, as if they would attack one of both armies in force, there would always be the other one to assail them in their rear and to cut their communication and supply line.

Taking it from this scenario, it would be in the positions as he describes the armies that this combination would be possible. Yet, it is just one scenario and it is also here that hindsight has crept into Von Müffling's account as this is the one which took place as he subsequently uses this - in his idea - perfect combination against Wellington to criticize him for not having placed his headquarters in Nivelles on the 14th of June and thereby having made it impossible to work this way.

Yet, in disconnecting this passage of Von Müffling's recollections from the Tirlemont meeting, what remains is yet still the basic strategical element which was all too valid for the situation in general no matter where Napoleon would strike: the absolute need for cooperation as felt by both armies so as to be able to beat Napoleon.¹¹¹

While Von Ollech (1876), from the documents available, sees the absence of a promise of Wellington to Blücher, it is Von Pflugk Harttung (1903) who considers the meeting as one which was meant for further directives for both armies. However, at the same time he rightly claims that at the time of the meeting it was Wellington who was under threat of an attack, resulting in a promise for support from Blücher and not also one from Wellington to Blücher.¹¹²

Von Lettow Vorbeck (1904) concludes that Blücher didn't make any *specific* promise, as he was in the middle of the Saxon rebellion.¹¹³

De Bas and T'Serclaes de Wommersom (1908-1909) are typical examples of authors using hindsight in the interpretation of the meeting as they use the events of the campaign to understand it. Resulting, their starting point is a French attack upon Blücher and not upon Wellington. Additionally, they also portray the meeting as one meant for the design of overall arrangements of the frontier of the Netherlands.

Winand Aerts (1915) clearly distances himself from Von Damitz by stating that during the meeting "il fut sans doute question de la défense des frontières et de l'appui mutuel, mais on n'entra dans aucun détail de temps ni de lieu." Whatever positive this approach might be, Aerts lacks to see the other elements of the specific situation of that moment.¹¹⁴

Houssaye (1917) also dismisses the idea of the pretended concentration on the line Sombreffe – Quatre Bras as at that time the direction of the French attack could come from Lille, Maubeuge, Condé or Philippeville. He also states: "Bien plutôt, les deux commandants en

chef s'étaient entendus seulement pour un jonction en avant de Bruxelles, sans fixer le point précis; les circonstances en décideraient." Yet again, however, Houssaye is another historian who doesn't recognize the fact that the moment the meeting was held where the accent of a French threat was: on Wellington.

Additionally, he is wrong in claiming that Ropes describes the meeting as one dealing with the invasion of France only. In fact, Ropes writes: "The two commanders no doubt fully intended to act in concert, and expected and relied upon the hearty support of each other, but there was not, as we believe, any definite agreement as to particular steps to be taken in the event of a French invasion." By using the word "particular" Ropes wants to show that the agreements on the defence of Belgium were of a general kind, in contrast to those who claim they were linked to Sombreffe and Quatre Bras. So basically, Houssaye and Ropes are in the same line of thinking. But yet again, it is also Ropes who doesn't make the connection to the specific situation of the moment, late April / early May.¹¹⁵

Hofschröder, also noting a lack of sources on the meeting itself, tries to reconstruct it by using the sparse accounts of it, orders issued later and subsequent actions of the allied commanders. In using the first category he ascertains the "various assurances of assistance to Wellington", but at the same time he translates this, apparently in combination with the way prince Von Thurn und Taxis has described the arrangements made at the meeting, as "the whole allied strategy as being clarified between Blücher and Wellington at Tirlemont." For Hofschröder, the starting point for the meeting was "to develop the allied plans." In this way, he shares the same (erroneous) approach of describing the meeting as one set up to develop a long term strategy for the defence for both commanders. By then using later (Prussian) orders and events of the 14th and 15th of June in order to understand the nature of the arrangements of the meeting, Hofschröder is also caught by hindsight by projecting an agreement into this meeting that Wellington and Blücher "had agreed to move rapidly and in force to support each other in the event of one of their armies being attacked by Bonaparte. In case of a French assault via Charleroi, the Prussians planned to fall back to the Sombreffe position to fight a major rearguard action, in which they would be supported by Wellington's forces."¹¹⁶

By doing so he binds the battle of Ligny to the meeting at Tirlemont, but this event stemmed from a different background. That is why he runs into trouble in trying to match both backgrounds, by asking himself "why there was only one offensive possibility, namely an assault on the Anglo-Dutch-German army?"

The answer is that this was the one realistic option at the time of the meeting of Tirlemont. An offensive through Charleroi on the Prussians -as it happened mid-June - wasn't. The confusing element here might be the area around Sombreffe, as this is so closely linked to the events of the 15th and 16th of June and therefore very hard to disconnect it from these events.

At the time of the meeting of Tirlemont, however, this area comes out as a point which was more than one in which a potential battle-ground was located.¹¹⁷

In taking a look at the orders of Blücher to Zieten and Pirch on the 5th of May, it is very tempting to understand them as pointing to the area involved as a probable battle-ground, but that is not what was all about at that particular moment. What Blücher is doing here is this: all signs indicated a possible French attack upon the left of Wellington's army. In that case Zieten had to fall back upon Fleurus and Pirch to concentrate near Namur.

There, at Fleurus, Zieten had to await the French movements to see whether the enemy would turn to Namur or to Wellington. The reason for this was that Blücher, despite the intelligence which was available, did not fully rule out the possibility that Napoleon might move from Givet upon Namur after all, so he reckoned there could be two options. It needs no explanation that Namur had for the Prussians a natural and eminent importance, not only in the relation to its mainland, but also towards Wellington.

During the development of the French advance, Fleurus was for Zieten to be a point to await this, no more. Pending its result, Blücher would take further measures. These would then be related to the two possible scenarios as sketched.

In case of a French attack upon Wellington, Blücher could include the area around Sombreffe as a concentration point for the Prussian army from which Blücher could give assistance to the duke of Wellington and who would probably face Napoleon somewhere between Enghien, Halle and Braine le Comte. This line of attack corresponded to one of the scenarios as Wellington had designed it in his Secret memorandum and having this position as a result.

And in case of an attack upon Blücher through Namur he could concentrate his army further east, between Sombreffe and Gembloux. In that sense, this area can be regarded as the operational area of the Prussian army, while the one between Enghien, Halle and Braine le Comte was the one for the duke of Wellington.

As a result, the strategic dimensions in which the positions of both armies should be seen were much larger as is traditionally done, by binding them on the points Sombreffe – Quatre Bras. In both cases, however, the road leading from Namur to Nivelles can be seen as the major line of communication between both areas.

Hofschröer completes the “whole allied strategy” by stating that, while Blücher was concentrating his forces near Sombreffe, “Wellington would move in support of the Prussians.” Apart from the fact that there is no foundation for this assertion (Hofschröer gives no sources), the context of the situation right then was just the opposite, and this is something which clearly comes out from the documents available: it was one in which it were the Prussians who gave assurances of support, not the other way around, as there was no reason for it.¹¹⁸

It is in this context that also the disposition written by Zieten for his corps on the 2nd of May is an easy prey for hindsight, i.e. to bind it to the events of mid-June, as Zieten sketches in this disposition the scenarios to be complied with in case of French attacks coming from Binche / Maubeuge or Beaumont / Philippeville.

Above all, Wellington did *not* ask Blücher at *Tirlemont* to change the positions of his army (see below). The fact is that Blücher did so a few days after the meeting. Of course, the movements were the result of the goodwill expressed at Tirlemont, but in themselves they were only ordered the moment after Blücher had got further intelligence from both Zieten and Wellington (cf. orders of Blücher to Von Zieten and Von Kleist in particular – see below).¹¹⁹

Taking all comments together, the following general, concluding observations on the meeting at Tirlemont can be made. First of all, one on the historiography of it. Taking most accounts together, they suffer not only from hindsight, but also from a dualism: to portray the meeting as one meant to design a general defense strategy covering all eventualities on the one hand, while at the same time entering only into one of them (a French attack through Charleroi). For the reasons why the meeting has been described this way, reference should be made to the evaluation of the cooperation of Wellington and Blücher on the 15th and 16th of June (see below).

Further, as a battle near Tirlemont was no option for Wellington and Gneisenau had decided to cross the river Meuse and advance as far as Charleroi (so as to close up on Wellington to cover Brussels), another approach in cooperation was necessary.

The cooperation as such was no matter of discussion, as both commanders realised that their chances of a complete success could only exist in cooperation and in that sense it was obvious that both Blücher and Wellington agreed to support each other in case Napoleon would attack them. Now, the option was no longer the choice of a battleground for a joint battle east of Brussels, but one south of Brussels, either by the union before or during that decisive battle. It

is what prince Thurn und Taxis refers to as that there was an agreement “dass, falls der Feind die Offensive ergreifen sollte, man sich vereinigen und ihm eine Schlacht anbieten wolle.”

In this context Gneisenau or Blücher wrote from the 17th of June to prince Schwarzenberg: “Zwischen mir und dem Herzog von Wellington war festgestellt, dass diejenige Armee, gegen welche der Hauptangriff erfolge, sich vertheidigen solle, während die andere, auf welche dafür der Scheinangriff stattgehabt, die Offensive ergreifen sollte.”¹²⁰

The same principle, of a defensive position of the one allied army, and of an offensive one of the other can be found in another statement of Gneisenau, which reads: “Er [Wellington] hatte diese Konzentrirung zu wiederholten Malen und namentlich noch am 15ten Juni auf das bestimmteste, und zwar binnen zwölf Stunden, zugesagt, und mit uns verabredet, der Feind möge die von beiden Armeen, welche er wolle angreifen, so solle die andere ihm in den Rücken fallen.”¹²¹

It is unclear when or where this statement had been made, but – again – it is a most general one which was built upon the presumption of a double line of the French attack, and at the same time upon a combination of defence and offensive of both allied armies in which these actions would have a mutual influence resulting in a decisive, victorious battle.¹²²

As far as allied cooperation between the rivers Scheldt and the Sambre was concerned, what mattered for both armies was that each of them had its flank to the partner army open to either receive or to give support to the other. What mattered was a realistic prospect of cooperation, so as to avoid each army having to fight a major action alone. This cooperation could be either by a direct junction just before a battle or an indirect one during a battle, wherein one army would be on the defensive while the other would move in the flank or rear of the enemy. In other words: the basic formula was that both armies would concentrate in time on one point or two points arranged in such a way that both armies would be able to cooperate.¹²³

That was the basic agreement upon which all hung and all further resulting arrangements were to be dependent on the specific situation regarding time and space.¹²⁴

That specific situation at the time of the Tirlmont was dictated by the threat upon Wellington’s army. That is why he asked for assistance and that is also why Blücher gave his assurances of support and all this in the connection of Wellington’s sector, the area between Enghien, Halle and Braine le Comte on the one hand, and Blücher’s sector, around Sombreffe, on the other.

The Prussians.

It has been asserted that the measures taken in Prussian headquarters on the 5th of May were a direct result of the meeting at Tirlmont, but this is incorrect. It becomes clear from the orders issued that day that the initiative was a Prussian one and which was based upon intelligence about a French concentration around Maubeuge which had dropped in through Prussian channels (Zieten) and Wellington.

As a result, because of their proximity to Napoleon’s forces, the 1st and 2nd corps were supposed to concentrate their forces around Fleurus and Namur respectively, while the 3rd corps was to move further west to the area between Arlon and Bastogne, so as to be on the left of the 4th corps which was supposed to march up to Malmédy.

In its turn, the 3rd corps was to be relieved near Trier by Von Kleist, on the Moselle, with the 3rd corps to his right (Luxemburg) and king Wrede to his left (behind the Saar river). In general, in this way Blücher moved up towards the Meuse river on the one hand, while covering the Rhine (Mainz) on a frontline reaching from Liège to the right to Saarbrücken to the left on the other.

At the same time, a possibility that Napoleon might attack from Givet towards Namur was not fully excluded, at least by Von Zieten. In that case, Zieten would – if it was up to him - collect

between Fleurus and Gembloux to attack the enemy in his rear or to fall back upon Tirlemont.¹²⁵

It means that in this scenario, it was taken into account that a major battle was to be expected north of Namur, on the left bank of the Sambre, and east of Gembloux. It would mean that the 2nd and 3rd corps would cross the Meuse from the south and the 4th corps to move up from the east, to cross the same river at Liège.¹²⁶

Apparently, it was for Von Zieten an option to move to Tirlemont to be able to accept a major battle there, as had been proposed by the Prussian leadership before. In the situation of that particular moment it is, however, impossible to assess whether this leadership still had this concept in mind. On a higher level, the instruction for Zieten on the 5th of May also read:

“Ich ersuche Sie zugleich eine genaue Verbindung mit der Anglo-Batavischen Armee fortdauerend zu unterhalten, ebenso mit dem II.Armeekorps. Sollten dieselben angegriffen werden, so würden Sie die Entwicklung des Feindes bei Fleurus in jedem Fall abwarten, dem Herzog Wellington und mir so schnell als möglich Nachricht geben. Ich würde dann sogleich mich zu Euer Excellenz Korps verfügen und das Weitere anordnen.”¹²⁷

It meant that Zieten was supposed to keep a close contact with both Wellington and Pirch I to make sure about a possible French threat, either coming from Valenciennes – Maubeuge or Givet, but at the same time – in both scenarios – he was supposed to concentrate his forces around Fleurus.

Fleurus was considered by the Prussian high command as the position for Zieten to await any further developments in the French advance, also in case of one against Wellington. It implicated therefore an ambiguous manoeuvre: initially one away from the duke’s army and then, if deemed necessary, one towards him to give him assistance.

At least in his mind, Zieten also regarded the position around Fleurus (and further east) not only as one from which it would be possible to give aid to Wellington, but also as one for possible manoeuvres further east or north.

At the same time, as has been stated before in the chapter covering the 10th of April, Wellington also did not rule out the chance of getting involved in some action further north-east, i.e. towards Maastricht, as can also be taken from his writing to sir Charles Stuart on the 6th of May.¹²⁸

There is a claim that during this meeting at Tirlemont, Blücher would have asked the duke to take the Saxons troops over into his army.¹²⁹ As Hussey as pointed out, however, this is incorrect as by the morning of the 3rd of May, as he left for Tirlemont, Blücher simply couldn’t be aware yet of the full scale of the event, whereas, by doing so, he would have flouted the king’s formal order (dated 22nd of April) to incorporate the Saxons into his army. Other than that, Wellington’s words to Hardenberg from the evening of the 3rd of May make clear that the Prussians might have sought help, no more.¹³⁰

First version: 1st January 2007 - Last revised: 5th October 2012 - Copyright © Pierre de Wit

¹ For instance, it was lieutenant colonel Schnouckaert van Schauburg who informed Constant Rebecque on the 29th of April about the imminent inspection by Napoleon of the fortresses in the north. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

It was also general Van Merlen who reported to Constant on the 1st of May that rumours were spreading that Napoleon, accompanied by the Imperial Guard, had left Paris. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

That same day, the Staatscourant, newspaper, published from the Gazette de France, dated 24th of April, that Napoleon was to leave Paris for the northern frontier.

² In: Malet, A. (ed.) Louis XVIII et les Cent-jours à Gand Vol.II p.84

³ KHA, A40 VI CW10

HL, WP nr. 1.458 and 6.1.19 (dated at 30th April)

BL, Add.ms.35.060

WD, Vol.XII p.337-338

According to the index of letters from the duke of Wellington, it would have been sent on the 30th of April to Uxbridge and on the 2nd of May to the prince of Orange; lord Hill is not mentioned. In: HL, WP nr.6.1.19

F.de Bas erroneously dates it either on the 15th [13th ?] of June [!]. In: La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p. 358-360, but at another page (p.296) he dates it the 30th of April.

This is based upon an undated copy in the papers of major general Sir Hudson Lowe to which the date of 13th of June is added later. In: BL, Add.ms. 20.192 p.278

Though the register mentioned here was written after the campaign, the original in the KHA and the note to lord Uxbridge dated 30th of April sufficiently prove that the memorandum was written on the 30th of April. In: WD, Vol.X p.338

In fact, the copy to Hill as referred to above is also dated 30th of April.

Cf. Hussey, J. - Note 1478. The significance etc. p.58-59

On the 1st of May, general Colville, commander of the 4th British division, wrote to his brother "His Grace has given directions that the cantonments of the troops should be concentrated in order to their being ready to act as may be required."

The day after, on the 2nd of May, Colville received a personal letter from lord Hill, stating: "You will find your troops very much scattered at present, and having no Head I have scarcely been able to get a correct return of them. I do, however, hope that in the course of a few days we shall be better arranged in every respect that we are at this moment."

Colville himself had arrived at Ostend on the 24th of April and established his headquarters in the château at Pothegeen near Audenarde. From there he visited Brussels where he was on the 26th, 27th and 28th of April.

Before his arrival, the division was led by general Hinuber. In: Colville, J. – The portrait of a general p.189-191

⁴ WD, Vol.XII p.338

⁵ SRO, TD 97/1

On the 2nd of May, lord Hill wrote in his letter book: "Transmitted Sir H.Clinton his secret instructions. I wrote to sir Ch.Colville." In: BL, Add.ms.35.062

⁶ KHA, A37.VII.B4

⁷ Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.12

Note of the aide de camp Wauthier from Brussels to Constant Rebecque, dated 30th of April
Added to this note is a list of the prince's aide de camps: (British) Tripp, Somerset, Russell, March, Webster, Berkeley, Abercromby; (Dutch) du Caylar, De Knijff, Wauthier, Cruquenbourg, Van Limburg Stirum, van Hooff, Ampt, du Chastel. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.8
Chassé had to evacuate Nivelles and leave one company as a guard for the general headquarters. Cf. Constant Rebecque to Chassé, 1st of May. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1113

Constant Rebecque, however, claims in his journal that headquarters moved to Braine le Comte on the 2nd of May and were established in le Miroir. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25
As members of the prince's staff he also mentions captains Curzon and Rooke.

⁸ Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Bosscha, J. - Het leven van Wilem den tweede etc. p.181

Falck, however, claims he left for Braine le Comte on the 3rd of May. Cf. his letter to Roëll, 3rd of May 1815. In: Gedenkstukken etc. Vol.VII p.770 (original in archive of Roëll).

⁹ Galesloot, L. - Le duc de Wellington à Bruxelles p.144

Cf. Staatscourant, newspaper, dated 5th of May 1815.

On his way back, or to Ath, he inspected the division of Guards at or near Enghien. This was reiterated by the prince of Orange on the 30th of that month on the Bruyère de Corteau, near the high road leading from Mons to Soignies. In: Hamilton, F.W. The origin and history of the first of grenadier guards. Vol.III p.12-13

¹⁰ WD, Vol.XII p.344

[] Here the manuscript is left blank.

¹¹ WSD, Vol.X p.216

¹² WD, Vol.XII p.344

In fact, Wellington had Lowe send orders on the 3rd of May to the commanders at Ostend, Nieuport and Ypres, as: "I am commanded by His Grace the duke of Wellington to signify to you that the fresh water sluices are to be used without delay for inundating the whole of your environs at Ostend and as there is a report that Bonaparte is supposed soon to visit the frontier and more than ordinary vigilance should be used with respect to every thing that is occurring in that direction. Your reports to me of any intelligence obtained I beg the favour of being transmitted without delay.

Memo.

The above is sent circular to the commandants of Nieuport and Ypres, with addition in the latter that the cavalry there is to be directed to fall back upon Ostend, in the event of an enemy's attack." In: BL, Add.ms.20.114 f.59 and 88

¹³ KHA, A.40.XIII.21 and in WD, Vol. .p.344

On the 5th of May, colonel Carmichael Smyth reported to the prince about the activities on the works in Ath, in the citadel of Ghent and on the work on the redoubts upon the Courtrai road. In: KHA, A.40.XIII.10

At what date they were established is unknown, but there were inundations at least as well at Ghent, Audenarde, Tournay, Ypres and Nieuport. Cf. The intendant of the department of the Scheldt to Wellington and his reply, both of the 1st of July 1815. In: WSD, Vol.X p.644-645

¹⁴ Sabine, E. (ed) , Letters of colonel Sir Augustus Frazer etc. p.486, 491-492

¹⁵ Cf. Wellington in a memorandum dated 23rd of April, for the king of the Netherlands. In: WD, Vol.XII p.324-326

¹⁶ Wellington's instructions for the prince of Orange, 7th of June 1815. In: WD, Vol.XII p.450-452

Smyth, sir J.C. Carmichael – Chronological epitome of the wars in the Low Countries from the peace of the Pyrenees in 1659 to that of Paris in 1815 etc. p.367

What is meant here is the one on the road of St.Ghislain, the so-called Quaregnon-redoubt south west of Mons on the former battlefield of Jemappes. Here in 1792 a French army, led by general Dumouriez, defeated an Austrian army under duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen; the defeat led to the French conquest of most of modern Belgium in the weeks that followed.

By mid-May, Wellington wanted to have 50 or 60 men on the redoubt constantly. Cf. his letter to the prince of Orange, 19th of May 1815. In: WD, Vol.XII p.403

The redoubt of Mont Palizel was already there and was restored. Cf. "Sketch of the military frontier of Belgium from Namur on the Meuse to Peruwlez to Tournai", as "reconnoitred in June 1814 by Charles Hamilton Smith, D.A.M.Genl.". In: NAK, MR1.163

¹⁷ WD, Vol.XII p.432

¹⁸ WSD, Vol.X p.183

¹⁹ WSD, Vol.X p.204-205

²⁰ For the fact that Tirlemont was at the chaussée from Brussels to Liège, see: J.van Esse - Description géographique et commerciale du royaume des Pays Bas p.74

²¹ WSD, Vol.X p.189

The letter involved is described in the index of letters to the duke as "appointment with Blücher at Tirlemont." In: HL, WP 6.1.18

Cf. Von Nostitz' diary (note 22) and Von Müffling – The memoirs of baron Von Müffling etc. p.210

²² Galesloot, L. Le duc de Wellington à Bruxelles p.146

In the 16th century, it was also called the inn De Scheuleer or De Schotel; nowadays it is called De Tinnen Schotel.

²³ Wellington wrote early that morning to sir Charles Stuart: "I am going to Tirlemont to meet Blücher, but expect to be back by five or six o'clock." And to the prince of Orange: "I am going to Tirlemont to meet Blücher, from whence I shall return by five or six o'clock." In: WD, p.344-345

In view of the distance, it took both Wellington and Blücher about 4 hours to reach Tirlemont. This time-schedule fits in with the note as published in the Staatscourant (cf. below).

For this reason, Frazer's statement as that Wellington would have returned at Brussels in the evening is incorrect, unless 5 or 6 p.m. can be regarded as "evening". In: Sabine, E. (ed) , Letters of colonel Sir Augustus Frazer p.500

²⁴ Staatscourant, newspaper dated 8th of May 1815.

²⁵ Hussey claims that Wellington appears to have gone unaccompanied by any staff, as there is no mentioning of this, but at the same time he adds that at least Von Röder was there, as he had invited himself which becomes clear from a letter of his hand dated 1st of May. In: The Tirlemont meeting etc. p.22

Additionally, the Staatscourant newspaper adds that "[Wellington and Blücher] kwamen bijna terzelver ure, hieeraan aan, verzeld [sic] van verscheiden generaals en opper-officieren."

The fact that colonel Hardinge attended can be taken from his letter dated 30th of April in which he writes to Lowe: "Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you on Wednesday next at Tirlemont where the duke and Blücher meet?" In: BL, Add.ms.20.114 f.84-85

²⁶ Here, he probably refers to the information provided by Von Dörnberg.

²⁷ WD, Vol.XII p.346 Here, Wellington may also refer to information sent by Von Dörnberg on the 2nd of May that Napoleon was to leave Paris on the 2nd of May, and that there was much movement amongst the troops from Cambrai towards the frontier. In: WSD, Vol.X p.216

²⁸ WD, Vol.XII p.345

²⁹ WD, Vol.XII p.345

³⁰ HL, WP, 1.464

³¹ Letter of baron Binder, dated 9th of May to Metternich. In: Malet, A. - Louis XVIII et les Cent-jours à Gand Vol.II p.281-282

Binder was minister of Austria at the court of Willem I; he arrived at Brussels on the 1st of May.

³² WD, Vol.XII p.354-355

³³ WSD, Vol.X p.231-232

³⁴ Lettow Vorbeck, O.von - Napoleon's Untergang Vol.III p.172

³⁵ WD, Vol.XII p.362

³⁶ Tagebuch, p.11, 13

³⁷ From: Aus drei Feldzügen 1812 bis 1815, p.313, 317

Thurn und Taxis had arrived from Munich at Liège on the 5th of May.

³⁸ WSD, Vol.X p.222

³⁹ KHA, nr.A.40.VI CW10

⁴⁰ WSD, Vol.X p.231

⁴¹ Letter offered for sale on E-bay, item nr.260139042214 - 17th July 2007 In: private collection in Missouri, USA.

Copy in: WD, Vol.XII p.355

⁴² NA, 2.13.414.01 nr.6 – 88

NA, 2.13.52 nr.1113

Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.14

In a reaction, colonel Van Zuylen van Nijvelt, reported back to Constant Rebecque on the 5th of May that the right wing of the division could collect near Marbais in 7.5 hours, the centre at Quatre Bras in 8 hours, at Nivelles in 10 hours and at Bornival, to the right, in 11 hours. And for the division to collect, through Feluy, at Seneffe in 11 hours. The proposal was to have the men in more concentrated cantonments, large buildings ideally. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.8

For the 4th of May, Constant Rebecque describes the situation in his journal as: “L’armée française commence à se renforcer sur la frontière; nos divisions reçoivent l’ordre de se concentrer un peu plus et de faire souvent des promenades militaires.” In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁴³ NA, 2.13.14.01. nr.6 – 101

Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: ARA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.14b

On the 8th of May, colonel Von Goedecke reported to general De Perponcher that he was able to assemble his brigade at Quatre Bras in two and a half hours. In: Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: ARA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.15b

De Perponcher himself had arrived at the division on the 4th of May; before that time, it was led by major-general Van Bijlandt. Cf. Colonel van Zuylen van Nijvelt to Constant Rebecque, 4th of May 1815. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.8

⁴⁴ Bas, F.de – Prins Frederik etc. Vol.III p.1149-1151

⁴⁵ WSD, Vol.X p.218-219

⁴⁶ Anne Willem Carel baron van Nagell van Ampsen (1756– 1851)

He was secretary of state for the ministry of foreign affairs of the government of the Low Countries.

⁴⁷ WSD, Vol.X p.215-216

It was already on the 21st of March that Colborne wrote that the Dutch bureau de la guerre had asked the British to give Antwerp to the Dutch troops, which was accordingly refused. See preceding chapter.

⁴⁸ WSD, Vol.X p.222-223

⁴⁹ Bas, F.de - La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.I p.270

In the journal of the 2nd division, the announcement about Wellington’s command over the army of the Netherlands is set on the 7th of May. Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.15

Yet, this would have been the day he was nominated by Willem I to field marshal of the Netherlands army.

As Torrens had written on the 8th of April

“The Hanoverian levies are much superior to what I expected. The duke means to mix them, as well as the Dutch, with our troops, according, in some degree, to the arrangements adopted with the Portugese; and though this formation is opposed at present by the King of the Netherlands, I imagine His Majesty will yet be induced to accede to it.” So, all in all, it would take almost one month before king Willem fully acceded to the amalgamation of his army with the other forces under the duke of Wellington. In: WSD, Vol.X p.41-43

⁵⁰ Colenbrander, H.T. - Gedenkstukken etc. Vol.VII p.772

⁵¹ WSD, Vol.X p.230-231

⁵² In: NA, 2.02.01 nr.6211

Also in: WD, Vol.XII p.350-351, with a slight variation.

The fact that Wellington assumed the command over army of the Netherlands on the 5th of May is confirmed by captain Rochell (19th battalion of national militia). Account in family archive.

⁵³ WD, Vol.XII p.356

⁵⁴ Cf. Wellington to colonel sir Hardinge, 5th of May. In: WD, Vol.XII p.355

Wellington to Hardinge, 7th of May. In: WD, Vol.XII p.356

Sabine, E. (ed) - Letters of colonel Sir Augustus Frazer p.502

D'Orléans, L.Ph. - Mon journal etc. p.30

Constant Rebecque confirms the duke received the command on the 6th of May. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁵⁵ WD, Vol.XII p.364-365

⁵⁶ Dagboek der operatiën etc. p.6

According to the journal of the 2nd division this took place on the 4th of May.

Cf. Journaal der 2^e divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.13

Van Uythoven claims it was on the 3rd of May. In: Waterloo campaign: Nassauers in the Netherlands service. Part 1 p.16

⁵⁷ Lord Stewart to Wellington, 28th April 1815. In: WSD, Vol.X p.171-172

⁵⁸ Pflugk Harttung, J.von – In: GSA. VPH-HA, VI nr.I nr.1 p.10

He cites here from: Beitzke - Geschichte des Feldzugs 1815 Vol.II p.8

⁵⁹ After 3rd and 4th brigade is written: “beide Brigaden behalten die Übergänge in ihren Cantonnementen über die Sambre besetzt” , but this is crossed out.

⁶⁰ GSA, VPH-HA, VI, nr.I nr.3. p.8-11

Plotho, Von - Der Krieg etc. p.21-23

MWB, 1846 p.15-16

The concept as given above differs in some points to the version as given in the diary of the 1st corps:

Concept

1. Reserve Kavallerie (versammelt sich) bei Gembloux, woselbst sie die näheren Ordres erwartet. Reserve-Artillerie (bei) Eghézé.
2. Das Gros des 1.schlesischen Husaren Regiments setzt sich hinter Lernes, wohin auch die Vorposten dieses Regiments sich in schräger Richtung hieher wenden.
3. Die Reserve-Kavallerie rückt nach Sombref. Die Reserve-Artillerie geht auf der Römerstrasse vor bis in die Richtung diesseits dem Défilée von Gembloux.

Diary

1. Die Reserve Kavallerie bei Sombref, die Reserve Artillerie bei Gembloux

Das schlesische Husaren Regiment wird sich bei Lernes zur Unterhaltung der Kommunikation zwischen Fontaine l'Evêque und Marchienne-au-Pont aufstellen.

2. Die Reserve Kavallerie bleibt bei Sombreffe. Die Reserve Artillerie stellt sich diesseits der Defileen von Gembloux auf.

In: GSA.VPH-HA,VI nr.I.nr.10 p.15

Two days earlier, on the 30th of April, an instruction had gone out for the artillery-post at Mont – sur-Marchienne:

“Instruktion für den Artillerie-Posten bei Mont-sur-Marchiennes.

Dieser Artillerieposten von 2 Kanons ist dazu bestimmt, 3 Signalschüsse zu thun, sobald der Feind wider Vermuthen unsere Vorposten-Chaine durchbrechen und die Kantonirungen der Brigade bedrohen sollte.

Zu gleichem Zweck sind 2 Kanons von der 1.Brigade ohnweit Fontaine l'Evêque postirt, und da dieselben der französischen Grenze näher stehen als die von Mont-sur-Marchienne, so ist es wahrscheinlich, dass der Allarm von dortaus gegeben wird; in disem Falle müssen die Signalschütze ohne Verzug bei Mont-sur-Marchienne widerholt, und dadurch der Allarm auf der Seite nach Charleroy und Chatelet verbreitet werden.

[..] Die 3 Schüsse müssen in regelmässigen Pausen von einer Minute Zwischenzeit gegeben werden; die Kugeln werden abgebunden und starke Verschläge gebraucht. Die Kanonen bleiben jederzeit abgeprotzt und geladen.

Marchienne au Pont, den 30 April 1815

V.Pirch II

In: MWB, 1846 nr.5 p.20

⁶¹ MWB, 1846 nr.5 p.19

⁶² MWB, 1846 nr.5 p.20

⁶³ GSA, VPH-HA, VI, nr.I. nr.3 p.21

⁶⁴ MWB, 1847 p.169

⁶⁵ MWB, 1847 p.162

GSA, VPH-HA, VI. Nr.I. nr.3 p.22

Ollech, Von - Geschichte etc. p.45

Lettow Vorbeck, O.von – Napoleon's Untergang Vol.III p.174

It reached Zieten on the 6th of May at 3 a.m. as the note on the document states: “Präs.6.Mai 1815 3 Uhr Morgens”

⁶⁶ Ollech, Von - Geschichte etc. p.45

⁶⁷ Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Bundestruppen p.88-89

He took it from the original at the KA, VI.C.92.I

⁶⁸ WSD, Vol.X p.239-240

⁶⁹ MWB, 1847 p.15

Ollech, Von - Geschichte etc. p.46

⁷⁰ MWB, 1847, p.162

⁷¹ MWB, 1847, p.163

⁷² GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.I nr.6 p.16 (from Kriegsarchiv)

⁷³ Ollech, Von – Geschichte etc. p.46

⁷⁴ The details of this rebellion can be found in a separate note.

⁷⁵ William Siborne quotes the memorandum in a footnote, explaining “That the duke was prepared, as far back as the 30th of April, to meet any attack that might be made upon him, may be seen by the following Secret memorandum [...]” but doesn’t analyse the document any further. In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.35-36

Hofschröder mentions the memorandum, plus the explanation as given by Wellington in his covering note for Uxbridge, but doesn’t enter into any detail either. In: 1815.The Waterloo campaign etc. p.113-114

⁷⁶ Of the cavalry, the following units were not present late April:

-Somerset’s brigade: partly present (the King’s Dragoon Guards were between Ghent and St.Lievensesse), Von Dörnberg’s brigade, Grant’s brigade (except for the 15th hussars which was between Gent and Ninove), the brigade of Von Arentschildt (the 13th regiment of light dragoons) and the brigade of Von Estorff (the Cumberland hussars).

As Wellington had the whole of his cavalry available as he used it in the Waterloo-campaign by the 29th of May, the remainder reached its destinations in the Low Countries between half and the end of May.

⁷⁷ The 2nd regiment of hussars were in occupation of a line of posts on the French frontier, extending from Courtrai, through Menin, Ypres, Loo and Furnes to the North Sea since late March. In: Journal of the regiment as issued by L.N.Beamish. In: History etc. Vol.II p.346

⁷⁸ The position of the 11th regiment of light dragoons is unknown.

⁷⁹ The Cumberland hussars arrived later.

⁸⁰ There is no reason to consider the memorandum, as Hofschröder does, as a result of the organisation of his own army (into two corps, a reserve and a cavalry) and of the Prussian assurances of support as formulated in April. By this time, the reserve of the army also didn’t exist yet. Cf. Hofschröder, P. 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.113

⁸¹ Cf. Report Chapman. In: WSD, Vol.IX p.202

Colonel sir Carmichael Smyth adds that the pontoon bridge was covered with field works. In: Chronological epitome of the wars etc. p.368

⁸² WSD, Vol.IX p.202

⁸³ WSD, Vol.IX p.203

⁸⁴ The headquarters of those units mentioned were for the 1st British division at Enghien, for the 2nd division at Ath and for the 3rd division at Lens – those of the brigades of cavalry as mentioned are not known, but they were probably in the vicinity of Ninove.

⁸⁵ Cf. Lettow Vorbeck, O.von – Napoleons Untergang Vol.III p.168

⁸⁶ WD, Vol.X p.62

⁸⁷ In fact, Constant Rebecque wrote to Chassé on the 20th of April that, in absence of prince Willem of Orange, it was his brother who led the field army as long as was necessary. In: NA, 2.13.52.11313 nr.56

⁸⁸ The fact that the prince was still in Brussels late April can be derived from his letter to his brother Frederik, dated 30th of April. In: KHA, A.37 VII B4

⁸⁹ Cf. Constant Rebecque in his journal. NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁹⁰ Cf. Constant Rebecque in his journal. NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁹¹ Cf. Wellington to Bathurst, on the 28th of April.

It had already been early April that sir Hudson Lowe complained about the lack of coordination between the British / Hanoverian forces on the one, and the Dutch and Belgian forces on the other as their common commander – till then - shared no general staff. Even after the 5th of April, when Wellington did, the command was still split until the beginning of May. Cf. preceding chapter, Hudson Lowe to Bunbury 4th April 1815.

⁹² There are no letters written by the duke of Wellington to the prince of Orange in April; it is only on the 27th of that month that he wrote him twice; this may have had to do with the fact that the prince may have stayed at Braine le Comte that day after the inspection of the army of the Netherlands. Cf. Wellington to the prince, 27th of April 1815. In: WD, Vol.X p.333-334

⁹³ Von Nostitz erroneously claims it was initiated by the Prussian staff. Cf. Tagebuch, p.11

⁹⁴ It is not clear whether Von Röder's position was discussed.

⁹⁵ Cf. the chapter on the intelligence.

Communication, at least between Namur and Brussels, and possibly also between Liège and Brussels, was arranged through a letter party; here the letters were taken over and forwarded to Namur and vice versa. Cf. Wellington to Hardinge, 13th of May. In: WD, Vol.XII p.384

As long as the Prussian headquarters was at Liège, the communication line with Wellington ran along Tongres, St.Trond and Tirlmont to Brussels. After these headquarters had moved to Namur in the early days of May, another communication line was opened through Louvain.

It was from the moment Prussian headquarters was established at Sombreffe on the 15th of June that this line was opened along Genappe. Cf. Gneisenau's letter of the 15th of June, noon (see below).

⁹⁶ Cf. Hussey, J. - The significance etc. p.16

⁹⁷ There is no indication that the disposition has somehow been communicated to Wellington's headquarters directly, or through the Netherlanders.

⁹⁸ Another indication for this is what Gneisenau wrote ten days after the meeting about the scenario for the Prussian army in case Napoleon might move over the right bank of the Meuse: “..dass man ihm die Ardennen und Eifelgebirge überlasse und in Vereinigung mir der Wellingtonschen Armee sofort in Frankreich eindringe. *Sollte H.v. Wellington aber nicht hierauf sich einlassen*, [italics are mine] so können wir solange warten, bis der Feind über die Maas geht um uns eine Schlacht zu liefern, die wir dann annehmen können, oder sollte er, ohne uns am linken Ufer der Maas aufzusuchen, gegen den Rhein vordringen, so müssen wir ihn so weit vorrücken lassen, bis er näher dem Rhein ist, um sodann über die Maas zu gehen, und ihm eine Schlacht unter ihm nachtheiligen Umständen zu liefern. Dies wäre unser Entwurf zum Feldzug, im Fall wir über die Ardennen her den Feind zu erwarten hätten.”

In case there would have been some arrangement for this scenario, Gneisenau would never have written in the way he did here. Cf. chapter below.

⁹⁹ It is Von Nostitz who writes: “Nachdem mit dem Herzog von Wellington für den gemeinschaftlich zu führenden Feldzug die nöthigen Verabredungen getroffen waren, kehrten wir nach Lüttich zurück [...]”, but he doesn’t enter into any details. In: Tagebuch p.11, 13

¹⁰⁰ Letter of baron Binder, dated 4th of May to Metternich. In: Malet, A. - Louis XVIII et les Cent-jours à Gand Vol.II p.279

Binder was minister of Austria at the court of Willem I; he arrived at Brussels on the 1st of May.

¹⁰¹ BL, Add.ms.20.114 f.84-85

¹⁰² Quote from the French translation, of 1973 (Campagne de 1815 en France, p.35). As indicated, the original dates from 1835.

¹⁰³ Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 etc. p.37-38

Von Pflugk Harttung takes this version in his manuscript in GSA VPH-HA,VI nr.III.3.p.32

He does the same in his Vorgeschichte (p.157, 234) but here he expresses his doubts about Quatre Bras as having been set as a point of concentration.

¹⁰⁴ Hofschröder mentions two meetings in which Wellington and Blücher met to discuss defense matters: one on the 3rd of May at Tirlemont and one on the 29th of May at Brussels. In the first one Wellington was the one who received assurances of support, while on the second meeting mutual arrangements were made. However, there was just one meeting where defence matters were discussed and that was the one held at Tirlemont on the 3rd of May.

Cf. Hofschröder, P. 1815.Waterloo. Wellington etc. p.116, 123

¹⁰⁵ Clausewitz, C. von - Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.22

He erroneously situates the meeting at St. Trond.

¹⁰⁶ History of the war etc. Vol.I p.39-40

¹⁰⁷ Charras does the same in his book, dated 1857. In: Histoire de la campagne de 1815 p.84

¹⁰⁸ Chesney, C. - Waterloo. Conférences p.97

¹⁰⁹ Müffling, K.von – Aus meinem Leben p.232-233

¹¹⁰ The expression is in origin a French one, as “Passer sous les fourches caudines” which in its turn goes back to a passage in the mountains near Benevente in Italy where a confrontation took place between the Romans and the Samnites in 321 b.C.

¹¹¹ In his publication of 1817 (*Geschichte des Feldzugs der englisch-hanovrisch-niederländisch-braunschweigschen Armee etc.*), Von Müffling doesn't mention the meeting.

¹¹² Ollech, Von – *Geschichte etc.* p.45
Pflugk Hartung, J.von – *Vorgeschichte etc.* p.23

¹¹³ Lettow Vorbeck, O.von – *Napoleons Untergang* p.172-173

¹¹⁴ Aerts, W. *Etudes etc.* p.52-53

¹¹⁵ Houssaye, H. - 1815. *Waterloo* p.116-117
Ropes, J.C. - *The campaign of waterloo* p.71-72

¹¹⁶ Hofschröder, P. - 1815. *The Waterloo campaign. The German victory* p.324
Also in: *Did the duke of Wellington deceive etc.* p.181

¹¹⁷ There is no clear idea of when the battle-ground position of Sombreffe was communicated to Wellington, but that it was done before the campaign can be derived from the fact that Blücher mentions it in his letter of the 15th of June (noon) to the duke, and in a way that Wellington knew what he was talking about (see below).

¹¹⁸ Hofschröder, P. 1815. *The Waterloo campaign etc.* p.116-118, 127, 161, 189-190, 343

¹¹⁹ For this request, cf. Von Nostitz. In: *Tagebuch* p.11,13

¹²⁰ Lehmann, M. - *Geschichte des Jahres etc.* p.284
Unfortunately, the full copy of the document involved is unavailable.

¹²¹ Cf. the letter to his friend Alexander Gibsons, consul in Danzig, dated 6th of August 1815. In: Delbrück, H. *Einiges zum Feldzuge von 1815* p.659

¹²² Cf. Von Müffling's letter of 7 p.m. of the 15th of June (chapters 15th -16th of June), which is based upon the same principle of two enemy columns.

¹²³ Cf. Von Clausewitz. *La campagne etc.* p.44

¹²⁴ For Aerts, there was no arrangement whatsoever, leaving both commanders to have their plans fully depending “aux circonstances”. For his part, he comes to this conclusion due to a lack of sources. In: *Etudes etc.* p.50, 57
Ropes states: “The two commanders no doubt fully intended to act in concert, and expected and relied upon the hearty support of each other, but there was not, as we believe, any definite agreement as to the particular steps to be taken in the event of a French invasion.” In: *The campaign of Waterloo* p.72

¹²⁵ Cf. his letter to Gneisenau, dated 5th of May.

¹²⁶ It doesn't become clear from the records available, but it should not be excluded that from the Prussian side there may have been a thought here on the position at Ramillies (about 18

kilometres north-east of Gembloux, and 18 kilometres south of Tirlemont), as a potential battleground.

The battle of Ramillies was a major engagement during the war of Spanish succession, fought on the 23rd of May 1706 between a French army led by marshal Villeroi and an allied army led by the duke of Marlborough. The encounter was a resounding success for the allies. Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ramillies

¹²⁷ MWB, 1847 p.162

GSA, VPH-HA,VI. Nr.I. nr.3 p.22

Ollech, Von Geschichte etc. p.45

Lettow Vorbeck, O.von – Napoleon's Untergang p.174

¹²⁸ Cf. Whitehead, who also sees this connection. In: Wellington's right flank p.201-208

¹²⁹ Nostitz - Tagebuch p.11,13

¹³⁰ Hussey, J. - The aftermath of Tirlemont, p.24-25