

The 4th corps. ¹

During the night of the 14th of June this corps had the following positions: headquarters at Liège, 13th brigade (Von Hacke) at Chênée, 14th brigade (Von Ryssel) at Waremme, the 15th brigade (Von Losthin) at Voroux-Goreux, 16th brigade (Von Hiller) at Liers, reserve cavalry and reserve artillery at Liège.

The order issued on the 14th of June for Bülow in terms of concentrating his troops so as to be able to reach Hannut in one march, arrived in Liège the 15th of June around 5 a.m. ² Having received this order, Bülow issued the following disposition:

For the concentration of the 4th corps the disposition given below will be carried out, after the men have eaten: the 13th brigade occupies Liège with 6 battalions. 3 battalions in Hirschtale, Voteme, Ans, and St.Nikolas, two squadrons to Jupille. A battery to Saire, Bessairée, Chênée. The 14th brigade will occupy only the canton of Waremme, with the exception of Greenville and Oreye.

The 15th brigade occupies the whole canton of Helogne, except for Grace, Thys, Chrichegnée, Odeur, Villar l'Eveque; the places destined as stages, Avoir, Angis and Chokier, can also be used. Jemeppe, Flemalle Haut and Flemalle Grand, however, will not be occupied.

The 16th brigade keeps of its current cantonments only those which are in the canton Glons.

The reserve-artillery moves from its current cantonments to Greenville, Oreye, Thys, Chrichegnée, Odeur and Villers l'Eveque. The park columns stay in the canton of Dalhem.

The brigade Von Sydow (reserve cavalry) does not move. The brigade of Von Schwerin does not move either, but only evacuates those places which are in the canton of Maastricht..

The brigade Von Watzdorff moves from its current cantonments to Marlin, Roclengé, Bry-Heers, Op-Heers; in the canton Looz, Wantrenge, Heerstappe, Heure le Tirhe, Nedrin and Frere, in the canton Tongres.

These places are to be occupied by those parts of the brigade of Von Watzdorff which have just arrived, and are also destined to the 8th regiment of hussars. At the arrival of the 8th regiment of dragoons, the brigade Von Sydow will assign it the necessary billets. The brigade of Von Watzdorff will receive its provisions in Tongres.

Headquarters Liège, the 15th June 1815

Signed on behalf of Bülow von Dennewitz, the chief of staff general major Von Valentini ³

In general it comprised a movement to the west, thereby evacuating the right bank of the Meuse (except for some small villages), the concentration of the corps in and around Liège, having the troops in the north near Tongres, those to the west in the canton of Waremme, those to the south at the Meuse, halfway between Liège and Huy, while having the most remote units 8 hours from Hannut. ⁴

After that, Bülow confirmed the receipt of the order to Blücher and the new dispositions sent to general Von Grolman at the same time. ⁵

Very late that morning Bülow received the order of Gneisenau which was issued at midnight. ⁶ Having this order in his hands, Bülow now took the following measures. First of all he decided to start his march next day at 4 a.m. For this march he issued the following disposition:

Tomorrow, 16th of June, the 4th corps will go into close quarters near Hannut:

The headquarters at Hannut.

The 13th brigade in Grandut, Petit Hallet, Avernas, Bertreis, Grasevernas, Linoeut, Weserain;

The 14th brigade in Hannut, Buthez, Boillei.

The 15th brigade in Villers and Blehen.

The 16th brigade in Landen.

The reserve-artillery in Omal.

The reserve-cavalry in Hologne sur Geen, Waarem, Kemmé, Bortée, Vieux Walef.

Of each brigade, an officer of the general staff will go to Hannut so as to receive still this evening from captain Von Below the detailed dislocation.

The units will leave from their quarters tomorrow morning at 4 and will form themselves at the following rendez-vous:

The 13th brigade rendez-vous near Hognout on the road to Saint Trond, moves from there through Fooz and Warem to its new cantonments.

The 14th brigade rendez-vous near Boilhe, from there straight to its new quarters.

The 15th brigade rendez-vous near Honesse and through Walef in its new quarters.

The 16th brigade rendez-vous near Odeur, and on the best roads to the quarters near Landen.

Colonel Von Hiller has these roads to be surveyed and will report of them today.

The reserve-cavalry rendez-vous near Op Heeres and Oreye (nach der näheren Bestimmung Seiner Königlichen Hoheit des Prinzen Wilhelm) und auf dem nächsten Wege in die Quartiere.

The reserve-artillery rendez-vous near Oreye and on the Roman road to the cantonments.

The men fill their supplies from the nearest depots of their cantonments.

Liège, the 15th June 1815

Signed on behalf of Bülow von Dennewitz, chief of staff general major Von Valentini. ⁷

Bülow also captain Von Below to general headquarters with a letter in which he informed Gneisenau that he would finish his concentration at Hannut on the early morning of the 16th of June. At the same time he asked for more instructions about the situation of the other Prussian army corps. This letter reads:

Nach dem heute früh eingegangenen Befehle des Herrn Feldmarschalls Durchlaucht sind die Truppen des 4ten Armee-Korps heute schon so concentrirt worden, dass sie nur einen kleinen Marsch bis Hannut haben. Da nunmehr aber ein kreuzen der Ordres eintreten würde, wenn die Truppen noch heute andere Kantonnements bezögen, habe ich zum Zusammenrücken bei Hannut anliegenden Dislocations-Entwurf befohlen, der morgem mit den frühesten ausgeführt werden wird.

Ich weise den Rittmeister Von Below an Ew.Excellenz, um demselben die etwa erforderlichen Instructionen zu ertheilen, da in dem an mich gerichteten Befehle nichts über die angrenzende Armee-Korps gesagt worden ist.

Im Falle Lüttich ganz ohne Besatzung bleiben sollte, bemerke ich, dass der hier anwesende Belagerungs-Train eine andere Direction erhalten müsste.

Bülow von Dennewitz ⁸

Assuming it took Von Bülow about six hours to cover the distance between Liège and Namur, he may have left Liège in the early afternoon as he reached Namur around 9 p.m.⁹ By that time the Prussian general headquarters had already moved to Sombreffe some hours before. Von Bülow got there somewhere towards midnight.¹⁰ Long before Von Bülow arrived at general headquarters, Blücher had sent Bülow a third order. The order was sent to Hannut (as it was presumed Bülow would be there) in the very afternoon.¹¹ The document reads:

Der Feind hat heute Morgen die Feindseligkeiten angefangen und drängt mit Heftigkeit die Vorposten des I. Korps auf beiden Ufern der Sambre auf Charleroi zurück. Buonaparte ist mit seinen Garden selbst zugegen.

Ew. Excellenz ersuche ich daher, sobald Ihr Korps die nöthige Ruhe bei Hannut genossen hat, spätestens morgen früh mit Tagesanbruch aufzubrechen und auf Gembloux zu marschiren, auch mich von der Stunde Ihres Eintreffens genau zu benachrichtigen. Ich werde noch heute mein Quartier nach Sombreffe verlegen, wohin ich die ferneren Meldungen erwarte.

*Blücher*¹²

Though Bülow had sent a part of his staff to Hannut, Bülow himself wasn't there yet the moment the messenger arrived there.¹³ Despite the fact that the messenger met with several officers of the general staff of the 4th army corps, the order was left unopened at Hannut.¹⁴

Later that day Gneisenau sent first lieutenant Roth to Hannut with oral orders which were probably similar to the ones which were issued that morning at 11.30 a.m. (see below in the observations on the concentration of the 4th corps).¹⁵ It is not known when lieutenant Roth was sent out.¹⁶ However, it is a fact that Roth arrived in Hannut around 11 p.m. It was there that he wrote to Von Grolman about his situation. This report reads:

Euer Hochwohlgeb. Befehl zu folge habe ich mich auf das Schleunigste hierher begeben, um mich der mündlichen Befehle an den Herrn General Grafen Von Bülow zu entledigen. Allein ich habe hier weiter Niemand als die Generalstabs-Offiziere von den Brigaden des 4ten Armee-Korps vorgefunden, welche für die erst morgen von Lüttich abrückenden und hier eintreffenden Truppen gedachten Korps die Quartiere reguliren wollen.

Mir ist unter diesen Umständen nichts weiter übrig geblieben, als meinem Weg mit Courier-Pferden nach Lüttich fortzusetzen, wo nach der Aussage der gedachten Offiziere, des Herrn General Grafen Von Bülow Excellenz diese Nacht noch ihr Quartier behalten haben.

Das Schreiben nach der Expeditions-Nummer 999, welches wahrscheinlich den Befehl an gedachten Herrn General zum Marsch von Hannut nach Gembloux enthält, habe ich unerbroschen hier vorgefunden; ich nehme es nach Lüttich mit.

Indem ich mich beeile Euer Hochwohlgeboren hiervon die schuldigste Anzeige zu machen, bemerke ich zugleich unerthänigst, wie es nach Lage der Dinge wohl ganz unmöglich sein wird, dass das 4te Korps die Höhe von Gembloux erreicht.

Hannut d.15.Juni 1815

Abend 11 ½ Uhr.

*Roth*¹⁷

In a straight line the distance between Hannut and Liège is 32 kilometres. Roth sent this letter back through the messenger who had accompanied him.¹⁸ At what time this second messenger has arrived at Sombreffe is not known; Roth left from Hannut around midnight. He also took the order to Bülow of Gneisenau which had arrived at Hannut at 11.30 a.m. and which had been left there. On the 16th of June, at 5 a.m., he arrived in Liege at the headquarters of general Bülow.¹⁹ At that time the 4th corps was on its way from Liege to Hannut.²⁰

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¹ For some more geographical explanations of Bülow's movements on the 15th and 16th of June, see a separate note.

2. Von Below In: Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.197

Pflugk Harttung, J.von. In: GSA, HA VI,II.13.p.2

History of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.19

Clausewitz, C.- Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.36-37

The distance between Namur and Liège is 52 kilometres, which means that it took the messenger about 7 hours to get it to Bülow.

According to major Ritz, a former ensign of the 2nd regiment infantry (1st Pommeranian) - (brigade Von Tippelskirch), the messenger brought the order to Huy, where it was taken over by the sole cavalry-officer present there at the estafette-post. In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII nr.1 p.18-19

³ In: Plotho, Von Der Krieg etc.p.32

⁴ In: History of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.19

⁵ Cf. note of captain Von Below on the order itself dated 15th of June. In: Von Pflugk Harttung. In: GSA.VPH-HA,VI,nr.II.13.p.4 In: KA. Register of staff. VI.D.9

6. A note, written by an officer on the order itself states: "Den 15.Juni gegen Mittag erhalten". Cf. VPH-HA.VI., nr.II.13.p.6

10.30 a.m. is an hour given by captain Von Below in his account. This was written for Gneisenau. It was in the former Kriegsarchiv (nr. VI.C.3.II,69,77) In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Vorgeschichte etc. p.367

Ollech, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 etc. p.107

Ropes and Von Clausewitz give 11 a.m. In:

Ropes, J.C. - The Waterloo campaign. p.73

Clausewitz, C.von – Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.36

In another publication Von Pflugk Harttung gives 11.30 a.m. In: Vorgeschichte etc. p.255

According to Von Reiche it was very late in the morning. In: Memoiren etc. p.197

Delbrück thinks it was 11 a.m. Cf. Delbrück, H. Das Leben des Feldmarshalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau Vol.IV, p.360

According to major Ritz, a former ensign of the 2nd regiment of infantry (1st Pommeranian) - (brigade Von Tippelskirch), the messenger brought the order to Huy, where the sole cavalry-officer present there at the estafette-post was absent as he was bringing the order of 10. p.m. to Liège. The second order, dated midnight, with all its urgency, was consequently kept there and only forwarded to Liège as soon as the cavalry-officier returned from his mission. All this resulted in the fact that it took almost 12 hours to cover the distance of 52 kilometres. In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.VII nr.1 p.17-19

7. In: KA, VI.C.3.II.nr.? in GSA,VPH-HA, VI, nr.VII.6.p.9
 Plotho, C.von. Der Krieg des Verbundeten etc. p.44
8. Register of staff. In: KA, VI.D.9. nr.253 In: GSA,VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.6.p.4
 In: KA, VI.C.3.II.p.69 In GSA,VPH-HA, VI, nr.VII.6.p.10
9. Captain von Below. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Vorgeschichte etc. p.367
 Von Pflugk Harttung himself believes Von Below left around noon or later. In: Vorgeschichte
 etc. p.264
 Damitz, Von - Geschichte etc.p.102
10. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.255
 Von Nostitz believes it was at 9 p.m. Cf. Nostitz, Von - Tagebuch etc. p.22 but Sellentin
 corrects him by stating that it was after midnight. Cf.Sellentin, B. Die Tagebücher etc. p.49
 The anonymous Prussian writer in the Militär Wochenblatt states it was late in the evening.
 In: MWB, 1845 p.22
 Pollio erroneously believes it was in the late morning of the 16th of June. In: Waterloo p.171
11. Some Prussian writers claim it was sent at 11.30a.m. but this is not very likely, as the order
 mentions the fact that the French would advance along both banks of the Sambre, and that
 Napoleon would have his imperial guard with him and these informations were part of Zieten's
 report dated 8.15 a.m. In view of the distance could never have reached Namur before 11.30
 a.m.
 Cf. Glover, G. – Waterloo: myth and reality p.51
 Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.197
 A history of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.23
 Ollech, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 etc. p.
 According to colonel Von Nostitz it was 11 a.m. In: Das Tagebuch etc. p.19
 Von Damitz claims it was sent out before 10 a.m. In: Geschichte etc. p.100-101
12. Former KA, VI.D.9.21 GSA. VPH-HA.VI., nr.II.13.p.6 The text itself is written by
 Gneisenau, while it's signed by Blücher. It is marked with two crosses.
 Register of staff. In: KA, VI.D.9. in: GSA,VPH-HA, VI nr.VII.6.p.3
 In this register the concise version of the order can be found, but striking detail here is that is
 says: "Benachrichtigung wegen des Anfangs der Feindseligkeiten. Ordre von Hannut sobald als
 möglich nach Sombref aufzubrechen."
 Reiche, L.von - Memoiren p.221
 Ollech, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 etc. p.99
 Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.257
 Conrady, E.von - Leben und Wirken etc. Vol.II p.296

13. Reiche, L.von - Memoiren etc. p.197

14. According to Von Reiche the order was kept by a staff officer, waiting for Von Bulow to come in person. The messenger then, rode back to headquarters. Cf. Reiche, L.von Memoiren etc. p.198

15. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.259

Damitz erroneously claims it was a "Feldjäger" who was sent out at noon. In: Geschichte etc. p.101

Von Pflugk Harttung explicitly states Roth was a first lieutenant.

16. Von Pflugk Harttung says it was between 6 and 7 p.m. In: Vorgeschichte etc. p.259

Another source claims it was in the late afternoon. Cf. History of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.23

Varnhagen von Ense says it was 11.30 a.m. while Von Damitz indicates noon.

Varnhagen bases his account upon the one of Von Damitz, whose account is most confusing. On the one hand he states that an order was sent to Bülow before 10 a.m. to march from Hannut to Gembloux, while on the other he suggest as if the same kind of order was sent out by noon, through Von Roth (who he calls a "Feldjäger"), thereby suggesting as if there was another order between what I call the second and the third one; but there wasn't. Von Roth simply had a different mission.

Cf. Varnhagen von Ense, K.A. - Leben etc. p.415

Damitz, K.von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815.p.101

17. In: KA, VI.C.3.II.p.31 in GSA,VPH-HA, VI, nr.VII.6.p.9

Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p. 259

18. Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.260

19. Hiller, Von - Denkwürdigkeiten etc.p.236

Delbrück, H. - Das Leben des Feldmarshalls Grafen Neithardt von Gneisenau Vol.IV, p.361

Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Vorgeschichte etc. p.260

History of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.23-24

Von Reiche says it was around dawn. In: Memoiren etc. p.198

Also see the anonymous author in the MWB. According to this writer, Bülow would have exclaimed: "Aber mein Gott, warum hat man mich nicht benachrichtigt, dass der Feind schon die Offensive ergriffen hat." In: History of the war etc. In: MWB, 1845 p.23

Von Clausewitz doesn't mention Roth as such and erroneously claims that the order he carried reached Bülow on the 16th by 10 a.m. Yet, this was the moment he was supposed to arrive at Sombreffe. In: Hinterlassene Werke etc. p.37

20. According to Delbrück, Bülow started his march at 5 a.m. Bülow's order of the 15th

prescribed a time of departure at 4 a.m. Cf. *Das Leben des Feldmarshalls etc. Vol.IV p.361*
Dörk claims the 15th regiment (Von Losthin) left even before daybreak. Cf. *Dörk, G.M. - Das Königlich Preussische etc. p.126*

The 2nd Silesian infantry regiment collected near Waremme around 5 a.m. and went from here to Boëlhe, the assembly point for the brigade, about 4 kilometre east of Hannut. Having arrived at Hannut by 9 a.m. the 14th brigade, of which the regiment formed part, took up concentrated positions. Cf. *Eberts, G.W.von Hundertjährige Geschichte etc. p.195*

A member of the same regiment (2nd battalion), lieutenant Van Rahden, claims the battalion left Waremme at 3 a.m. Cf. *Rahden, W.von - Wanderungen eines alten Soldaten p.350, 361-362*

The 3rd battalion of the 4th regiment of Silesian Landwehr infantry (Von Losthin) had left its position around 4 a.m. and got to the rendez-vous near Hannut. Cf. *Captain Von Conrady (commander of the 3rd battalion of the 4th regiment of Silesian Landwehr infantry, brigade Von Losthin). In: Aus stürmischer Zeit p.410-411*

Von Hiller states that his brigade had collected at 4.30 a.m. at Odeur (about 12 kilometres north west of Liège) and that it marched towards Landen (about 8 kilometres north of Hannut) when it got the order to take the Roman road instead. In: *Denkwürdigkeiten etc. p.237-239*

The 10th regiment of hussars (brigade of Von Schwerin) joined its brigade near Oreya (about 10 kilometres southwest of Tongres) and then marched to Crehen (about 2.5 kilometres west of Hannut). Cf. *Thielen, H.von - Geschichte des Magdeburgischen Husaren-Regiments nr.10 p.16*

Dunker, A. – Geschichte des Magdeburgischen Husaren-Regiments nr.10 p.12