

The sector of the army of the Netherlands.

Headquarters at Braine le Comte.

During the 15th of June the headquarters of the 1st army corps was established in the inn called " Le Miroir ", at the market-place of Braine-le-Comte. ¹

At 5 a.m. the prince of Orange left these headquarters to visit his outposts in front of Roeulx, towards Saint Symphorien. ² At Saint Symphorien major general Van Merlen had his headquarters.

Meanwhile, De Constant Rebecque wrote to general Collaert:

*Aan den luit.gen.Collaert Komm.de kavalerie te velde te Boussoit sur Haine
Hoofdkw. Braine le Comte den 15 Juny 1815*

S.A.R.le prince d'Orange est allé ce matin à cinq heures aux avant-postes, et j'ignore quand il compte être de retour ici. S'il ne vous voit pas ce matin, Monsieur le général, je suis persuadé qu'il sera charmé de vous voir ici lorsque vous désirez vous y rendre.

Constant Rebecque ³

Taking into account the distance between Braine le Comte and St.Symphorien (about 24 kilometers, through Roeulx) it must have been around 7.30 a.m. that the prince got there. ⁴And it was here that he somehow must have got the information that the Prussians were under attack. ⁵

According to the information which is available it was probably by distant gunfire that he did so. So, the information the prince must have gathered must have been very superficial and general: a direction and an hour, no more.

In this connection Von Hügel, the representative of Württemberg at Wellington's staff, wrote at 6 p.m. the same day in his letter to the Austrian king: "In diesem Augenblick reitet ein preussischer Husar bei dem General Von Müffling vor, der hart neben mir wohnt, und bringt ihm die Nachricht, die Müffling mir sogleich mittheilt, dass heute vormittag Napoleon die preussische Armee an der Sambre bei Thuin angegriffen hat. Resultat noch nicht bekannt. Soeben kommt auch Müffling wieder von dem Herzog zurück. Der Kronprinz der Niederlande hatte gemeldet, dass auf unserem linken Flügel starkes Kanonenfeuer gehört werde." ⁶

The result was that he gave Van Merlen and Chassé orders to collect their units. The one for Chassé is brief and reads:

St.Symphorien, 15 juin 1815

Mon cher général,

Les prussiens ayant été attaqués, je vous prie de rassembler sans perte de tems [sic] votre division au point de rassemblement sur les hauteurs en arrière de Haine St.Pierre où vous attendrez mes ordres.

Guillaume, Prince d'Orange ⁷

It was also at the same moment that the prince issued orders for Van Merlen. These were to:

- to establish headquarters at Bray
- to bring in the advance posts
- to place one squadron of the 5th regiment light dragoons at Saint Symphorien and one at Bray
- the give the 6th regiment of hussars the following position: one squadron at Estienne-au-Val, one at Perrone, one company at Maurage and one at Bray.
- to place two guns of the section under Gey of the horse-battery Bijleveld at Maurage⁸

All in all, the prince may have been in St.Symphorien almost one hour and as a result he may have left there about 8.30 a.m.⁹

As he got back at Braine le Comte by 10.30 a.m. he must have reported about what he had learned and done at St.Symphorien to Constant Rebecque.¹⁰ Having done so, he took the decision to ride to Brussels himself, bring the news to Wellington and discuss it. It was then probably around 11.30 a.m.¹¹ The prince must have reached his own quarters in Brussels around 2.30 p.m. and Wellington's headquarters towards 3 p.m.¹²

For his absence, the prince must have left Constant with certain powers to act on his behalf; at the same time, he requested to have one of his British adjudants ready to ride to Brussels the moment information would come in about a French attack on the sector of his corps.¹³

And in his absence, several messages dropped in.

The first one probably was one of Von Dörnberg, from Mons and which was destined for Lord FitzRoy Somerset. It was written at 9.30 a.m. and reads:

Mons, 15th June 1815, half past 9 o'clock in the morning

My Lord,

A picket of French lancers has been placed again at Autreffe, on the Bavay road. But at Quivrain there are only national guards, with a few gendarmes.

A man who was yesterday at Maubeuge says that all troops march towards Beaumont and Philippeville, and that no other troops but national guards remained at Maubeuge. He thinks that near 40.000 man have passed that place.

I have sent towards Pont-sur-Sambre, where, I believe, a corps remains. I just hear the Prussians were attacked.

I have the honour to be, my Lord, your most obedient humble servant,

*Von Dörnberg*¹⁴

The way Von Dörnbergs describes the situation is that he learned of some kind of French actions against the Prussians while he was actually writing his report; from where the French came and where the attack took place must not have been known to him.¹⁵

Taking into account the distance to be covered – about 22 kilometers – it must have been towards 12.30 p.m. that this report reached Braine le Comte.¹⁶ It must not have made a lot of difference to the report the prince had made to Constant Rebecque some two hours earlier.

The next report which dropped in must have been the one which general Chassé had written at Haine St.Pierre at 11 a.m. for Constant Rebecque. He wrote it further to the prince's orders and reads:

Aan den Heere Generaal Majoor en kwartiermeester generaal Baron de Constant Rebecque te Braine le Comte

Haine St. Pierre den 15. Juny 1815 11 Uren

Zoo even ontvangen wij de zekere tijding dat de vijand onze grenzen heeft overschreden. Binch is door de Pruisen geëvacueerd; de divisie is vergaderd te Faij en ik verwagt de nadre orders van Zijne Koninklijke Hoogheid.

De Lt. generaal kommanderend den 3e divisie,

*Baron Chassé*¹⁷

What had happened was that early that morning the rumour had spread amongst units of the 3rd division that the Prussians had been attacked that morning in the vicinity of Marchienne-au-Pont. The units had already started returning to their cantonments (after having been concentrated during the night), but now got the counter-order to remain where they were. As a result, Chassé sent out an officer in the direction of where the attack was supposed to come from and – as a result – Chassé took it upon himself to collect his division around Faijt and accordingly informed headquarters at Braine le Comte.¹⁸

Supposing the report has been sent out towards 11.15 a.m. and taking into the account the 22 kilometers between Haine St. Pierre and Braine le Comte it must have reached the latter place around 1.30 p.m.¹⁹

It was not long after that another and important report got into Constant Rebecque's hands.²⁰ It was one written at Saint Symphorien by major Van Paravicini, chief of staff of the brigade Van Merlen. This letter was based on the information Van Merlen had received from Von Steinmetz and which was transmitted by his chief of staff, major Arnauld de la Périère. It reads like this:

Saint Symphorien, le 15 juin 1815

Monsieur le général,

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire rapport que Mons. le général Steinmetz vient de m'envoyer un officier pour me donner avis que la 2e brigade prussienne a été attaquée ce matin; il n'avait pas encore reçu de rapport; les canons [sic] d'allarme [sic] ont été tirés sur toute leur ligne. Le feu d'infanterie paraissait assez vif en se dirigeant vers CharleRoi [sic]. L'intention des prussiens est d'évacuer de suite [sic] Binch et les villages voisins [sic] pour se placer et prendre position avec sa brigade derrière la rivière Piéton à Gosselies, et en cas qu'une attaque bien décidée se ferait, la position de leur corps d'armée est fixée près de Fleurus.

Par ordre du général Van Merlen

*B. de Paravicini, major*²¹

It was by 9 a.m. that major general Von Steinmetz had received instructions of Zieten to pull back over Fontaine l'Évêque and Courcelles towards the Piéton and Gosselies and it must have been at the same time that he sent his news through to Van Merlen at Saint Symphorien.²² The information could not have reached St. Symphorien before 11 a.m., the distance between this village and Fontaine l'Évêque being about 23 kilometers.²³ The report of De

Paravicini therefore may have been issued towards 11.30 a.m. In this sense, after the presence of the prince at St.Symphorien, it was a much more detailed confirmation of the French attack, which was noticed some time earlier in a more general way and after which the prince had issued his orders for Van Merlen and Chassé.

The report, in turn, had to travel about 24 kilometers before reaching Braine le Comte between 1.30 and 2 p.m.

The same was the case for a third report which came in for the prince at Braine le Comte from baron Behr, the commandant of the fortress at Mons.²⁴ It probably got there after the one of De Paravicini (but before 2 p.m., see below) and was based on information of Van Merlen.²⁵

It reads:

Mon Prince,

J'ai l'honneur de rendre compte à Votre Altesse Royale du rapport qui vient de m'être expédié par M. le général major Van Merle. Il résulte que le général de Steinmetz, commandant à Fontaine l'Eveque, vient de lui envoyer un officier pour l'aviser que la 2e brigade prussienne a été [sic] attaquée ce matin et que les canons d'allarme [sic] ont été tirés sur toute la ligne. Il paraît que l'attaque se dirige sur Charleroi, où le feu d'infanterie était très vif. Sur les avant-poste [sic] de M. le général Van Merle tout est tranquille. J'ai l'honneur d'être, avec un profond respect.

*Le général major commandant supérieur,
Baron Behr*

*P.S. Les avant-postes en avant de Mons sont aussi très tranquilles*²⁶

Behr reported at the same time and in the same sense to general Tindal at Brussels, as this general, in his turn, enclosed a summary of this report to his own report of the morning of the 16th of June for king Willem. This summary reads:

*“Par lettre du 15 juin le général Behr, commandant supérieur à Mons, annonce que la 2^e brigade Prussienne a été attaquée le matin et que le canon d’alarme a été tiré sur toute la ligne; que l’attaque parassait se diriger sur Charleroy et que le feu de l’infanterie était assez vif. Il annonce en outre que d’après des instructions de mr.le maréchal duc de Wellington il a déclaré la ville de Mons en état de siège quoiqu’il n’y eut encore rien de nouveau vis à vis de la place.”*²⁷

It seems as if Behr wrote a second time later that day from Mons for Tindal, as the same summary states right after:

*“Par lettre du même jour le même général [Behr] rend compte que par un mouvement que le général Van Merlen a fait pour concentrer sa cavalerie légère, la place de Mons se trouve à découvert sur la gauche.”*²⁸

Apparently, Van Merlen also must have informed Behr about the situation the moment he did so towards Constant Rebecque, about 11 a.m. As the distance between St.Symphorien and Mons is five kilometers, Behr probably got it about 11.30 a.m.

This flow of information must have led Constant Rebecque to request lieutenant colonel Berkeley, assistant adjudant-general, to forward it all to lord FitzRoy Somerset, Wellington's

military secretary in Brussels. Yet, Berkeley must not have known about the short presence of the prince at Braine le Comte that morning, as he wrote at 2 p.m.:

Braine-le-Comte, 15 June 1815, 2 o'clock p.m.

My dear Lord,

H.R.H. the Prince of Orange having set out at 5 o'clock this morning for the advanced posts, and not being returned, I forward the enclosed letter from general Dörnberg. General Constans [sic] desires I would inform you that the reports just arrived from different quarters state that the Prussians have been attacked upon their line in front of Charleroi. That they have evacuated Binche, and meant to collect first at Gossilies [sic]. Every thing is quiet upon our front; and the 3rd division of the Netherlands is collected at Fay. He sends you also the copy of a letter from the commandant at Mons.

I remain, my dear Lord, very faithfully yours,

*G.H.Berkeley*²⁹

Von Dörnberg's report for lord Fitzroy Somerset had come in at Braine le Comte after the prince had left there; it must have remained there till 2 p.m., probably as it didn't contain any relevant new information.³⁰ The reports Berkeley refers to are the ones from Chassé and Van Merlen.

Behr wrote his report for the prince and it was a copy which was forwarded to Lord FitzRoy Somerset through Berkeley. The original probably was forwarded by Constant Rebecque to the prince through another courier.³¹

After having discussed and pondered what to do, Constant Rebecque issued his first set of orders for the 2nd division and for the cavalry of Collaert at 3 p.m.³²

Lieutenant general baron de Perponcher, commander of the 2nd division was instructed to assemble his division as fast as he could, to have one brigade in readiness on the chaussée near Nivelles and the other to take up position at Quatre Bras.³³ The order read:

Hoofdkwartier te Braine-le-Comte, 15 juni 1815

Z.K.Hoogheid heeft mij gelast U aan te schrijven om op ontvangst deezes met de meeste spoed uwe divisie te doen verzamelen, en een brigade in gereedheid te houden op de straatweg bij Nivelles en de andere bij de 4 bras en zulks tot nader order door Z.K.H. aan U te zenden bevelen.

In geval U.Z.E.G. de troupes reeds zederd den morgen mogt bijeengebragt hebben, zal het misschien nodig zijn dat zij hun eten klaar maaken en gebruiken op hun verzamelplaatzen.

De generaal & kwartiermeester Generaal,

*Baron de Constant-Rebecque*³⁴

And the order for Collaert read:

Au Lt.Gl. Baron de Collaert, commt la cavalerie à Bousoit sur Haine. Hoofdkw. Braine le Comte den 15. Juny 1815

S.A.R. le prince d'Orange me charge de vous prier de rassembler de suite la 1ere brigade de cavalerie légère du Gl.de Ghigny près de Havré et la brigade de carabiniers du Gal.Trip en arrière de Strépy et de les y tenir rassemblées jusqu'à nouvel ordre.

S.A.R. a donné elle-même ce matin des ordres au général Van Merlen pour ce qui concerne sa brigade.

*Baron de Constant Rebecque*³⁵

At the same time, between 2 and 3 p.m., Constant Rebecque also must have ordered - through lieutenant colonel Berkeley and on behalf of the prince - the commanders of the other divisions of the 1st corps, Cooke and Alten, to hold their units in readiness to move at any moment (see below).³⁶

The cavalry of Collaert.

No details are available about the way the regiments of the brigade of Van Merlen carried out the orders which were issued by the prince at St.Symphorien around 8 a.m.

De Ghigny had to place his brigade in rear of Havré and wait there for further orders. In detail, the instructions must have read to bring the hussars from their positions at Gottignies, St.Denis and Thieusies towards Ville-sur-Haine and Boussoit. The light dragoons had to remain at Havré and draw in their squadron which was located at Obourg. The brigade headquarters, accompanied by one squadron of cavalry, were to be at Boussoit.

Some time before these orders were issued the hussars were instructed to send their baggages from the road which connects Ville-sur-Haine, Thieu and Fayt to the road leading to Nivelles; the light dragoons had got similar instructions, from the road which connects Roeulx to Fayt.³⁷

Trip was requested to place his brigade behind Strépy (near L'Arbre Seul) and wait for further orders. No further details of the movements of the regiments of this brigade are available.

The section of the horse battery of captain Petter also had to take up a position behind Strépy. The two remaining guns of the section of Gey came into position at Havré.³⁸

Taking into account the distance between Braine le Comte and Boussoit-sur-Haine (21 kilometers) it must have been towards 5 p.m. that Constant Rebecque's orders (dating from 3 p.m.) reached Collaert.

It appears that the brigades have taken up their new positions after 6 p.m.³⁹ General Collaert kept his headquarters at Boussoit-sur-Haine.

The division of Chassé.

The order sent out by the prince of Orange at St.Symphorien must have reached general Chassé about 9.30 a.m. (the distance is about 16 kilometers through Havré and Boussoit sur Haine).

By that time the division stood behind Binche, its right wing resting in Thieu, the left at Chapelle Herlaimont; in front, Péronne was occupied and to the rear the division occupied the area as far as Bois d'Haines and Famillereux.⁴⁰

In case of a strong French attack the division was supposed to collect in front of Fayt, but some battalions had other tasks.⁴¹ The 6th and the 17th battalion of national militia (at Strépy, Thieu and Trivières) were then supposed to operate in conjunction with the cavalry in their march towards Fayt. The 10th battalion of national militia (at Péronne) had to fall back upon the bridge at Haine St.Paul over the chaussée leading there, while the 3th battalion of national

militia and the 35th battalion of chasseurs (at Beaume and Haine St.Paul) were supposed to keep their positions, awaiting further orders.⁴²

After Chassé had received his orders, he must have started collecting his division south of Fayt right away. Chassé himself claims this was finished by 11 a.m. Yet, due to the distance of some battalions I do not believe this could have been the case; it may have been around noon that this had taken place, with the battalions which were supposed to form detachments in their destinations.⁴³

The battalions which were near Fayt were drawn up along the road which leads to Nivelles. Of the 19th battalion of national militia the company under captain Rochell was detached a bit to the east, near a windmill to observe the area where the enemy was supposed to be advancing in all directions.⁴⁴

By 6 p.m. Chassé took it upon himself to move his division a bit further south, to a position in rear of Haine St.Pierre, in front of Baume, while covering the bridges at Haine St.Pierre and Haine St.Paul with two battalions and some guns.⁴⁵ In this position he spent the night.

The division of De Perponcher.

By noon, inhabitants coming from Charleroi approached the positions of the 2nd brigade of the division of De Perponcher over the chaussée of Brussels, driving their cattle before them and holding part of their belongings.

Meanwhile, at the headquarters of Bernard van Saksen Weimar, then still the commander of both battalions of Orange-Nassau, news came in from an officer of the military police, that the French had probably passed Charleroi.⁴⁶ It was then that gun- and musketfire could be heard in the direction of Jumet.

Bernard van Saksen Weimar, then still the commander of both battalions of Orange-Nassau, decided to move both his battalions (located at Genappe, Bousseval, Ways, Glabais and Thy) towards Quatre Bras on his own initiative.⁴⁷ He informed his superior, colonel Von Goedecke, who was at Hautain-le-Val.

Meanwhile, the events led major Von Normann, whose 2nd battalion Nassau was in position in front of Frasnes, to lead his battalion and the battery of Bijleveld to a position immediately south-west of that part of Frasnes which lies along both sides of the Brussels road.

Major Normann informed colonel Von Goedecke by sending a member of the horse-battery to the headquarters of his regiment at Hautain-le-Val.⁴⁸

In his turn, colonel Sattler sent adjudant major captain Von Mühlmann from there to lieutenant general De Perponcher at Nivelles.⁴⁹ This must have been around 4 p.m.⁵⁰

As Von Mühlmann had reached De Perponcher at Nivelles around 4.45 p.m. , De Perponcher decided to send captain Von Gagern to Van Saksen Weimar to enquire about the exact situation at Frasnes and Quatre Bras.⁵¹

At the same time De Perponcher ordered both his brigades to collect at their points of alarm: Nivelles and Quatre Bras.⁵²

Von Gagern must have met the duke of Saksen Weimar in front of Genappe, after he had collected both his battalions and just when he was advancing with them towards Quatre Bras. Then it was about 6 p.m. The duke informed him of the situation and sent Von Gagern back to Nivelles to make his report about the situation.⁵³ Here, he arrived towards 7.30 p.m.⁵⁴ (see below).

The moment Van Saksen Weimar arrived with the 1st battalion Orange-Nassau and the 2nd battalion Orange-Nassau (coming from Genappe / Ways and Thy / Glabais), the 1st and 3rd battalion Nassau were already in position near Quatre Bras, as both had been collected there between 4 and 6 p.m.⁵⁵

During the march of the 1st battalion Nassau to Quatre Bras, colonel Von Sattler had detached two companies to the western edge of the Bois de Bossu in order to occupy its extreme south-edge and to communicate with the 2nd battalion Nassau. The remainder of the battalion marched to Quatre Bras where it arrived at 6 p.m. and where it formed a square because of the distant presence of French cavalry.⁵⁶

The 3rd battalion was already there by then.⁵⁷ The company Nassau Volunteer Jäger had marched that evening from Thines to Quatre Bras, where it was posted in four sections by adjudant Steproth at the edge of the Bois de Bossu.⁵⁸

Bernard van Saksen Weimar now posted both his battalions to the left of Quatre Bras and in rear of the Namur-road.⁵⁹

It was not long after that the enemy drove the 2nd battalion of Von Norman and Bijleveld's battery back towards Quatre Bras. Being the sole colonel present, Van Saksen Weimar took over the command of all the battalions present and decided to cover Von Normann's and Bijlevelds retreat with the 1st battalion Nassau. As a result he advanced with the battalion along the Brussels-road. Meanwhile, captain Von Coustol came to inform Bernard van Saksen Weimar about the official transfer of the command over the 2nd brigade to him; at the same time colonel Von Goedecke ordered him to defend the crossroads as well as possible.⁶⁰

Eventually, Von Normann took up his position near Gémioncourt and in the eastern edge of the Bois de Bossu, covered by the 1st battalion Nassau and the company Nassau Volunteer Jäger which stood in the wood.⁶¹

That night the bivouac of the 2nd brigade was [⁶²]: the 1st battalion Nassau on and near the road to Houtain-le-Val near Quatre Bras, with two companies to the west of the Bois de Bossu.⁶³ The 2nd battalion Nassau occupied the farm of Gémioncourt and the east-edge of the Bois de Bossu.

The 3rd battalion had three companies near the 2nd battalion Nassau. The remaining three companies were near Quatre Bras. The 1st battalion Orange Nassau was also in the vicinity of Quatre Bras.

The 2nd battalion Orange Nassau had two companies in front to support the 2nd battalion Nassau. The remaining four companies were near Quatre Bras.

The Nassau Volunteer Jäger Company was, in platoons, in the western boundary of the Bois de Bossu.

From 8 p.m. onward, Bijleveld had two guns on the high road leading to Namur, four guns south of Gémioncourt (⁶⁴) and two guns near Quatre Bras in reserve. One of these was on the road leading to Brussels and the other one on the road leading to Namur.⁶⁵ The brigades headquarters were at Quatre Bras. Its outposts were on the line Grand Pierrepont – Gémioncourt - Piraumont.

By 4.45 p.m. general De Perponcher was informed by captain Von Mühlmann about the French presence upon the Brussels road towards Gosselies and about the imminent concentration of the 2nd brigade at Quatre Bras. As a result he decided to collect his 1st brigade around Nivelles. Accordingly, orders were sent out towards 5 p.m. to the units of Van Bijlandt. With the 27th battalion of chasseurs on the Place St.Paul in Nivelles itself, the other battalions were instructed to collect at the exits of the town: the 8th battalion of national militia at the one of Soignies, the 7th battalion of national militia at the one of Brussels, the 5th battalion of national militia at the one of Charleroi and the 7th battalion of the line at the one of Mons.⁶⁶⁻⁶⁷⁻⁶⁸

It must have been towards 5 p.m. as well that De Perponcher received Constant Rebecque's order of 3 p.m. – in fact this order was already about to be executed, as this took place on De Perponcher's initiative, at least for the brigade of Van Bijlandt.⁶⁹

During the night the 27th battalion of chasseurs was relieved on the Place St.Paul by the 7th battalion of the line; this battalion took up its position here in a massed column, with the weapons in stacks. ⁷⁰

As soon as he had heard the report of captain Von Gagern, De Perponcher immediately sent him through towards Braine le Comte, to Constant Rebecque. ⁷¹ This must have been towards 8.30 p.m.

At the same time, De Perponcher sent all heavy luggage of the division, the hospital, the court-marshal etc. towards Waterloo so not to be a burden for further movements. ⁷²

Some time later - towards 10 p.m. - he also must have received Saksen Weimar's report dated 9 p.m.

As a result, De Perponcher sent captain Van Zuylen van Nijeveldt, brigade-major of the brigade of Van Bijlandt, to Quatre Bras, instructing Van Saksen Weimar to hold his positions as long as he could and not to go back to Mont Saint Jean without a fight. Finally, De Perponcher promised him the support of two extra battalions of the brigade of Van Bijlandt that night. ⁷³

Also, De Perponcher placed a company of chasseurs of the 27th battalion [⁷⁴] and a company of the 8th battalion of national militia en echelon on the road between Nivelles and Hautain le Val. In addition, he gave the battalions of Van Bijlandt the order to keep a sharp look out in all directions. ⁷⁵

Around 11.30 p.m., De Perponcher received the order Constant Rebecque had written at 10.15 p.m. ⁷⁶

The situation in Braine le Comte.

At Braine le Comte it was by 9 p.m. that Constant Rebecque received the prince of Orange's letter which was sent from Brussels by 5 p.m. After all the information he had got by then, the letter didn't meet the situation anymore. ⁷⁷

This was even enhanced when one hour later, towards 10 p.m., Von Gagern reached De Constant Rebecque with the news about the French advance as far as Frasnès. ⁷⁸

This news was immediately forwarded to the prince in Brussels in the following note, which was carried by lieutenant Webster:

Braine le Comte, le 15 juin 1815 à 10 h. ½ du soir

Dans cet instant le capitaine baron De Gagern vient d'arriver de Nivelles avec le rapport que l'ennemi a déjà poussé jusqu'à Quatre Bras.

J'ai cru devoir prendre sur moi de faire dire au général Perponcher de soutenir sa seconde brigade par la première et de faire évacuer l'hôpital et le conseil de guerre sur Bruxelles. J'ai envoyé un officier à Nivelles et à Fayt pour s'assurer de l'état de choses au premier endroit, et avertir ensuite les généraux Chassé et de Collaert afin qu'ils joignent et soutiennent la 2^e division en cas de besoin.

Le Q.M., baron De Constant Rebecque ⁷⁹

In fact, the enemy had not pushed as far as Quatre Bras, as Constant Rebecque suggests. ⁸⁰

The last passage in this report refers to his orders for De Perponcher, which De Constant Rebecque wrote at 10.15 p.m. They were carried by major Van Limburg Stirum and read:

Aan den luit.generaal Perponcher commandt du 2.Division à Nivelles Q.Gl. à Braine-le-Comte, le 15 juin 1815, 10 h 1/4 p.m.

Monseigneur,

S.A.R. est dans ce moment à Bruxelles, mais elle est attendu à chaque instant de retour. Je crois qu'il serait important de faire soutenir la 2e brigade par la première et que, s'il était nécessaire, le général de Perponcher la fit soutenir par la 3e division, qui est à Fay [sic], et la cavalerie du général Collaert, qui est dans le voisinage de Roelux; l'hospital et le conseil de guerre sur Bruxelles.

Dans tous les cas, le général de Perponcher voudra bien envoyer un officier au général Chassé à Fay [sic] pour lui donner connaissance de l'état de choses en le priant de les faire communiquer au général de Collaert.

Le général major quartier maitre général,

*Baron de Constant-Rebecque*⁸¹

By the time Constant Rebecque wrote to the prince about the enemy's presence in front of Quatre Bras, captain Russell came in from Brussels with Wellington's concentration orders; it was about 10.30 p.m.⁸²

They read:

Brussels , June 15 1815

The Prince of Orange is requested to collect at Nivelles the 2nd and 3rd division of the Netherlands. The troops to move at one o'clock in the morning.

*The cavalry of the Low Countries is all to move behind the Haine and to be collected on the heights behind Haine St.Pierre. One brigade holding the passage of the river at Haine St.Paul with the necessary proportion of artillery.*⁸³

One hour later, Constant Rebecque wrote new orders for Collaert:

Aan den luit.gl.Collaert comm. de kavalerie te Boussoit sur Haine Hoofdkw.Braine-le-Comte den 15e juny 1815 11 1/2 uur p.m.

U.H.E.G. zult op ontvangst deezen de divisie kavalerie onder uwe orders in beweging zetten, en met dezelve de hoogten agter [sic] te Haine-Saint-Pierre occuperen, detacherende eene brigade met de nodige artillerie , ter bewaring van de passagie [sic] op de Haine bij Saint Paul.

*Baron Constant Rebecque*⁸⁴

At the same time, Constant Rebecque wrote orders to Chassé to march to Nivelles as soon as possible. The order was carried by captain Nepveu and reads:

*Au lt.gl.Chassé commt.la 3e Don.à Fay [sic],
Q.Gl. à Braine-le-Comte le 15 juin 1815,à 11. 1/2 h.p.m.*

Votre division doit marcher immédiatement à Nivelles, pour y soutenir la 2e division en cas de besoin; vous êtes averti que le Gl. Collaert prend une position derrière la Haine.

*Baron Constant Rebecque*⁸⁵

Constants order to Perponcher was sent out around 00.30 a.m. It instructed Perponcher to collect his division at Nivelles and reads:

*Au lt.gl. De Perponcher commt. la 2e division à Nivelles
Q.Gl.à Braine-le-Comte, le 15 juin 1815 minuit et quart*

Après vous avoir envoyé le comte De Stirum j'ai reçu l'ordre de S.A.R. le prince d'Orange de Bruxelles de vous faire dire de rassembler votre division à Nivelles; la division du général Chassé a reçu l'ordre de se porter à Nivelles pour se joindre à vous et vous soutenir; le général De Collaert a reçu ordre de prendre une position sur les hauteurs en arrière de Haine-Saint-Pierre.

*Baron Constant Rebecque*⁸⁶

It must have been around 2.30 a.m. that a late order of the prince of Orange for Collaert arrived at the headquarters at Braine le Comte.⁸⁷ It read:

La division de cavallerie [sic] des Pays Bas se portera de Haine St.Paul et St.Pierre sur Arquennes et se placera derrière ce village.

Guillaume P. d'Orange

Le Q.er Genl. doit se porter demain de Braine à Nivelles.

Guillaume Prince d'Orange

Bruxelles, 15 juin

British: 3d div. to Nivelles

1st div. to Braine le Comte

2d 4th div. to Enghien

*Cavalry to Enghien*⁸⁸

By the time Constant Rebecque was reading this order, the prince himself was underway from Brussels to Braine le Comte.

As a result of this order, Constant Rebecque immediately issued his for Collaert:

The order reads:

*Au lieut. genl. Collaert, commt. la cavalerie à Boussoit sur Haine
Q.Gl. à Braine le Comte le 16 juin 1815 3 h.a.m.*

Par ordre de S.A.R. le Prince d'Orange la division de cavalerie sous vos ordres doit se porter sur Arquennes et se placer derrière ce village; le quartier général de S.A.R. sera aujourd'hui à Nivelles.

Constant Rebecque ⁸⁹

The prince of Orange left Brussels between 1.00 and 1.30 a.m. Shortly before he left he had ordered lieutenant Webster to remain in Brussels.

He would have traveled alone all the way down to Braine le Comte where he arrived around 3.30 a.m. ⁹⁰ He joined Constant Rebecque and approved all measures taken by him. Then he sent Constant to Quatre Bras, with the instruction to have the units there ready for departure. ⁹¹

Constant left on his own (due to the absence of all his adjudants) from Braine le Comte before 4 a.m. ⁽⁹²⁾ and arrived around 5 a.m. at Nivelles. ⁹³ Having prepared the troops there to march, he rode to Quatre Bras where he arrived around 6 a.m. ⁹⁴

Before he would leave for Nivelles as well, Constant Rebecque instructed major Van Gorkum, of the general staff of the army of the Netherlands, to order the headquarters of the army of the Netherlands not to follow him, but to remain where it was and to await further instructions. If these would not come out after a few hours, Van Gorkum was supposed to act according to circumstances and to what he deemed right to do: either to have general headquarters follow the army, or to bring it into safety. ⁹⁵

The situation at Mons.

As has been stated before, it was around 9.30 a.m. that Von Dörnberg learned about a French attack upon the Prussians, but further details were missing.

Some time later, however, probably around 11.30, a report dropped in for baron Behr, through Van Merlen, informing him about a French attack upon the 2nd Prussian brigade which seemed to be heading towards Charleroi and that alarm shots had been fired all along the line.

In front of Mons and Van Merlen's sector everything remained quiet, but – according to previous orders - Mons was now declared in a state of siege. One of the results was that trees were cut to block roads leading to Mons and that the road to France was cut up (see below).

After he had sent his report of 9.30 a.m., Von Dörnberg decided to head to Binche to see for himself about the situation. Here he found out that the Prussians had evacuated the place and he returned to Mons, where must have been informed by Behr about the information which had dropped in from Van Merlen during his absence. ⁹⁶

It may have been in the early afternoon that Von Dörnberg got back in Mons, but it was somewhere in the early evening that he left for Brussels, while in the late afternoon or the early evening the general inspector of the region between the rivers Lys and Sambre, jonkheer L.A.B.Vrijthoff, wrote a report about the situation to general Tindal at Brussels, informing him about the hostilities and the resulting concentration of the Netherlands forces around Nivelles.

Some hours later, Vrijthoff wrote again in the following way:

“Tout est ici dans la même position qu’au départ du courrier ce soir. Aucune nouvelle officielle est rentré de l’officier de ce sont les nouvelles particuliers sont que Lobbes a été pillée; que les Français seraient à Thuin et que, comme j’ai eu l’honneur de prévenir Votre Excellence, notre armée se concentre et prendra position vers Nivelles portant son aile droite à Mons.

J'ai l'honneur de prévenir Votre Excellence que demain matin je me mettrai à cheval pour me rapprocher des opérations et pouvoir la tenir au courant des affaires. Ce soir tous les avenues et les arbres entourant la ville ont été battu et les chaussées ont été levées à la porte de Bertaimont (de France). [⁹⁷]

On est instruite que Napoleon a enlevé partout toutes les voitures sans [...] des berlines mêmes et q'il les emmène à la suite de son armée. L'attaque de Charleroy pourrait fort bien n'être qu'une feinte et qu'en suivant le plan de la campagne de 1794. Il n'attaqua sérieusement par la Flandre.

Le 16 à 4 heures du matin. Pendant la nuit tout a été tranquille.”⁹⁸

For some reason Vrijthoff had his report of 10 p.m. pending till dawn the other day, at least after 4 a.m., noticing by that time that everything remained quiet at and around Mons.⁹⁹

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¹ The fact that the headquarters were in this building is confirmed by major Van Gorkum, of the general headquarters. Ch. His memoirs (private collection). This building was in 1815 owned by a man called Simon.

Cf. Bas, F.de and T'Serclaes de Wommerson. La campagne de 1815 Vol.I p.269

² Letter of Constant Rebecque to lieutenant general Collaert, 8 a.m. In: NA, Register of staff 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –177

Cf. Letter of G.H.Berkeley to lord FitzRoy Somerset, later that day at 2 p.m. In: SD, p.480

Also see: Constant's account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25 and the (French) account of major Van Gorkum. In: private collection.

³ Cf. register of staff, nr. 177 In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –177

⁴ According to De Bas, the prince reached St.Symphorien by 6.30 a.m. having ridden cross-country one kilometer per four minutes, in my view an absurd presumption. In: Documenten en hypothesen (1911) p.7

Robinson claims an hour of 7 a.m. In: The battle of Quatre Bras p.27

⁵ Major count Van Limburg Stirum informs us that the prince learned in the outposts that the French were about to attack, but the prince must clearly have taken it for sure they were under attack. In: VLS, nr.II nr.3, 4

In this connection I would like to mention a letter written by captain Gey to his brother on the morning of the 15th of June in which he writes at St.Symphorien that at 4 a.m. - at two hours distance - the Prussians standing to his left had come under attack; the moment he wrote his letter, his unit was saddled and ready to leave. From all this it can be taken that the letter was written before the prussians left their positions and maybe after Van Merlen had given his orders for the units to hold themselves into readiness to leave; by then Van Merlen may have got the order of the prince already.

Taking two hours distance for a captain of a battery of horse artillery, however, I come to a point around Binche (about 10 kilometers east of St.Symphorien), which is a point about 10 kilometers north-west of Thuin. In: NA, nr. 462A, 2.21.071 coll.123 nr.188

⁶ In: Pfister, A. Aus dem Lager der Verbündeten p.366

⁷ The existence of this order has been a question of debate between lieutenant general Koolemans Beijnen and colonel F.de Bas in the Militaire Spectator in the years 1910-1912, until the original was found in 1912 in the collection of jonkheer Beeldsnijder, as mentioned by general Sabron.

F.de Bas had always denied its existence (and that Chassé had acted from his own initiative), but eventually had to admit he was wrong. Cf. Bas, F.de and T'Serclaes de Wommerson, J.de "St.Symphorien." In: Militaire Spectator (1912) p.270-271

The text of the document had been published for the first time, by Del Campo (= Camp), in his biography of general Chassé of 1849 (annex 12).

The original has been published in facsimilé in the Militaire Spectator of 1912 (nr.3, p.203) by Koolemans Beijnen. Despite its specific description I haven't been able to retrieve it yet from the collection, which is now in the National Archives, The Hague.

Cf. Dam van Isselt, W.E. De Noord-Nederlandse batterij artillerie te voet Lux in 1815 p.42-43
Bosscha, J. – Het leven van Willem den tweede etc. p.185

⁸ Report of lieutenant colonel Hoyneck van Papendrecht (chief of staff of the division of Collaert). In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.422

Hoyneck van Papendrecht's report is most confusing. What he does is suggesting as if the orders for all brigades of the division were issued at the same time i.e. "tegen de middag", so possibly around 11.30 a.m. Yet, he also suggest as if the brigades had to move by 6 p.m. only. However, from the order of Constant Rebecque of 3 p.m. it becomes clear that the prince had issued his orders for Van Merlen that morning (by 7.45 – 8.00 a.m.) and it would be ridiculous to suppose that these were to be executed in the early evening. Additionally, the prince had ordered Chassé to collect his division right away and it would be most unlogical to suppose that he would have given Van Merlen plenty of time before he would have to move his brigade, as this would not fit to the situation at all.

Cf. Koolemans Beijnen, G.J.W. De order etc. p.28-33

⁹ It was 8 a.m. according to Robinson. In: The battle of Quatre Bras p.29

¹⁰ Major Van Gorkum claims in his memoirs that the prince arrived at Braine le Comte not long after 9.30 a.m., but I will come back to the validity of these memoirs below.

Van Gorkum would have been waiting for the prince (to come back from the outposts) on the road towards Mons, immediately south of Braine le Comte. In: private collection.

Robinson translates this description into the fact that the prince would have met Van Gorkum near a relay station at Naast, a village about 2 kilometers south-east of Soignies but of which it is highly improbable that the prince passed there as this is too remote for the connection Saint Symphorien – Braine le Comte. In: The battle of Quatre Bras p.31

Hussey's statement that the prince drove straight from St.Symphorien to Brussels "for his dinner engagement" is thus highly incorrect. In: The Frasnes letter, a reconsideration etc. p.17

¹¹ Baron Constant Rebecque claims he left about 9.30 a.m., but this is impossible in view of the distance involved between Braine le Comte and St.Symphorien and a time of departure for the outposts at 5 a.m.

Additionally, he also (erroneously) claims that the prince had learned nothing new on the French there; he even doesn't mention the orders to Chassé and Van Merlen of that morning.

Cf.his account, in: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Cf. Koolemans Beijnen, G. De order van de prins etc. (1910) p.573

In relation to the account as written by Constant Rebecque: this has been referred to as a diary as it is written in the present tense, but it isn't. In fact, De Bas does so in his study Prins Frederik der Nederlanden etc. Vol.I p.631 nr.82

In another publication it has been claimed that the account was written not on a daily base but during the events, at moments there was time to do. Cf. Le témoignage etc. p.130

In my mind, however, it was written after the events as for example Constant writes for the 15th of June that he sent Perponcher the order "[...] de défendre le poste de Quatre Bras à toute outrance, comme étant la clef de nos positions [...]" – as a matter of fact, first of all he didn't order Perponcher what he describes here and secondly, at that time Quatre Bras was not regarded as the key position of the sector, in fact this was Nivelles. This statement can only have been done in hindsight.

On another occasion he claims Wellington sent his units from Brussels to Quatre Bras, which he didn't: he sent them to Mont Saint Jean. And another example is that Constant gives a full

picture of the French movements on the 15th of June, an impossibility if his account would have been a diary. Cf. *Le témoignage* etc. p.130, 132, 133,134

As for the trip from Braine le Comte to Brussels, there is a – in my mind absurd – claim that he made it in a cabriolet. In: Robinson, M. *The battle of Quatre Bras* p.32

¹² The distance is, through Tubize and Hal, about 30 kilometers.

¹³ Major Van Limburg Stirum. In: VLS, II nr.3, 4

¹⁴ WSD, p.481

¹⁵ There is no relation between the report baron Behr received at Mons later that morning through Van Merlen and the information Von Dörnberg got, as by the moment Von Dörnberg wrote his (daily) report by 9.30 a.m., Von Steinmetz' information had not reached St.Symphorien and on which De Paravicini sent his report.

Hussey somehow seems to make the connection, but this is incorrect. As a result he claims Behr wrote before 10 a.m., but – again – his report is based upon Van Merlen's information which dropped in at Mons much later, by 11 a.m. In: *Towards a better chronology* etc. p.472

Cf. Hofschroer, P. 1815. *The Waterloo campaign*. Wellington etc. p.195

Von Pflugk Harttung already saw as well that Von Dörnberg must have been writing from his own knowledge and not from Van Merlen's. In: *Vorgeschichte* etc. p.202

¹⁶ Hussey, J. *Towards a better chronology* etc. p.476

¹⁷ NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8 –172

¹⁸ Cf. Autobiographical notes of captain Von Omphal (6th regiment of hussars), adjutant of Chassé. In: NIMH, nr.104/7

¹⁹ Cf. Major Van Gorkum in his diary. In: private collection.

The fact that Chassé writes to Constant Rebecque and not to the prince was probably caused by a message of the courier to do so.

²⁰ Cf. sequence of the incoming reports – in the register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8 –208

Major Van Gorkum, in his diary, also mentions a report which came in mentioning the details as can be found in the one of De Paravicini (Van Merlen), so this is the one he actually means. In: private collection.

Later, in his memoirs, Van Gorkum seriously mixes things up as he then states that the same report of Chassé got in Braine le Comte by 9.30 a.m (which is impossible due to the distances the reports had to travel) and that the one of Van Merlen got in by 11.30 a.m.

Van Gorkum also edited a French version of his memoirs and here he gives 12.30 p.m. in stead of 11.30 a.m. I believe the diary to be the most authentic and therefore closest to the truth. In: private collection.

²¹ NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

²² The reason for this can be seen from the fact that De Paravicini's report actually mentions Von Steinmetz' intention to withdraw towards the Piéton, and, ultimately, towards Fleurus.

Hofschröder's presumption that it was Zieten who informed the Netherlanders is incorrect, as it was Von Steinmetz who did so. In fact, there never was any direct communication between Zieten and the Netherlanders on the 15th of June. In: Yet another reply etc. p.224

²³ Hofschröder erroneously believes the note was sent by Von Steinmetz around 4.45 a.m., that it reached Van Merlen at 8 a.m. and that he sent it through to Mons, where it got by 9.30 a.m. In: 1815. The Waterloo campaign. Wellington etc. p.195, 354

²⁴ Hussey also sees that a time of arrival (noon) as claimed by Constant Rebecque simply cannot be true (see below). As a result he states it got there (much) later as noon. In: Towards a better chronology etc. p.472

²⁵ It remains a mystery why this report is not being registered in the general register of Constant Rebecque.

²⁶ HL, WP 1.467
WSD, p.481

²⁷ NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

²⁸ NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

²⁹ HL, WP 1.467
WSD, p.480

³⁰ Hussey claims the letter of Von Dörnberg remained unopened until the reports of Chassé and De Paravicini had arrived; this may be true. It has not been registered in the register of staff of Constant Rebecque, as no other report of Von Dörnberg was in the period before the 15th of June. Cf. Register of staff, in NA, 2.13.14.01 nr. 7-8

³¹ Constant Rebecque here claims in his account that he received Behr's letter about noon, but this is impossible in relation to the distances involved. He also claims that it was through Behr that he learned about a French action at Thuin and about the evacuation of Binche by the Prussians and their retreat towards Gosselies. However, this was information which had come in through Van Merlen.

What Behr did report about in a second report was the departure of Van Merlen's brigade, thereby exposing the east flank of Mons. Its summary reads:

“Par lettre du même jour, le même général [Behr] rend compte que par un mouvement que le général Van Merlen a fait pour concentrer sa cavalerie légère, la place de Mons se trouve à découvert sur la gauche.”

This report must have been forwarded from Braine le Comte to Brussels as well, as it got there, apart from the other one as cited from, on the 16th of June.

Cf. note which gives a summary of the report in a document entitled “Lettres confidentielles reçues le 16 Juin 1815.” In: NA, nr.2.02.01 nr.6585

Behr's report was also no reason for Constant Rebecque, as he says, for immediate orders for De Perponcher, Collaert and Chassé. First of all, these orders were not issued shortly after noon, but at 3 p.m. and there was no such order of Constant Rebecque to Chassé, as the prince had already given him his orders earlier that morning. Cf. Constant in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Cf. Hussey, J. Towards a better chronology etc. p.474

The remark of Berkeley dated 2 p.m. that “the 3rd division of the Netherlands was collected at Fayt” is additional proof that such orders had already been issued that morning.

In his “Vorgesichte” Von Pflugk Harttung sees the discrepancies in this matter, but doesn't come to firm conclusions as his presumptions, the existence of a second letter of Behr as well as his believe in the correctness of Constant Rebecque's journal, are wrong. As a result he tries to push it all into an unrealistic time-frame, while at the same time he sees inconsistencies in communications and the gap in time between the incoming information and the orders issued at 3 p.m.

Von Pflugk Harttung also sees the fact that Constant Rebecque claims to have sent orders to Chassé, while only the ones to Perponcher and Collaert had been handed over to posterity; but, by 1903, the order of the prince for Chassé had not been made public. In: Vorgesichte etc. p.202-206, 360

³² That both orders were issued by 3 p.m. can be taken from the register of staff of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –178 and 179

³³ Perponcher had his headquarters in Nivelles, in the house of count Van Grave, at the rue de Charleroi. It was bombed in 1940.

³⁴ Original in NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –178 In the register of staff, the last passage has been left out.

³⁵ Cf. NA, register of staff, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –179 Both orders, for Perponcher and Collaert were sent by captain Heinecken. His name comes back again that day in connection to the order issued by Constant Rebecque to Collaert at 11.30 p.m. As it would be most unlogical to send Heinecken to two divisional commanders at the same time in such an important phase of the events, I believe Heinecken, as commander of the “guides à cheval” sent members of his unit to the respective destinations.

³⁶ This can be taken not only from the accounts of several members of these units, but also from the prince's letter dated 5 p.m. as written from Brussels.

According to Robinson, it was Berkeley who informed both commanders that hostilities had begun. However, actual instructions must have gone out. In: The battle of Quatre Bras p.37

³⁷ Account of lieutenant colonel Van Heerdt, chief of staff of the brigade De Ghigny. In: VLS, nr.II.5.1

³⁸ That night the half battery under captain Petter had its bivouac near Baume. Cf. letter of Petter. In: VLS, II, nr.4.6

³⁹ J.B.Christemeijer (4th regiment of light dragoons) confirms his regiment received the order during the afternoon to take up a position in a field near Havré that same evening. In: Geschiedverhaal etc. p.11

According to Krayenhoff (4th regiment of light dragoons) the regiment was assembled near Havré at 6 p.m.. Account in: Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Lieutenant Van Wassenaar van St.Pancras (battery Gey) confirms his unit left its position towards evening and that it took up a (short) position after dark. In: VLS, II, nr.4.5a

⁴⁰ Colonel Van Delen. Report. In: NA, nr.2.13.14.01 nr.8

⁴¹ The fact that the place for the division to collect was not Fayt itself but the area in front (south) of it is confirmed by the order of Constant Rebecque to Chassé, dated 9th June 1815. In: NA, nr.2.13.52.3 nr.1113

⁴² Cf.orders of lieutenant colonel Van Delen, chief of staff of Chassé, for both Detmers and d'Aubremé, dated 18th may, 9th, 10th and 13th of June 1815. In: Koolemans Beijnen, G. W. De order etc. from Mil.Spectator nr.6 (1911) p.24-26

⁴³ Colonel van Delen. In: Bas, F.de , La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.358
Cf. Chassé's report for Constant Rebecque dated 11 a.m. He wrote this report from Haine St.Pierre, his headquarters. Yet, captain Rochell (19th battalion of national militia) claims he saw Chassé in or near Fayt; this may have been possible, but at least he must have been back at Haine St.Pierre by 11 a.m. Cf. Captain Rochell. Account in family archive.
An anonymous member of the division claims the division was collected near Fayt by 4 p.m.
In: VLS, nr.II nr.8

⁴⁴ Cf. Captain Rochell. Account in family archive.

⁴⁵ Colonel van Delen. In: Bas, F.de , La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.358
Captain Rochell (19th battalion of national militia). Rochell saw his battalion march off and about 30 minutes later was supposed to follow in its rear. Account in family archive.
The 6th battalion of national militia was at Maurage that night, with outposts as far as Bray. Cf. 2nd lieutenant Holle in his letter to his parents, dated 10th July 1815. In: Stadsarchief Dordrecht, family archive Blussé, 68-28 nr.21 and in his account dated 1856 in the same archive, nr.26

Van Delen claims Chassé was ordered to go there, while during the morning he moved his divisions towards Fayt on his own initiative; I believe it was just the way around.
It may have been the information of major Nahuys (attached to the staff of Chassé) who had taken it upon himself to ride to Binche to verify whether the French were there, which caused Chassé to advance towards the Haine. In: Letter of recommendation of Chassé to the prince of Orange, dated 3rd august 1815. In: Köffler, G. De militaire Willemsorde p.24

Lieutenant Kikkert of the train of the foot-battery Lux mentions Fayt as the place where he spent the night. Cf. his letter to his parents, datd 26th July 1815. In: diary - in: Koninklijke Militaire Academie, Breda, nr.4193-2

⁴⁶ Colonel Saksen Weimar. In: VLS, nr.II.nr.3.5

⁴⁷ Sergeant Döring (1st battalion Orange-Nassau) claims his battalion already left Genappe at 3 p.m. In: Die Schlacht bei Waterloo etc. In: Heimatblätter etc. nr.2
It must have been somewhat later.

⁴⁸ Captain L.Wirths (2nd battalion 2nd regiment Nassau) In: Aus der Schlacht bei Waterloo. In: Nassovia 1905 p.142-143

⁴⁹ Colonel Von Rattler and colonel Von Kruse. In: VPH, nrs.18 and 17

According to captain Wirths (2nd Nassau battalion) the message brought by the member of the artillery had been received with disbelief. In: *Aus der Schlacht bei Waterloo*. In: *Nassovia* 1905 p.143

⁵⁰ Cf. Colonel Sattler. In: *VPH*, nr.18

⁵¹ Colonel Van Saksen Weimar. In: *VLS*, II, nr.3.5

Von Gagern claims it was him who gave the duke the information about the command of the brigade (see below) , but at the same time confirms he was sent back to Nivelles by the duke (and from there further by De Perponcher to Braine le Comte. Cf. letter of captain Von Gagern to captain Von Löben Sels dated 14 december 1841. In: *VLS*, II.3.nr.3

Yet, Van Saksen Weimar makes it clear that Von Gagern was sent out by De Perponcher to enquire about the situation and not about the change of command; as a result he sent him back.

⁵² Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveldt. In: *Historisch verhaal etc*. In: Bas, F.de *La campagne de 1815 etc*. Vol.III p.290

⁵³ Colonel Van Saksen Weimar. In: *VLS*, II nr.3.5 It means that Von Gagern did not come at Quatre Bras.

Cf. letter of captain Von Gagern to captain Von Löben Sels dated 14 december 1841. In: *VLS*, II.3.nr.3 He believes he was sent back between 1 and 2 p.m. !

He also says that Saksen Weimar asked him to ask De Perponcher for reinforcements, but this is doubtful.

⁵⁴ Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveldt claims it was at 7 p.m. In: *Historisch verhaal etc*. In: Bas, F.de *La campagne de 1815 etc*. Vol.III p.294

⁵⁵ According to Saksen Weimar the 3rd battalion Nassau had marched on its own initiative from Sart-à-Mavelines to Quatre Bras. In: *VLS*, II nr.3.5

Colonel Sattler confirms he concentrated the 1st battalion Nassau at Quatre Bras immediately after sending out captain Von Mühlmann. In: *VPH*, nr.18

The 1st battalion Nassau would have marched to Quatre Bras in a forced march. Cf. Leonhard, P. Manuscript.

⁵⁶ Captain Von Büsgen. Report dated 19th December 1835. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in: HSA, Abr.1049 nr.1

⁵⁷ Colonel Von Sattler. In: *VPH*, nr.18

⁵⁸ Captain Bergmann. In: Domarus, M. *Die Oranien-Nassauische Freiwillige Jägerkompagnie etc*. In: *Nassauische Heimatblätter* 1915 p.19

⁵⁹ Colonel Van Saksen Weimar. In: *VLS*, II nr.3.5

Initially, both the 1st and 3rd battalion of the 2nd regiment of Nassau must have stood somewhat more to the front, as at dusk they were both pulled more towards the crossroads. Cf. Captain Von Büsgen. Report dated 19th December 1835. In: www.1815.ltd.uk Original in: HSA, Abr.1049 nr.1

⁶⁰ Prince Bernard van Saksen Weimar had led the brigade ad interim since the 2nd of June, when colonel Von Goedecke had been injured during an exercise by the kick of the horse of his adjutant. Major Sattler succeeded Saksen Weimar as commander of the regiment light infantry Nassau; captain Büsgen succeeded Sattler as commander of the 1st battalion of this regiment. Cf. Von Sattler. In: VPH, nr.18 and Van Saksen Weimar. In: VLS, II nr.3.5

Starklof, R. Das Leben etc. p.178

The journal of the 2nd division, however, states it was on the 4th of June that Goedecke got wounded. Cf. Journaal der 2^o divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 nr.1090 p.26b

⁶¹ Colonel Van Saksen Weimar. In: VLS, II nr.3.5

⁶² Cf. Van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.294

⁶³ In coming from Hautain-le-Val the battalion had moved in a forced march, but as soon as it reached the wood it went into line and then into closed square as it approached Quatre Bras over the road; as soon as it turned to the right into the fields it moved in a square; after some manoeuvres back- and forward the unit took up position in the rear of Quatre Bras in closed square. Cf. Leonhard, manuscript.

⁶⁴ One of them (a six-pounder) was on the road. Cf. van Zuylen van Nijvelt. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.

⁶⁵ Report of major Van Opstall. In: VLS, nr.II, nr.4.1 Van Opstall here refers to the report of captain Bijleveld written during on the evening of the 15th of June. Van Opstall received this report at 10 p.m.

Cf. Colonel Von Sattler and major general Von Kruse. In: VPH, nrs. 18 and 17

⁶⁶ J.Rem (veteran of the 7th battalion militia) gives 5 p.m. as the moment orders for the battalion to assemble arrived. In: Aantekeningen van een veteraan etc.

Colonel De Jongh (8th battalion of national militia) says he got orders to leave his bivouacs. The battalion took up its new position near Nivelles accordingly at 5 p.m. Cf. papers published in the Militaire Spectator of 1866.

⁶⁷ Captain Mollinger to captain Van Löben Sels, 19th august 1841. In: VLS, nr.II, nr.3.8

According to the account of an anonymous officer of the 5th battalion of national militia (probably captain Van Toll) the battalion remained in its position near Buzet and Obaix till late that night. By then the battalion learned about the French advance by inhabitants fleeing before the enemy and by a reconnaissance sent out towards Gosselies. Having no orders, Westenberg would have sent his lieutenant adjutant Vos to the brigades headquarters after which the battalion got orders to proceed to Quatre Bras. By then it was 11 p.m.

The battalion went back to Nivelles first and then proceeded to Quatre Bras early morning. In: Knoop, W.J. Quatre Bras en Waterloo p.

⁶⁸ Private Rentenaar of the battalion. Account in private collection.

⁶⁹ Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld and De Perponcher do not mention having received such order and then having complied with it. Cf. Colonel van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p. 290
De Perponcher in his report dated 11th of July 1815. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.280

⁷⁰ Colonel van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p. 296
Cadet-sergeant Welter (27th battalion jäger). Cf.his letter dated 1st July 1815 from Péronne. In: family archive Volkersz.

⁷¹ Captain Von Gagern. In his letters dated 1841. In: VLS, II.3 nr.2 and 3

⁷² Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.296

⁷³ Van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In a letter dated 13th December 1838 to Major Van de Poll. In: NA, nr.2.21.180
Cf. the answer of Major Van de Poll to Van Zuylen van Nijeveld, dated 8th January 1839. In: NA, nr.2.21.180
Also see the letter of the Duke of Saksen Weimar. In: VLS, II nr.3.5
Cf. Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.294

⁷⁴ This was the 6th company led by Captain De Crassier of the 27th battalion chasseurs. Cf. Report Lieutenant Colonel Grunebosch. In: Archive VLS. II.3.nr.7

⁷⁵ Colonel van Zuylen van Nijeveld. In: Historisch verhaal etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.298

⁷⁶ Cf. Count Van Limburg Stirum. The count doesn't mention a written document of Constant; instead he speaks of the recommendation done to him to keep his position and, in case of a retreat, to fall back towards Braine le Comte. At 1.30 Van Limburg Stirum returned to Braine le Comte. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.4
Colonel Van Zuylen van Nijeveld claims it was by midnight that the order came in at Nivelles. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.300

⁷⁷ Cf. Document in NA, 2.13.14.01nr.6
De Constant Rebecque wrote on the same document after its arrival: "Reçu à Braine le Comte le 15 à 9 heures du soir." And: "Het is gevoeglijkst geoordeeld de divisien en bivouac te laten verblijven, wijl dit berigt te laat ontvangen is."
For 9 p.m. also see Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25
Major Van Gorkum in his diary claims it was during the night that the letter came in. In: private collection.
Somehow, it must have been delayed in its delivery.

⁷⁸ Cf. count Van Limburg Stirum. In: VLS, nr.II,3.4

De Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

The distance between Nivelles and Braine le Comte is about 15 kilometers.

Major Van Gorkum is (again) not consequent about this time: he claims it was 7.30 p.m. on the one hand, and 10 p.m. on the other. Cf. his memoirs and his account “Neuf jours de la campagne de 1815 dite Waterloo”. In private collection.

Von Gagern himself claims he was back in Nivelles between 10 and 11 p.m. , but this must have been after 11 p.m. In: VLS, II, nr.3.3

⁷⁹ In: KHA, nr. A 40 XIII.10

Register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 - 182

The document in this register is dated *at 10 p.m.* and is placed *after* the order for De Perponcher which sent out at 10.15 p.m. and that is why I haven chosen for the document from the KHA.

Also see Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Apart from the hour, the text version of the one in the register of staff is different as well in details. It reads:

A S.A.R. le prince d'Orange à Bruxelles

Q.Gl. à Braine-le-Comte, le 15 juin 1815, 10 h du soir

Dans cet instant le capitaine Baron de Gagern arrive de Nivelles faisant rapport que l'ennemi s'est montré à Quatre Bras.

J'ai cru devoir prendre sur moi d'engager le général de Perponcher de faire soutenir la 2e brigade par la 1er et de faire avertir la 3e division et la cavalerie pour pouvoir en être soutenu en cas de besoin.

Baron de Constant Rebecque

⁸⁰ In his account, Constant Rebecque also erroneously claims Von Gagern told him about the loss of Frasnes and the retreat upon Quatre Bras, and this while Von Gagern must have left before the action of Frasnes actually started. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁸¹ Register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 181

⁸² Constant Rebecque wrote on the order: “ordre apporté par le cap.Russel [sic] à 10 ½ h. avant minuit à Braine le Comte le 15 juin 1815.” In: KHA, nr.A40 XIII.10
They were probably written by 7.30 p.m.

⁸³ In: Copy in KHA. A40 XIII-10

The copy is written by, has a note on top stating “Ordre apporté par le cap.Russell à 10 ½ h.avant minuit à Braine le Comte le 15 juin 1815” and is also signed by Constant Rebecque.
Cf. Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

It is strange that Wellington wrote this way to the prince, while he was in Brussels and that the order was apparently sent to Braine le Comte without a covering note of the prince. The moment Constant Rebecque got it, he sent out orders to De Perponcher on behalf of the prince (see below).

⁸⁴ Register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 183
The carrier was captain Heinecken.

⁸⁵ Register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 184
Constant, in his account, writes about an order sent out for Chassé at 11.30 p.m. instructing him to march to Nivelles at 1 a.m. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁸⁶ Register of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 185
In this register the (correct) remark is made that the minute gives “à minuit” in stead of “minuit et quart”. For this minutes, see the archive of the 2nd division. In: NA, 2.13.52.2 - 1096 The order was carried by captain Schreuder.

⁸⁷ A note on top of the document states: “Copie. Ordre reçu à 2 ½ du matin le 16 juin.” In: NA, nr. 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8
Also see: Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁸⁸ Copy in NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8 - 215
From the notes at the bottom of the document it can be taken that the prince – while being in Brussels – was obviously aware of the existence of the so-called “after orders”.
Constant Rebecque translates in his account the last part into French, as: “La 3^e division anglaise marchera à Nivelles, la 1^e division à Braine le Comte, les 2^e et 4^e divisions et la cavalerie anglaise à Enghien.” In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁸⁹. See the register of staff. In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 186
Its messenger was lieutenant Kaps. Cf. Constant Rebecque in his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁹⁰. Constant Rebecque believes it was 3 a.m. In his account. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25
Major count Van Limburg Stirum thinks it was at 2 a.m. In: VLS, nr.II.3.nr.4
It was still at 3 a.m. that Constant Rebecque wrote his order to Collaert in absence of the prince.

⁹¹ Cf. Account of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁹². Cf. Account of Constant Rebecque. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

⁹³. The distance between Braine le Comte and Nivelles is 14 km. According to Constant Rebecque the baggage of the prince and the headquarters were left at Braine le Comte.

⁹⁴. Consant Rebecque himself says it was 5.30 a.m. but this is impossible due to the distance. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

Adjutant general Van der Wijck left Nivelles some time later. He had left Braine le Comte on his own initiative as he had no orders what to do. On the evening of the 15th he understood that the prince would return on the 16th from Brussels and that he would proceed to Nivelles and Quatre Bras. It was at about 10 a.m. that he arrived there too. Cf. account of Van der Wijck dated 27th June 1815. In: NA, nr.2.13.67 inv.4

⁹⁵ Cf. his memoirs. In: private collection.

⁹⁶ Cf. Von Dörnberg. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Vorgeschichte etc. p.292

⁹⁷ On the southern outskirts of Mons.

⁹⁸ NA, 2.02.01 nr.6211 and 6585

⁹⁹ It can be derived from this letter that Vrijthoff, contrary to what he claims in his so-called memoirs, was at Mons during the night of the 15th of June. In his memoirs he states to have spent it at Nivelles. In general, Vrijthoff links all kinds of events in a most unlikely chain which makes these memoirs, as written in 1861, highly unreliable. In: Geusau, baron Von "Eene onuitgegeven bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van den slag bij Waterloo."