

French general headquarters: observations.

Napoleon versus Wellington.

By developing some of his forces on the early evening of the 17th of June Napoleon wanted to make sure whether Wellington had taken up a firm position at Mont Saint Jean. It soon became clear that he did and reports dropping in on the very early morning of the 18th of June confirmed the same.

Eager to reach Brussels, Napoleon now planned a major confrontation with his opponent in the position of Mont Saint Jean. This confrontation was to start at 9 a.m.

How Napoleon's plan for this action must have looked like remains unknown, but in the very early morning it resulted in orders for the armée du Nord for the positions they needed to have by then, but which they would eventually take up much later that morning.

As time went by during the early morning hours of the 18th of June it must have become clear to Napoleon that the situation didn't develop the way he had in mind and that the planned confrontation had to be postponed. The deployment of the army took much longer as expected and this did not permit an action at 9 a.m. As has been shown, the French order of battle was completed about half an hour after the battle had started.¹

Traditionally, the breakfast as Napoleon used it - accompanied by members of his imperial staff - is portrayed as one in which Napoleon displayed an almost unlimited optimism.²

Despite the delays, Napoleon may still indeed have been most confident about the outcome of the imminent battle, but, as has been stated before, it is more logical to suppose that the main subjects discussed at Le Caillou must have been the time needed for the troops to arrive in the front line, the state of the field and the situation of the enemy.

The result of the meeting was Napoleon's personal check-up of Wellington's position and the eventual alternative and delayed plan for the battle, which was set for 1 p.m.

Obviously, the terrible state of the ground was an element which contributed to the delay of the advance of the army into its positions for the battle. Yet, this delay was also in a high degree caused by the scattered and improvised way the French bivouacs were arranged.

The state of the ground should be seen in the context of this advance only, and not in relation to the (im) possibility of manoeuvring of units during the imminent battle. In historiography it has often been used as an argument for the French leadership to wait for the fields to dry up before any further actions could be considered, as an excuse for the tardy start of the battle. It should however be pointed out that by the early morning no one had any idea of how the weather would develop that day; in case it might have rained all day it would not have meant that the battle would not take place. So, this is another case of hindsight.

More importantly, by the time the original plan as set for 9 a.m. was launched there was no prospect to such an improvement either. Other than that, even at the moment that the weather actually did improve, by 9 a.m., there was no prospect for the fields to dry up in such a way that (artillery) units could be moved properly a few hours later.³

By the time Napoleon felt he would have an idea at what time he would have all his forces in their assigned positions he released his battle-plan, and that was at 11 a.m. while the start was set for 1 p.m.

What did Napoleon know about Wellington's position and what options did he have to attack his opponent ?

After Wellington had pulled back the forces which had been in front of the Ohain-road to the north side of the ridge, the only forces visible for the French were the enemy's artillery which

was developing on the crest of the ridge, a strong line of skirmishers and some other light troops which were in front at the bottom of the declivity. Right through the heart of the enemy's position, along the Brussels road, activities across and along this road within the enemy's position could be seen but the view must have been very limited and what these activities were meant to be could only be guessed. On Wellington's extreme left flank, forces could be seen being placed on the heights in rear of the low ground of Smohain, while on the opposite flank Braine l'Alleud was occupied by infantry. It became clear to the French that Wellington's frontline extended from this village to the right to the chateau of Ficherfont on the left. Major earthworks or other entrenchments were absent, but small ones like the barricades upon the highroads could easily be detected.⁴

There is no doubt whatsoever that Napoleon was aware of Wellington's tactical skills on the field of battle, but during his career he had never met Wellington in the field. Some of his subordinates, however, had.

Whether these skills have been discussed on the morning of the 18th of June cannot be fully corroborated, but in the way both commanders confronted each other, two points should be highlighted.

First of all, the choice of the battle-ground. As at Ligny, Napoleon was faced with a situation in which the field of battle was the choice of the opponent, not one of his own. In itself, this should not have to be a major drawback right from the start, but it did conflict with Napoleon's own axioma.⁵

Secondly, the combination of the position of Mont Saint Jean and Wellington's tactical strength, must have triggered the basic question for Napoleon whether he would have to seek victory by outmanoeuvring his opponent, or by simply crushing him in a head-on, frontal assault.

Outflank Wellington by sweeping around his left flank in force was no option as the ground here was too much cut up by the low ground of Smohain and the scattered woods, enclosures and sunken roads.

A massive attack upon Wellington's left wing was another option, yet Napoleon could not see that this wing was actually weaker as were the other parts of the duke's frontline. Other than that, such an attack might push Wellington back along the forest of Soignes towards Halle and – in this way – to his operation line towards Antwerp. In itself this could not be a problem, were it not that Napoleon had no forces there where he could cut off this retreat at the same time.

To move around Wellington's right flank, by bending around Goumont through the low ground which runs all the way through to the rear of Wellington's right flank near Merbraine was another option. The open ground would allow a considerable force to move this way and push Wellington in a congested position in front of the forest of Soignes, facing west.

Whatever considerations Napoleon may have had for manoeuvring, finally they must not have convinced him as – eventually – he refrained from doing so altogether.⁶ The plan as he announced it by 11 a.m. stands for a massive, frontal attack on Wellington's line.⁷

Wellington's centre was the target of the main attack; from there Napoleon wanted to penetrate deep into Wellington's position as far as the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean as an initial step in the total rout of the enemy.

In Napoleon's mind, the way to do this was - first of all - a general attack to be preceded by a heavy bombardment of a grand battery placed near the centre of the French line. Then, the 1st corps was to advance *en echelon* left in front. This meant that the division of Allix was to hit Wellington's centre first, followed by the other ones.

While d'Erlon doesn't enter upon the plan of the battle, Reille does. He writes: "Vers 11 heures, Napoleon donna ses instructions pour l'attaque; elle devait être faite en échelons formés en avant par la droite. Le 1^{er} corps à droite de la chaussée et le 2^e à la gauche; de cette manière, le 1er corps, qui n'avait encore eu aucun engagement avec l'ennemi, devait l'aborder le premier, tandis que le 2^e soutiendrait ce mouvement en couvrant la gauche du bois d'Hougoumont."⁸

The order of 11 a.m. and Reille's account taken together picture the general idea of the cooperation of both the 1st and the 2nd corps, *formé en avant par la droite*: while the 1st corps would hit Wellington's line first, the 2nd would advance in support. This means that the 2nd corps was supposed to advance *en echelon*, i.e. to the left rear of the 1st corps, with the division of Jérôme Bonaparte covering the left flank by occupying the low grounds around the complex of Goumont.

As has been shown, it was after the order at 11 a.m. had been issued, that Ney felt the need to make an additional note when it came down to more specific information for both d'Erlon and Reille. The note reads: "Le comte d'Erlon comprendra que c'est par la gauche que l'attaque commencera, au lieu de la droite. Communiquer cette nouvelle disposition au général en chef Reille." It is this note which merits attention in the the discussion around the action towards Goumont.

From the way it was drafted by Soult it can be concluded that it was most probably written for Ney only, and for him to transmit its details to both Reille and d'Erlon. After having read it, Ney must have deemed it necessary to make for Reille and d'Erlon the addition alluded to. Being of a somewhat ambiguous character, what does this note actually want to say ?

For d'Erlon, it was meant to be a confirmation what the order already stated: that he was supposed to advance *en echelon*, left in front. For Ney, it was merely to make sure that he would understand it that way. For Reille, however, it was different, the more as d'Erlon's echelon refused to the right would influence his own advance

After having broken through Wellington's centre, the divisions of the 1st corps were to make a vigorous push deep into Wellington's line and by doing so take the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean. As it was described in the plan, this was all merely meant of course as an initial step in the overall plan. As such, the plan as it was described could not be more than that.

All would of course depend upon the further course of events, but within the context of Napoleonic tactics it can be expected that the attack, after having split Wellington's line, was to be exploited by Napoleon's infantry and (heavy) cavalry reserves in a combined shock action. Starting up from the centre, it is not unlogical to suppose that these forces were then expected to roll up the scattered halves of Wellington's army and to cut them off from their single line of retreat, the Brussels road.⁹

Gourgaud briefly sums it up as: "Ces dispositions indiquaient le projet de l'Empereur, qui était de percer le centre de l'armée anglaise, de le pousser sur la chaussée, et arrivant sur le débouché de la forêt, de couper la retraite à la droite et à la gauche de la ligne."¹⁰

It has been suggested that the plan for the first main attack of the battle incorporated a preliminary divisionary attack upon Goumont, and which was designed to draw Wellington's reserves away from the target area, his centre.¹¹

The document dated 11 a.m. doesn't mention such an action as supposed to precede the main attack, and yet it did precede it for about two hours. What it is all about here is just the basic question in what way a preliminary attack upon Goumont *as such* and not *in the way it was carried out* relates to the battle-plan as it was launched at 11 a.m., the more as there was only half an hour between this moment and the moment Goumont was actually attacked.

The lapse of time between the main attack of the 1st corps and the one upon Goumont does not necessarily have to mean that the second one was a feint. Additionally, this is related to the way the battle developed and not to the plan as it was designed to be.

A lack of proper sources about the circumstances under which the action upon Goumont was started makes the issue difficult to assess, yet how contradictory this may seem they share all the same approach: a lack of total sensitivity around the subject. If there would have been some kind of sensitivity whatsoever, it would have been easy for the people involved to blame others for whatever they could have felt relevant. And there is no such thing, neither with Napoleon, nor

with Reille, nor with Jérôme or any other participant. This means that the action was initiated in a common consent, and this can only have been in the context of the way how Reille describes the role of the division of Jérôme, i.e. as covering the left flank of the grand attack by occupying the low grounds around the complex of Goumont. As long as further evidence is missing, the most logical explanation of the preliminary attack on Goumont can therefore only be some concern for the proximity of the complex in relation to the grand attack which was due to take place. So as to ensure its protection on the left, the decision must have been taken to neutralize this outpost and to attack it right away, considering it would take time to do so.

It has been suggested that the French order of battle, shaped in a concave line, enveloped the one of Wellington. This is incorrect. In fact, the Anglo-German-Netherlands frontline, with infantry at Smohain / Ficherfont and Braine l'Alleud actually extended beyond the extreme French right and left flank.¹²

Napoleon and the Prussian army.

By the morning of the 17th of June, for Napoleon, the application of the strategy of the central position had worked so far: in his idea he had thrown the Prussian army towards the Meuse, so away from his ally. In this, Napoleon assumed that Blücher would either move south-east (Namur), or to the north-east, to possibly seek for an allied junction somewhere between Brussels and Maastricht after all. For that reason, this was the basic concept upon which Napoleon sent Grouchy away with 32.000 men

From Wellington Napoleon expected that he would either fall back beyond this city towards Antwerp, or if he would dare to make a stand south of Brussels, he would then be left to Napoleon's mercy alone.

As such, the ideas of Napoleon about the allies' line of retreat, or rather, their potential positions for a defence deeper down into the Netherlands, fitted almost seamless to the way there were actually designed by the allies. As has been described in the preambles of the campaign, the strategic dimensions for a campaign in the Netherlands for the allies were far larger as they have traditionally been described.

Grouchy reported back to Napoleon on the late evening of the 17th of June that he had the impression that the majority of the Prussian army could be moving either towards Liège (through Perwez) or towards Brussels (through Sart-à-Walhain and Wavre). Pending further intelligence, he would either pursue Blücher in one of these two directions. In the second scenario he then intended to do so, to prevent Blücher from joining Wellington beyond Wavre, near Brussels.

This news must have reached Napoleon at very early morning of the 18th of June at Le Caillou.¹³

In the relation between Napoleon and Grouchy there is a strong lapse of time when it comes down to mutual communication, as the first communication from Napoleon's side dates from 10 a.m. It would be too simple to state this hour as a mere fact and no more. It is also too simple to criticize Napoleon for reacting at such a very late hour, in case he really did receive Grouchy's report around dawn.¹⁴

Supposing he did, there must have been a compelling motive for Napoleon to write to Grouchy just then, at 10 a.m. and not earlier.

The way the order starts, it seems as if Napoleon had received Grouchy's report not long before 10 a.m. Yet, this would have meant that it would have taken the messenger eleven hours to cover the distance between Gembloux and Le Caillou, which is about 30 kilometers. This is highly improbable.

The key to the direct cause of the order of 10 a.m. should be sought in the combination of Napoleon's ideas about the Prussian whereabouts and what he found out about them that morning.

From the perspective how Napoleon saw it, Grouchy's report of the late evening of the 17th of June fitted into his own pre-occupations with the Prussian army. In case Blücher would move with the majority of his forces through Namur and Perwez (so towards Liège), this would lead him away from his ally. In case he would move with the majority of his army further north-east, towards Maastricht, then Grouchy would be there to prevent this from happening by pursuing him there.

The option mentioned by Grouchy of a possible Prussian junction with Wellington between the forest of Soignes and Brussels might have been new for the emperor, but also in this sense he apparently saw no reason to issue orders.

This situation may explain the optimism as displayed by Napoleon early that morning: as he could convince himself that Wellington had taken a firm position in front of the forest of Soignes, at the same time he felt confident Blücher would play no role in the imminent confrontation whatsoever.

The difference came when Napoleon received reports about the passage of strong Prussian forces at St.Géry and Gentinnes, heading for Wavre. Their significance is not only in their actual content, but also in the moment their reached Napoleon. This second element can unfortunately not be read from the order as we have it. One would think this information could have dropped in on the evening of the 17th of June, but if this would have been the case, it would have struck Napoleon as being divergent on what he thought the Prussians were doing. It is this element which makes the critical difference in this particular case. It is therefore most probable to assume that this intelligence laid unused for such a long period of time.¹⁵

Taking it all together, it is therefore most probable to conclude that the information about the passage of strong Prussian forces at St.Géry and Gentinnes reached Napoleon somewhere not long before 10 a.m. on the 18th of June. It was most probably this intelligence which led Napoleon to issue his order at 10 a.m. and not earlier.¹⁶ Having this piece of information, it now led Napoleon to change the basic concept upon which he had detached Grouchy.

Initially, Napoleon supposed Blücher would fall back upon the Meuse, towards Namur or further north, towards Maastricht, in a possible attempt to cover Brussels by taking up a position between this city and Liège.

From now on, Napoleon shifted his attention to another theatre of war, taking into account that the majority of the Prussian army would no longer pull back directly to the Meuse on the line Maastricht - Namur, but towards Brussels or further north east, towards Maastricht – both in an attempt to unite with Wellington after all.

It is within this strategic context that he now pulled Grouchy back into his operation-area to make sure he was *à portée* in case he yet had to confront both allied armies one way or another on this line. This is what he meant with the instruction stated as “de vous rapprocher de nous, vous mettre en rapport d'opérations et lier les communications.”¹⁷

The swift occupation of Wavre and pushing the Prussians forces beyond it now served a multiple purpose: it would not only prevent Blücher of posing an immediate threat upon the right flank of the main French army from there, now at Mont Saint Jean, it would also allow Napoleon to prevent Blücher from joining Wellington immediately south of Brussels. And in case Blücher would pull back upon a position in front of Brussels or between Brussels and Maastricht, then Napoleon could use Wavre as a starting point for offensive operations in those directions.

In traditional historiography of the campaign, the request from Napoleon to Grouchy to move towards him has always been explained in the context of an imminent Prussian threat as

coming from Wavre and as it actually took place. Yet, again, this is reasoning from hindsight. As has been shown - and this cannot be stressed enough - the strategic dimensions of the issue at that moment were far more extensive than that.

Grouchy's news which came in at imperial headquarters after 10 a.m. confirmed Napoleon in his idea that Blücher fell back upon Brussels through Wavre. What had simmered at 10.a.m. as a dormant fear for a Prussian threat as coming from Wavre directly upon the right flank of the French main army through an interior line, now developed to what was written in the body of the order for Grouchy at 1 p.m.

This order is highly ambiguous in its total content. While on the one hand Napoleon approved of Grouchy's movements towards Wavre, on the other he ordered Grouchy to move more towards the main army.¹⁸ The reason for doing so was to prevent any Prussian forces to place themselves between the two parts of the French army. At the same time, Grouchy was to be prepared to fall upon such a force if he would meet it.

It is here stated for the first time that there could be a chance that Prussian forces, as coming from Wavre, could move in between the main French army and Grouchy's detachment. Their strength could of course only be guessed, but apparently it was considered large enough that Grouchy's assistance was needed for Napoleon to beat Wellington in the meantime. Yet, also in this respect the order was ambiguous in its description, as Soult on the one hand describes it as a corps which could intervene, while on the other he plays down their strength by using the expression "quelques troupes ennemies."

Additionally, the order contains another strange contradiction as where Soult instructed Grouchy to find out himself where Napoleon was, while in the next sentence he situated the main army near Waterloo. Yet, in all its ambiguity, one thing stood clear: Grouchy was to quit his pursuit through Wavre and move further west towards the main army to protect it from a possible threat upon its right flank.

However, within minutes after the body of the order was written the word "possible" was overtaken by the delivery at imperial headquarters of a letter seized from a messenger who was on his way from Von Bülow to Wellington. It made clear that the 4th corps was at Chapelle Saint Lambert and that the threat was now imminent.

Had the order been written in ambiguity and verbosity, the situation now asked for a more unequivocal approach as it was phrased in the post scriptum: Grouchy's immediate joining of the main army and – in doing so – the destruction of the Prussian forces at Chapelle Saint Lambert.

This post scriptum and the additional clarification on the exact position of the main army did not contribute to the overall clarity of the order, on the contrary. The document is typical reflection of the development of a situation and lacked a proper editing. What resulted was an highly unbalanced document, issued at a moment of great significance.

¹ Cf. Movements of the division of Durutte and the Imperial Guard.

Bonaparte, J. - Mémoires et correspondances etc. Vol.VII p.21

Jérôme Bonaparte in a letter, dated 15th July 1815. In: Martinet, A. - Jérôme Napoleon, roi de Westphalie p.274

General Alava states French movements took place around 10.30 a.m. Cf. his report dated 20th June 1815 to secretary of state P.Cevallos. In: Kelly, Chr. - A full and circumstantial account of the memorable battle of Waterloo etc. p.64-67

Colonel Baudus adds that the army started to take up its positions by 9 a.m. Cf.Baudus. Etudes sur Napoleon. Vol.I p.225

Petiet claims the army had completed taking up positions by 11 a.m. In: Souvenirs militaires p.213

Aerts even believes that the last troops to take up their positions arrived after 1 p.m. Cf. Aerts, W. - La nuit de Napoleon et la matinée du 18 juin 1815. Réfutation de quelques légendes. In: Bulletin of the SBEN, 1952 nr.5 p.16

The way Napoleon describes the deployment of his army, as eleven columns getting together in a perfect array, is pure fiction and has therefore nothing in common with the events on the 18th of June. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.128-133

Those who accept this deployment uncritically are for instance Houssaye, Charras, De Pontécoulant, Piérart, Quinet, De Mauduit and F.de Bas.

² Traditionally, the following utterances as coming from Napoleon are referred to:

"Messieurs, si mes ordres sont bien exécutés, nous coucherons ce soir à Bruxelles." In: Marchand – Mémoires p.163

And: "L'armée ennemie est supérieure à la notre de près d'un quart; nous n'en avons pas moins quatre-vingts-dix chances pour nous, et pas dix contre".

As Ney said: "Sans doute, si le duc de Wellington était assez simple pour attendre Votre Majesté; mais je viens lui annoncer que déjà ses colonnes sont en pleine retraite; elles disparaissent dans la forêt" – resulting, Napoleon would have corrected him stating: "Vous avez mal vu, il n'est plus à temps, il s'exposerait à une perte certaine, il a jeté les dés, et ils sont pour nous !" In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.124-125

Gourgaud's version of Ney's words is not much different: "Sans doute, Sire, si Wellington était assez simple pour rester là; mais je viens vous annoncer que la retraite est prononcée et que si vous ne vous hâtez de les attaquer, ils vont nous échapper." In: La campagne de 1815 p.72

³ Drouot therefore establishes a non-existent relation between the orders for the attack and the improvement of the weather, specially in relation to the manoeuvring of the artillery. In: The battle of Waterloo also of Ligny and Quatre Bras etc. by a near observer Vol.II p.111

⁴ Haxo is sometimes being accused of having insufficiently surveyed Wellington's position, but this survey should be assessed in relation to major earthworks etc. constructed specifically

as an *extra*, apart from the presence of the farms and other minor – and clearly visible – entrenchments. Cf. Houssaye, H. – 1815.Waterloo p.334

⁵ Cf. Becke's quote of Turenne: "never do what the enemy wants you to do simply because he wants it: therefore, avoid the battle-field which the enemy has reconnoitred and studied, and *a fortiori* that which he has entrenched." From: 18th observation. Guerres de Turennes. Commentaires de Napoleon Ier. Vol.VI p.265 In: Becke, A.F. – Napoleon and Waterloo Vol.II p.9

⁶ Napoleon himself remains silent about the pros and cons of the different options. He only restricts himself to his preference of turning Wellington's left flank, yet at the same time he uses the wrong arguments why he would have refrained from doing so. First of all he claims that this left wing was weak. This is true, however, Napoleon could not see this. Secondly, Napoleon states that by moving upon Wellington's left wing he would cut him off from the Prussian army. This is incorrect as well, as in the morning hours Napoleon did not take into account that the Prussian army would intervene at all. And in this way his third argument falls through, by stating that he sought the link with Grouchy, whom he expected in his right flank, which is incorrect as well (see below). In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.134-135

At Waterloo, Napoleon clearly rejected one of the axioms he so much admired about Turenne and which reads "never make a frontal attack against a position which can be gained by turning it." Cf. 18th observation. Guerres de Turennes. Commentaires de Napoleon Ier. Vol.VI p.265 Cited by Becke. In: Napoleon and Waterloo Vol.II p.9

⁷ Napoleon is the inventor of a plan of attack which never existed. It comprised an attack of two infantry divisions of the 1st army corps and two of the 6th army corps on the farm of La Haye Sainte. Meanwhile, two other divisions of d'Erlon would attack La Haye, further to the right. Both attacks would be supported by the light cavalry of both corps. In the second and third line, cavalry of the reserve would advance, as well as the Imperial Guard. In this way, while being in possession of both the hamlet of Mont Saint Jean as well the farm of La Haye, the Brussels road would have been cut off from the (massive) right wing, thereby cutting it off from its line of retreat. In Napoleon's words this attack upon Wellington's centre and left wing would be "décisive." If this plan would ever have existed, then it was carried out quite differently as it was supposed to be and would – to say the least – not plea for Napoleon as an able commander. One wonders why he described it this way, while his description of the attack of the Goumont and d'Erlon are not in line with this plan at all. Other than that, in reality, Napoleon most probably could not know that Wellington's main concentration of forces was between the high-roads (this is what he calls his right wing). In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.134-135

⁸ In: Document inédits etc. p.61

⁹ Cf. Roberts, A. – Napoleon and Wellington p.xxxi

¹⁰ Gourgaud – La campagne de 1815 p.74

¹¹ Cf. Roberts, A. – Napoleon and Wellington p.xxxi

¹² Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.331

Some historians depict in the French order of battle detailed positions of specific regiments etc. which, however, cannot be corroborated from authentic evidence. Cf. Mauduit, H. de – Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II plan

Adkin, M. – The Waterloo companion p.118-119, 202

¹³ The distance Gembloux – Le Caillou is about 30 kilometers. In case the messenger left Gembloux around 10.30 p.m. and as he had to travel in darkness, it might have cost him between four and five hours to reach imperial headquarters.

For 4 a.m. see: Matason, R.J. - The Napoleon-Grouchy dispatches of 17-18 June 1815: another look p.23

¹⁴ Pollio, desperate to explain this lapse of time, sees no other way as to claim that some kind of communication between Napoleon and Grouchy must have taken place in the period referred to, but would not have surfaced and which never would. In: Waterloo, 1815 p.389

¹⁵ It remains mere conjecture under which circumstances this intelligence reached Napoleon, as no sources refer to it.

On the 17th of June, after 5 p.m., French patrols – probably coming from the Namur-road - penetrated as far as Strichon and Villers la Ville, but a connection here cannot be substantiated. Cf. reports of Von Gröben.

Napoleon claims flankers of his army were in constant contact with those of Grouchy and that the cavalry of Milhaud was used to maintain communication. In this sense, Milhaud would have reported at 9 p.m. to Napoleon having seen Prussian cavalry moving from Tilly to Wavre. Apart from the fact that it is absurd to suppose that heavy cavalry was used for these purposes, there is no proof whatsoever that such communication was established.

Further, if Napoleon would have acquired the intelligence he now acquired not long before before 10 a.m., he would have reacted in the same way much earlier. These statements, therefore, should be regarded as pure fiction. In: Mémoires pour servir etc. p.114

¹⁶ How he acquired this information remains unknown, the more as no sources are available. The only account which refers to such reports having dropped in at central headquarters, independently of those of Grouchy, is the official French bulletin. In: Bas, F.de – La campagne de 1815 Vol.III p.551

¹⁷ It should be noted that by the time that Napoleon sent his orders at 10 a.m., he was still informed on the situation of Grouchy as that he was still in doubt whether the majority of the Prussians fell back upon Perwez or Wavre. Theoretically, it could have meant that Grouchy – for whatever reason – could have strayed further east, and not north by the time he would receive the order.

¹⁸ Cf. Lenient, E. – La solution des énigmes etc. p.432