

## **The march of the 2nd Prussian corps towards the battlefield of Waterloo on the 18th of June 1815.**

The orders for Pirch I

Shortly after writing his orders for Von Bülow, Blücher wrote those for general Pirch I. It was around midnight.<sup>1</sup> They read:

*Ew.Hochwohlgeboren benachrichtige Ich, dass das 4.Armeekorps den Befehl erhalten hat, morgen mit Tagesanbruch sich über Wavre in der Direktion auf Chateau [sic] Saint Lambert in Marsch zu setzen. Ew.Hochwohlgeboren schliessen sich mit dem 2.Armeekorps unmittelbar an das 4.Armeekorps an und folgen der Marschdirektion desselben. Sie wollen bei Ihren Truppen alle diejenigen Massregeln treffen, die als Vorbereitung zum Gefecht nöthig sind. Die Bagage,Trains usw. werden nach Löwen dirigirt,und zwar auf dem rechten Ufer der Dyle, damit der Durchzug durch Wavre vermieden werde.*

*Blücher*<sup>2</sup>

It must have been shortly after midnight that Pirch I received this order.<sup>3</sup> Resulting, Pirch issued the following order:

*“Bivouac bei Wavre, den 18.Juni 18151*

*Die Brigaden sind zum Aufbruch bereit und zwar nach folgender Ordnung:*

- 1. Reserve-Cavallerie*
- 2. 5. Und 6. Brigade*
- 3. die Reserve-Artillerie Brigade*
- 4. 7. Und 8. Brigade, sämmtlich rechts abmarschirt*
- 5. 2 Cavallerie-Regimenter unter dem Obrist v.Sohr*

*Das Corps folgt dem über Wavre geheneden 4.Armeekorps, daher der Obrist Graf Schulenburg sich der Queue desselben anschliesst. Die Herren Brigade-Chefs werden genau darauf achten dass diese Marschordnung streng befolgt wird. Der zur Arriere-Garde kommandirte Obrist V.Sohr hat nur die gewöhnlichen Sicherheits-Massregeln zu nehmen, da der General V.Hobe noch hinter ihm ist. Alles wird zum Gefecht vorbereitet sein. Die zum Empfang der Lebensmittel beauftragten, vorausgeschickten Offiziere werden von hier aus nach einem Platze gewiesen werden, wo die Vertheilung der Lebensmittel vorgenommen wird.”<sup>4</sup>*

The march to Chapelle Saint Lambert

Though the corps was ready at 5 a.m. to leave and follow the 4th corps, the passage of this corps only allowed it to leave towards noon.<sup>5</sup> At Wavre the 1st battalion of the 14th regiment (brigade Brause) was relieved by a battalion of the 30th regiment (brigade Borcke, 3rd corps).<sup>6</sup>

Those who marched towards Wavre left in the following order: the reserve cavalry (brigade of Von Von der Schulenburg in front), the reserve-artillery, the brigade of Von Tippelskirch and the brigade of Von Krafft.<sup>7</sup>

Having been kept on the right bank of the Dyle because of the approach of the enemy, the remaining units - the brigades Von Brause, Von Reckow and Von Sohr - crossed the Dyle around 4 p.m.

Von Brause and Von Reckow did so via Wavre (Von Brause first) and Von Sohr via the bridge near the mill of Bierges.<sup>8</sup> The detachment of Von Ledebur also crossed the Dyle at Wavre.

As soon as Von Sohr had passed the defile, he got the instruction to join the reserve-cavalry (which was in front) and he tried to do so by passing the columns of the other troops, but arrived on the battlefield too late to play any role of importance.<sup>9</sup>

Of the rearguard of Von Sohr, the 11th regiment of hussars as well as the 1st battalion of the 2nd regiment of Elbe Landwehr infantry moved to a position somewhere between Limale and Chapelle Saint Lambert. The hussars, led by major Somolin, kept up a communication from there with Thielmann, and it was a post of these hussars, posted near Limale, which saw the French approaching the bridge. As a result, the detachment remained in its post till about 8.30 p.m. Then it moved to Chapelle Saint Lambert and spent the night there.<sup>10</sup>

As the reserve cavalry proceeded towards the battlefield, the reserve-artillery halted near Chapelle Saint Lambert in order not to delay the further advance of the other units of the corps. The only units which reached the battlefield were the horse battery nr.6 and foot battery nr.10

From the battlefield, Blücher had ordered Pirch I to send one of his brigades to his left to cover the army from here. Pirch I used the 7th brigade for this. The brigade had succeeded in reaching the main body of the corps, but was now sent from Chapelle Saint Lambert towards Maransart. The 4th regiment of Kurmark Landwehr cavalry (brigade Von der Schulenburg) was now attached to the brigade and used as an advance guard.

Between the 7th and 8th brigade there must have been a gap, as the latter brigade reached the battlefield much later that evening, far too late to contribute to the allied victory.<sup>11</sup>

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1. Ollech, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.188

2.KA, VI.C.28.I In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V.5B.p.2

Von Ollech gives a slightly different version. In: Ollech, Von - Geschichte etc. p.188

<sup>3</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.V.5B.p.1

<sup>4</sup> Stawitzky, L. – Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 25ten Infanterie-Regiments p.89  
The march order for the brigade of Von Tippelskirch was: 1st regiment Pommeranian infantry nr.2, foot-battery nr.10, 25th regiment of infantry, 5th regiment of Westphalian Landwehr infantry. Cf. Stawitzky, L. – Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 25ten Infanterie-Regiments p.90

5.Bericht über das Arriergarden Gefecht bei Wavre den 18.Juni 1815 in: MWB, 1836 p.2  
B.von Stuckrad also claims the corps crossed the Dyle at noon. Cf. Stuckrad, B.von  
Geschichte etc. p.113

The fact that at least the brigade of Von Brause was ready to leave at 5 a.m. is confirmed by Von Brause himself, in his report of the former Kriegsarchiv nr.VI.E.35 in: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Von Wavre bis Belle Alliance p.508

Schreiber believes it was at 1 p.m. that the corps left. Cf. Schreiber, H. - Geschichte des Infanterie-Regiments Von Borcke (4.Pommerschen) nr.21 p.104

The regimental history of the 25th regiment of infantry, however, claims the regiment (forming part of the 5th brigade) had marched through Wavre before the fire broke out (7 a.m.). Cf. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 25ten Infanterie-Regiments etc. p.34

Another account says it was 11 a.m. Cf. Über den Antheil des 2ten Armee-Korps an der Schlacht bei Belle Alliance. In: MWB 2.Jg. (1817) nr.68 p.326-327

6.GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V.5B.p.19

Damitz, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.260

7. Cf. march-order. In the brigade of Von Tippelskirch, the 1st regiment of Pommeranian infantry nr.2 was in front; its fusilier battalion (led by captain Von Kalkreuth) was in front, and then the musketeer-battalions (led by captain Von Korthé and captain Von Collignon). Cf. Mach, A.von - Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen etc.p.337

Von Tippelskirch himself says he had to follow the cavalry and that his brigade crossed the Dyle at Wavre at 1.30 p.m. Report of major general Von Tippelskirch. In: Former KA. VI.E.15.12 in GSA, VPH-HA,VI nr.VII.5.p.13

<sup>8</sup> Von Sohr would have left that morning from Mont Saint Guibert, but it is unknown how long it took Von Sohr to get from there to the Dyle and whether he has made any halts. Von

Sohr had spent the night at Mont Saint Guibert. Cf. Bewegungen und Gefecht des Detachements der Arriergarde 4ten Armeekorps etc, MWB no.34 p.143

<sup>9</sup> GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V.5B.p.9,21

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pflugk Harttung, J.von Das Gefecht bei Limale p.35

GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V.5B.p.10-11,21,32

According to Von Eck, the hussars were called to the battlefield of Waterloo, but didn't arrive there in time as they only got up to Chapelle Saint Lambert (which, erroneously, Von Eck calls Chapelle le Chateau). Cf. Cf. Eck, Von - Geschichte des 2.Westfälischen Husaren Regiments nr.11 p.150-151

<sup>11</sup> GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V.5B.p.13-15,25-26,33

Cf. Uber den Antheil des 2ten Armee-Korps an der Schlacht bei Belle Alliance. In: MWB 2.Jg. (1817) nr.68 p.326-327

This document claims the advance guard of the 2nd corps reached Chapelle Saint Lambert at 5.30 p.m.