

## The corps of Von Thielmann on the 18th of June 1815

The orders for general Thielmann have not been preserved. However, there are two documents which shed some light on what they have been.

These documents are the letter written at 11 p.m. on the 17th of June by Blücher to Von Müffling and the other one is the order written by Blücher for Von Bülow at midnight. Both these documents confirm that the 3rd corps had to hold itself into readiness, if needed, to follow the other two corps to the battlefield of Mont Saint Jean.

Thielmann was also informed that all the baggage and trains had to be directed towards Louvain.<sup>1</sup>

Instructions came at 1 p.m. At that time Von Grolmann told the chief of staff of the 3rd corps, general Von Clausewitz, that the 3rd corps was intended either to defend the position at Wavre or to leave some battalions there and to march off towards the battlefield of Mont Saint Jean, to act as a reserve and a rearguard.<sup>2</sup> At 3 p.m. Thielmann got the order to march off towards Couture.<sup>3</sup>

Thielmann had started this march when circumstances forced him to change his idea and to leave some units in and around Wavre.

In leaving, Thielmann was convinced the enemy would only keep him occupied and that he wouldn't attack him.<sup>4</sup>

The brigade of Von Stülpnagel was already moving and the one of Von Lucke had just started its march.<sup>5</sup> Both brigade were now ordered to return to their positions. While the 10th brigade hadn't moved at all, the 9th brigade had.

At 8.30 a.m. Thielmann had ordered Von Borcke to occupy Wavre with two battalions until further notice.<sup>6</sup> The battalions which Von Borcke used to accomplish this were the 3rd battalion of the 1st regiment of Kurmark Landwehrinfantry (led by major Von Bornstedt) and the 3rd battalion of the 30th regiment (led by major Von Sprenger). At Wavre, both battalions came under the command of the brigade major, major Von Zeppelin.<sup>7</sup> While the units of Von Bülow crossed the town of Wavre, both battalions arrived there.

It was Thielmann's intention that Von Borcke would follow the 2nd corps towards Couture. Of this corps, two brigades of infantry (those of Von Reckow and of Von Brause) and one brigade of cavalry (Von Sohr) were still on the right bank of the Dyle. They formed the rearguard of the 2nd corps. Eventually, Von Brause and Von Reckow crossed the Dyle at Wavre, while Von Sohr did so at Bierges. Von Borcke marched off that afternoon over the bridge of Basse Wavre.<sup>8</sup>

It was here that he left the Schützen-platoons of the fuselier battalion of the Leib-regiment, led by captain Von Steinäcker, as well as the one of the 1st battalion of the 30th regiment, under the command of major Von Bornstedt.<sup>9</sup>

Before ascending the north bank of the Dyle, Von Borcke reinforced the garrison of Von Zeppelin with the 2nd battalion of the 30th regiment and the two squadrons of the brigade (the 1st and 2nd squadron of the 3rd regiment of Kurmark Landwehrcavalry).<sup>10</sup>

Now Von Borcke moved his remaining forces (of five and half battalion and a battery) further in

a northwest direction, through Champles as he had got the order to take up a position on the other side of Wavre, on the road which leads to Brussels and to await further orders there.<sup>11</sup> That night, the brigade was in all probability at or near Couture; it had reached that village by wheeling to the southwest through Fromont and St.Lambert and thereby crossing the column of the 1st corps.<sup>12</sup>

Fact is that even on the morning of the 19th of June, an adjudant of Von Thielmann reported to Von Bornstedt; on his instruction he was then still looking for the brigade.<sup>13</sup> According to Von Ollech the Prussian staff forgot to call back Von Borcke. Von Borcke himself thought he was following his corps, while it was the 2nd.

Von Borcke would have ordered Von Bornstedt not to go to Wavre, but the moment all battalions would have left the bivouac to cover these battalions and in case the battalion would be pushed too much by the enemy, to fall back to the Dyle and to follow the brigade. Von Bornstedt, who succeeded in convincing major Von Zeppelin, as well as his subordinates of the importance of the defence of the passages over the Dyle, decided not to obey this order. At that time the French attack was imminent or had already started.<sup>14</sup>

General Thielmann decided to halt his troops and to take up positions in and around Wavre. His main reason to do so was the fact that the enemy was deploying in front of him. Further, he wasn't able to continue his march as the 1st corps filled up the road of Bierges, while the 2nd was doing the same towards Neuf Cabaret.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To this instruction, Thielmann wrote:

*“Sind die Trains bei Rouxmiroir angekommen, so können per Brigade einige Wagen mit Zwieback und Branntwein über die Abtei St.Florent wo sie das Thal der Dyle passieren müssen hierher dirigirt werden. “* Cf.Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.86

Rouxmiroir is about 12.5 kilometers east of Wavre.

2. Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.87

Ollech, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.195

Clausewitz, Von - Campagne de 1815 en France p.129

According to the chief of staff of the 11th brigade (Von Luck), captain Von Röder, Thielmann received these orders at 11 a.m. Cf. Röder, C.von Erinnerungen etc. p. 325

3. Report of Von Thielmann himself. In: Ollech, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.195

Cf. Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.87

The carrier, lieutenant Von Gerlach, states it was about 2.30 p.m. Von Gerlach joined Gneisenau and his staff again on the battlefield of Waterloo, in front of the Bois de Paris.

Cf.his diary. In: Aus den Jahren preussischer Not etc. p.151-152

4. Thielmann in his report. In: Ollech, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.195

Thielmann believed that the deployment of the dragoons of Exelmans between Saint Anne and Dion-le-Mont was only a demonstration. Cf. Houssaye, H. 1815.Waterloo p.463

5. In: Wavriensia p.303

That morning, the 12th brigade had moved from a position to the west of the road which leads from Wavre to Brussels to a position to the right rear of Wavre; during this march the troops halted several times. Earlier that day they had got their first breakfast (some rice) since the battle of Ligny. Cf. lieutenant Mankopf (commander of the platoon of skirmishers of the 4th company of the 31st regiment, brigade Von Stülpnagel). In: Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

6.Major Von Bornstedt (commander of the 3rd battalion of the 1st regiment of Kurmark

Landwehr infantry) claims he got the order to go to Wavre at 10 a.m, but this must have been around 8.30 a.m. Cf. Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

7.Cf. Von Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.88

Damitz, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.324

In: Wavriensia, p.303

Ollech,Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.195

Clausewitz, Von - Campagne de 1815 en France p.130

8. Von Bornstedt. Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815  
Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.88

<sup>9</sup> Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.88

Major Von Holleben (commander of the fusilier battalion of the 8th regiment). In: Aus den hinterlassenen Papiere p.141

10. Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

Damitz, Von- Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.325

Clausewitz, Von – Campagne de 1815 en France p.130

Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.88

11. Major Von Holleben (commander of the fusilier battalion of the 8th regiment). In: Aus den hinterlassenen Papiere p.141

Some claim the force consisted of six battalions, two squadrons and one battery.

Cf. Plotho, Von - Der Krieg des Verbundeten Europa gegen Frankreich im Jahre 1815 p.75

In: Wavriensia p.303

Six battalions and a battery. Cf.

Major Von Holleben (commander of the fusilier battalion of the 8th regiment). In: Aus den hinterlassenen Papiere p.142

Damitz, Von – Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.326

12. This theory seems to be supported by Henckel von Donnersmarck who states that his brigade was seriously delayed in its march towards Ohain by the brigade of Von Borcke which filed through the column of the 1st corps from the right. Cf. Henckel von Donnersmarck, count Erinnerungen etc. p.359

According to Gottschalck the brigade was initially trapped in the column of Henckel's brigade and afterwards it started following the 7th and 8th brigade, presuming they were units of the 3rd corps. Cf. Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.88

That Von Borcke moved towards Couture is claimed by:

Wagner, J.Chr.A. - Pläne der Schlachten und Treffen etc. p.99

Charras. Histoire de la campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.46

Clausewitz, Von – Campagne de 1815 p.131

Von Ollech claims Von Borcke had his bivouacs between Chapelle Saint Lambert and Ohain, In: Geschichte des Feldzugs etc. p.210

Von Plotho says it was near Ohain. In: Der Krieg des Verbundeten Europa gegen Frankreich im Jahre 1815 p.75

According to major Von Holleben, the brigade moved its position north of Wavre from the road which leads to Brussels towards Couture and from there to Ohain, near which village it bivouaced. Cf. Major Von Holleben (commander of the fusilier battalion of the 8th regiment). In: Aus den hinterlassenen Papiere p.142

13. Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

14. Bornstedt, Von - Das Gefecht bei Wavre an der Dyle am 18.und 19.Juni 1815

15. Plotho, Von - Der Krieg des Verbundeten Europa gegen Frankreich im Jahre 1815 p.75

Ollech, Von - Geschichte des Feldzugs von 1815 p.210

Gottschalck, M. Geschichte etc. p.87