

The Prussian and French casualties on the 15th of June.

The Prussian casualties.

On the 15th of June several actions were fought in which the Prussian army suffered casualties.

I have found no reports on any Prussian losses in the actions at Thuin, Lobbes, Maladrie, Marchienne-au-Pont and Charleroi, but I have for the one at Montigny-le-Tilleul.

While major Von Monsterberg of the 3rd battalion 2nd regiment of Westphalian Landwehr states in a general way that his battalion was completely disorganised, it is Reille who gives more detailed figures of the battalion. ¹ He claims his men cut down a hundred men (killed and wounded) and took 260 prisoners, which makes Von Monsterberg's version highly acceptable. ²

At Gosselies, and the associated retreat towards the east, the situation is not entirely clear as no reports of all units involved are available.

However, from those units I have them, losses were low. While the 2nd battalion of the 29th regiment would have lost 14 men, the musketeer battalions of the 12th regiment lost 37 men, and the fuseliers of the same regiment 4 men. ³

The 3rd battalion of the 24th regiment had 2 losses [⁴], while the 6th regiment of uhlans lost 22 men. ⁵

The situation for the two remaining battalions of the 29th regiment and of the 2nd battalion of the 1st Westphalian Landwehr regiment is unclear. Hartkort claims for the last battalion a loss of 250 men, but it is not entirely clear whether he here means the 15th of June only; I do not think he does, as the number of 250 seems far too high in relation to the other battalions involved and there are no indications of any dramatic high losses with the battalion during the action. Therefore, I believe the losses given refer to the battle of Ligny as well. ⁶

Bleibtreu claims for the whole 29th regiment a loss of 400 men, while Wellmann does so with 476 for both the 15th and 16th of June. I do not know from where Bleibtreu got his data, but it might very well be that the difference – 76 men – was the total loss of the regiment at and near Gosselies as, again 476, is in my idea far too high in relation to the way the action was fought. ⁷

These calculations give a net figure of 141, thereby excluding any losses of the 2nd battalion of the 1st Westphalian Landwehr regiment.

For the action of Gilly and the subsequent retreat from Lambusart much higher losses can be found.

First of all, the 11th company of the 3rd battalion of the 28th regiment which had stood near Nalennes was completely cut down, overrun and taken prisoner near Couillet. Taking into consideration that the whole regiment counted about 2300 men, the company may have counted about 150 men. ⁸ Apart from these losses, the battalion suffered about 500 men at Gilly as by the end of the action 67 men were left. ⁹

While the fusiliers of the 28th regiment were badly mauled, both musketeer battalions of the same regiment only lost 60 men (wounded and missing) ¹⁰

The 3rd battalion of the 1st WestPrussian regiment nr.6, however, lost the considerable number of 216 men in the action at Gilly. ¹¹

During the retreat east of Gilly, the 5th regiment of Brandenburg dragoons had 10 losses, while the horse battery nr.2 lost 4 men. ¹²

During its retreat through Damprémy, the 2nd regiment of Westphalian Landwehr lost 10 men while it lost another 4 during the continuation of its retreat towards Ligny. ¹³

Apparently there were no losses of any significance in the actions at Lobbes, Maladrie, Thuin, Marcinelle and Marchienne-au-Pont.

Taking all together the total loss of the 1st corps on the 15th of June would be around 1300 men.¹⁴

The French casualties.

The loss of the 2nd corps is defined on the evening of the 15th of June by Reille himself on about 100 men.¹⁵ His chief of staff, Pamphyle-la Croix, however, gives on the 4th of July a figure which is much higher, i.e. 200.¹⁶ The truth may have been somewhere in between, i.e. about 150.

Of Domon's division, at least the 4th regiment of chasseurs à cheval suffered some casualties, but how much is unknown.¹⁷

At Gilly, Exelmans must have lost 29 men, of which two officers.¹⁸ In the same action, the 15th regiment of light infantry (division of Lefol) would have suffered some losses, but how many is unknown.¹⁹

It seems as if Pajol has suffered no casualties at all, while Guyot lost 4 men that day, but under which circumstance, I have not been able to determine.²⁰

As for the duty squadrons, it is claimed that they lost – together with the 20th regiment of dragoons (Exelmans) – 90 men.²¹

At Frasnes, the light cavalry of the guard lost 10 men.²²

It has been impossible to determine whether the sappers and miners of the guard lost any of its members at Marcinelle.

Taking these actual losses together, I come to about 200 men, but this is a minimum. Yet, taking into the account the very low figures of the missing units involved, I do not believe these total losses may not have been much higher as 300 men (or 400 at the most), the more as there haven't been any situations in which French units were very hard-pressed.²³

Revised: 15th February 2009

¹ Cf. Von Monsterberg in his report. In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr. In: KA, nr.VI.E.7.I.p.78

² Reille in his report to Soult dated 15th of June, 9 p.m. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5
Maréchal de camp Pamphyle-Lacroix, chief of staff of Reille, mentions here 300 prisoners, but I follow the report of Reille written the same day. In a letter dated 4th of July to the president of the Chambre des représentants. In: Coppens, B. and Courcelles, P. Hougoumont p.79

The official French bulletin also mentions here 300, but I have no confidence in this report (see below).

Ney, in his report of the evening of the 15th of June to Soult, mentions a total number of 500-600 prisoners, but I believe this highly exaggerated, as I have found no confirmation for such high numbers from the Prussian side. In: SHAT, C15, nr.5

³ Report of major Von Chevallerie (2nd battalion 29th regiment). In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI, nr.VII.3d.p.7

Reports of major Von Götz (12th regiment). In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.VII.3B.p.1

⁴ Report of major Von Blücher (3rd battalion 24th regiment). In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.VII.3N.p.17

⁵ Cf. Bleibtreu, C. England's grosse Waterloo-Lüge p.39

⁶ In: Die Zeiten des ersten Westphälischen etc. p.42

⁷ In: Bleibtreu, C. England's grosse Waterloo-Lüge p.39

Wellmann, R. Geschichte des Infanterie-Regiments von Horn (3tes Rheinisches) no.29 p.122

⁸ The official French bulletin erroneously claims Domon took 400 men prisoner of two battalions. In: Napoleon Bonaparte.Correspondance. Nr.22056

⁹ There were 7 officers, 6 subalterns and 54 men left. Cf. report of major Von Müller (3rd battalion 28th regiment). In: GSA, VPH-HA,VI, nr.VII.3C, p.27

A table in the regimental history contains a few minor errors in totals and mentions two battalions (plus the Jäger detachment), thereby considering the 2nd battalion as the fusilier battalion, giving for the 15th of June as casualties: 15 officers, 55 subalterns, 13 musicians and 612 men, totaling it to 68 (which is a difference of about 29 to my total). The percentage of missing in action in this table is huge: 95.5%

In: Histoire du 28eème régiment etc. p.18

Bleibtreu believes the battalion lost 13 officers and 614 men, leaving 5 officers and 57 men.

In: England's grosse Waterloo-Lüge p.38

¹⁰ Report of major Von Quadt (1st and 2nd battalion of the 28th regiment). In: GSA,VPH-HA, VI, nr.VII.3C.p.24

¹¹ One officers killed, one officer wounded, 9 subalterns and 205 men killed, wounded and missing. Report of major Von Henne (3rd battalion 1st WestPrussian regiment nr.6). In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.VII.3C.p.22

Conrady bases his account upon this report. In: Geschichte etc. p.243

Bleibtreu claims the battalion lost 214 men. In: England's grosse Waterloo-Lüge p.38

¹² Report of the 5th regiment of Brandenburg dragoons. In: KA.VI.E.7.I.166 In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.V, nr.II.6.p.20 and nr.VII, nr.3 E p.60

Report of captain Borowski (horse battery nr.2). In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.II.6.p.2 and nr.VII nr.3 E p.63

¹³ In: Report of captain Von Eberstein (2nd regiment of Westphalian Landwehr). In: GSA, VPH-HA VI, nr.VII, 3C, p.12-13

¹⁴ Resuming, the totals per action were:

360 at Montigny-le-Tilleul

141 at Gosselies

790 at Gilly

The number of prisoners is shown by French reports, but these are hard to match with the numbers I have. First of all, I have no distinction of all units for the number of prisoners, while on the other hand the numbers as given from the French side seem far too high.

Grouchy reports back to the emperor on the night of the 15th that Exelmans would have taken about 400 prisoners. While this may be true, his claim that Pajol would have taken another few hundred after the action has not been established by the facts as I have found them.

The next day, at 5 a.m, Grouchy claims his cavalry took between 800 and 900 men. Is this figure in our idea far too high, the official French bulletin written during the evening of the 15th June is even more erroneous.

For Domon it claims a figure of 400 prisoners, for Reille 300. At the same time it states as at Gilly the 26th, 27th and 28th regiment (which is wrong) would have suffered 1500 men.

According to the same document this would bring the total for that day in prisoners to 1000, while actually 2200 are counted in it.

Taking all the figures together, the document clearly grossly exaggerates them.

Cf. Grouchy's reports in C15, nr.5

Official bulletin. In: Napoleon Bonaparte. Correspondance. Nr.22056

Clearly, most French versions tend to make the figures higher as they were, while Prussian ones tend to do the contrary.

Cf. Napoleon – 2000. In: Mémoires etc. p.84

Charras mentions 1200 by Prussian and 2000 by French sources. In: Histoire de la campagne etc. Vol.I p.114

He may have used the number as given by Von Reiche (1200) and Wagner.

Cf. Memoires etc. p.169

Colonel Von Reiche. In: Über die Kriegsbegebenheiten des I.Armeekorps In: VI.E.7.I.p.1 In: GSA. VPH-HA. VI, nr.5.p.53

Plane etc. p.18

This is also taken up by for instance Siborne. In: History of the war etc. Vol.I p.68

Baron Van Panhuys is with 1500 men reasonably close to the figure I have. Cf. his report to baron Van der Capellen, dated 17th of June. In: NA, 2.02.01 nr.6585

¹⁵ He gives 80 men for the 2nd regiment of light infantry (division of Bachelu) and 20-25 men for the 1st regiment of chasseurs à cheval (division of Piré). In his report. In: SHAT, nr.C15 nr.22

¹⁶ In: Coppens, B. and Courcelles, P. Hougoumont p.79

¹⁷ For the officers – three in total - see: Martinien, A. Tableaux etc. p.585

¹⁸ Cf. Exelmans in his report of the morning of the 16th of June to Grouchy. In: C15 nr.5
Of these casualties, the 14th regiment of dragoons had eight (three killed and five wounded / missing). In: Menuau, H. Historique du 14^e régiment de dragons p.290
Another source claims the 15th regiment of dragoons lost three officers. In: Martinien, A. Tableaux etc. p.555

¹⁹ Martinien indicates that this regiment lost one officer. In: Tableaux etc. p.427

²⁰ Cf. Guyot himself. In: Carnets de campagne p.290

²¹ Cf. Napoleon in his bulletin of the evening of the 15th of June. In: In: Napoleon Bonaparte. Correspondance. Nr.22056
The presence of a number of 40 men wounded of the duty squadrons is confirmed by the general intendant, Daure, in his report of the evening of the 15th of June. In: SHAT. C15, nr.5

²² Cf. Lefebvre Desnouettes in his report to Ney on the evening of the 15th of June. In: C15, nr.5

²³ It is in this context that I do not see where Charras takes his figure which lies between 500 and 600. In: Histoire de la campagne etc. Vol.I p.114
De Mauduit is closer to my version (between 300 and 400). In: Les derniers jours etc. Vol.II p.19