

## 4th – 10th of June

The formation of Wellington's army.

The 1st regiment of Nassau was one of the last units to arrive in Belgium before the campaign started. It reached Brussels on the 7th of June, after it had left from Wiesbaden on the 20th of May. It was added to the reserve as the composition of the army had already been determined.<sup>1</sup>

Three days before, Wellington had formulated the following proposal about the Nassau troops to the king of the Netherlands:

- to form them in a division, the 2nd, under the command of general Von Kruse
- that both regiments Orange-Nassau, plus the 10th battalion of national militia, would form a brigade, and that this brigade, plus the first one of the 2nd division, would form the 4th (Nassau) division of the army of the Low Countries.

The result would then be:

- 1st division and the Indian brigade
- 2nd division: 6 battalions Nassau under Von Kruse (those of the 1st and 2nd regiment, plus the Nassau voluntary Jäger)
- 3rd division (the 10th battalion of national militia excluded)
- 4th division: composed of the first brigade of the current 2nd division, plus the brigade Orange Nassau and the 10th battalion of national militia.<sup>2</sup>

Just before all this, on the 4th of June, Wellington inspected the reserve residing in Brussels itself in the Allée Verte.<sup>3</sup> That same day, king Willem left from Brussels for Liège and Luxembourg.

It was also in this period of time that Wellington received a request of the duke of Cambridge regarding the augmentation of the regiments of the German Legion by volunteers from the Hanoverian regiments of the line.

However, the duke rejected it as he feared that this measure might take more time as planned and that the KGL and the Hanoverians would be disorganised just at the moment they would be needed for the imminent invasion into France.<sup>4</sup>

And on the 7th of June, five troops and brigades of artillery were formally attached to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th British-Hanoverian divisions.<sup>5</sup>

Wellington's intelligence.

Wellington was fed with the following intelligence in this week:

Von Dörnberg wrote on the 4th of June about 10.000 national guards being at Maubeuge, though not all yet armed. At Ferrière la Grande would be a park of artillery. The Young Guard would have been sent from Paris to the Vendée. The Champ de may was to be held on the 1st of June.<sup>6</sup>

Lieutenant colonel von Wissell reported to Lord Hill that the enemy would have evacuated Lille; all the troops would have taken the road to Maubeuge and Valenciennes.<sup>7</sup>

On the 5th of June the prince of Orange reported back to the duke about the Champ de Mai as being held on the 1st of June and that immediately after Napoleon was to be expected at Laon, which was to be his headquarters and that the French army expected to attack the allies within a few days.<sup>8</sup>

The same day, from Ghent, the duke De Feltre wrote to Wellington about the garrison at Valenciennes, consisting of national guards only. The rise against the government in the Vendée and several other regions in France would be very serious.<sup>9</sup>

It was Von Dörnberg again who reported on the 6th of June; he wrote about the rumour that Napoleon would be leaving the capital on the 6th for Laon, as being highly fortified. Von Dörnberg also had the report of forces of the line on the frontier near Valenciennes, numbering about 30.000, but which he felt exaggerated.<sup>10</sup>

On the 6th of June, the prince of Orange forwarded a report of baron Behr from Mons, dated the 6th of June. Behr reported on the departure of Bonaparte from Paris on the 6th for Compiègne, where a lot of units coming from Paris moved to. He cited from information gathered by mr. Vilnoisy, a delegate from Louis XVIII. He also added that Napoleon, from la Compiègne, would go to Avesnes to carry out a feint against the allies near Maubeuge, while the main thrust would fall upon Flanders, i.e. between Lille, Tournay and towards Mons. The Young Guard would have left for the Vendée.

The prince of Orange himself also had a report from Collaert who got the information from the French general Albert who said that if the French would not attack on the 7th, they would do so on the 8th or the 9th.<sup>11</sup>

Von Dörnberg, in his report of the same day, confirmed all this and interpreted the feint attack as one upon the Prussians.<sup>12</sup>

Also the same day, Zieten wrote to Wellington confirming the Champ de mai had taken place on the 1st of June and that the French corps of Vandamme would count 18.000 men, the one of Reille 25.000 and the one of d'Erlon 60.000 men (which Zieten thought was too strong).<sup>13</sup>

It was on the 6th of June as well that Wellington wrote to Hardinge: "All accounts which I receive from the frontier appear again to concur in the notion of a collection of troops about Maubeuge. Buonaparte was expected to be at Laon on the 6th, and there were on all parts of the road between Paris and the frontier extraordinary preparations for the movement of troops in carriages. The numbers of the latter collected are immense in some of the towns."<sup>14</sup>

On the 7th of June Von Dörnberg wrote about the expected arrival of Napoleon at Valenciennes on the 7th of June. The French of Vandamme on the line of Solre-le-Chateau expected to be attacked by Wellington any day.<sup>15</sup>

That day, Wellington wrote to Hardinge:

"I have heard nothing new since I wrote you yesterday evening, excepting general reports of an intention to attack, which very possibly are circulated in consequence of the weakness in our front, and the fact that there are great many carriages for the transport of troops at every stage on the road."<sup>16</sup>

By the 7th of June the duke had also drafted very specific orders for the defence of the towns of Antwerp, Ostend, Nieuport, Ypres, Tournay, Ath, Mons [<sup>17</sup>] and Ghent. These orders, in all their detail, may have been based upon the reports of colonel Carmichael Smyth who had told Von Müffling two days earlier that these towns were the main strong points.

The main item for Wellington was, apart from all the organisational, technical and military arrangements to be made in the different localities, as soon as the enemy had entered the territory of the Netherlands, that all these places should be considered as being in a state of siege.<sup>18</sup>

Von Dörnberg made his report on the 8th of June detailing that Napoleon would go from Paris directly to Laon. Troops that were between Landrecy and Avesnes had made a movement on

their right towards Solre-le-Chateau on the 4th of June. The existence of a park of artillery at Ferrière la Grande had been confirmed.<sup>19</sup>

The very same day, Zieten wrote to Wellington about the withdrawal of the French posts in front of Maubeuge, back towards the fortress of this town. He enclosed a report from Charleroi dated 6th of June stating that the total French forces amounted to about 300.000 and that 102.000 of them were between Maubeuge and Sedan (of which 12.000 of the line). The garrison at Philippeville would consist of 2000 men; at Maubeuge would be about 3000. In the region between Beaufort and Landrecy the French would continue to cut up the roads.<sup>20</sup> It was also on the 7th of June that colonel Hoyneck van Papendrecht, chief of staff of the cavalry division of Collaert, informed Constant Rebecque in extracts from the *Moniteur* that Napoleon would have held the Champ de mai on the 1st of June, that on the 3rd of June there would be a concentration of troops at Valenciennes and that Napoleon would have left Paris for Douai and Laon three days after.<sup>21</sup>

On the 8th of June Von Dörnberg cited from a report that at Valenciennes there would be 6000 to 7000 national guards and 1500 troops of the line; another 4000 to 5000 men infantry would have reached the vicinity of Valenciennes. The Young Guard was expected the night before at Valenciennes and the Old Guard was marching to Maubeuge. At Condé would be 4000 national guards.<sup>22</sup>

General Von Müffling also supplied intelligence on the 9th of June indicating that the garrison at Valenciennes was composed of 4000 men and 100 guns. Troops would be in cantonments around Valenciennes, stretching from the frontier towards Cambrai. Between this town and Paris there would be very few troops.

Progress on the fortifications at Paris was slow; there would be numerous units of the regular army as well as of the Imperial Guard. The Old Guard was supposed to leave for Strassbourg. On the northern frontier there would be 40.000 men, to be increased to about 100.000. Though the rise in the Vendée would have suffered serious setbacks, numerous units of the regular army as well as the Young Guard would have been sent there.<sup>23</sup>

On the 9th of June, Von Müffling also wrote to Von Gneisenau that Von Dörnberg had reported to him privately that Napoleon would arrive at Valenciennes on the 7th of June and that it would be his intention to destroy the allied armies in Belgium before the arrival of the Russian army.<sup>24</sup>

From Mons, on the 9th of June, Von Dörnberg sent his report to lord Fitzroy Somerset indicating that Napoleon would have left that morning from Maubeuge for Valenciennes, and to go from there to Lille.

Another report indicated that Napoleon was at Avesnes on the 8th of June and yet another that 30.000 men were on the move from Paris to the frontier in the north.<sup>25</sup>

The same day, colonel Hardinge wrote to Wellington that the French 4th corps was moving from Thionville towards Mézières, but he knew no date or numbers.<sup>26</sup>

It was also on the 9th of June that the prince of Orange wrote to Wellington about the arrival of Napoleon that morning at Maubeuge, thereby basing himself upon a report of general Van Merlen. The prince also writes: "Napoleon having arrived, I think he is likely to attack in a very few days, if he means to attack at all."<sup>27</sup>

And to his father he wrote that day: "Ik heb de eere aan Uwe Majesteit rapport te doen, dat ingevolgens alle ingekoomene berichten het zeker schijnt te zijn dat Napoleon op de linie is, en waarschijnlijk heden te Douay. De fransche armée heeft eene beweging gemaakt ten einde zig in de omstreken van Sar le Chateau te vereenigen, alwaar dezelve thans sterk is. Ik ben van mening dat wij in korten zullen geattaqueerd worden."<sup>28</sup>

And also from Zieten came a report, who wrote about the French movements (whatever they may have been) to have been caused by his movements on the frontier. Other than that, the enemy would have moved 4000 men from Marienbourg to Maubeuge, but there had not been any French reinforcements at the frontier and its surroundings till the 8th of June. Napoleon would still be in Paris.<sup>29</sup>

The same day, Chassé reported to Constant Rebecque that the garrison in and around Maubeuge would count 9000 men; at the Sambre would be 6450 men and the forces stretching from Maubeuge to Philippeville would be 18.000 men strong.<sup>30</sup>

And in the Oracle of the 10th of June was written:

“Du 5 juin. S. M. passera aujourd'hui une revue de départ. Le grand-maréchal part ce soir pour Laon. On croit que l'empereur partira demain. Déjà le maréchal Soult, major-général de l'armée, est parti cette nuit. Ce matin, avant le jour, quelques corps de troupes sont partis pour nos frontières.

Quelques mouvements parmi les troupes, sur les frontières, dit la Gazette de France, ne laissent aucun doute sur le prochain commencement des hostilités.”<sup>31</sup>

The intelligence of the French movements around Maubeuge led at least the headquarters of the 1st army corps at Braine le Comte to alert the units.

For instance on the 14th of June, captain Bowles of the 1st regiment of Foot Guards wrote to Lord Fitzharris: “There has been for several days past an idea that an attack on this army was in contemplation, and if it could be made with any chance of a temporary success, it might perhaps be a good though a very hazardous plan. [..]”<sup>32</sup> And about the Bremen battalion of the brigade of Kielmansegge is reported: “Nachmittags um 6 Uhr verliess das Bataillon nach Empfang einer Ordre des Herrn Divisionairs, General-Lieutenants Graf Alten, seine Cantonnirungen in Neuville [..] (nachdem es seit mehreren Tagen Befehl hatte, jeden Augenblick marschfertig zu sein, weshalb die Compagnieen in nahe zusammenliegende Häuser gelegt wurden) und marschirte nach Soignies, wo sich die Division versammelte.”<sup>33</sup>

The situation of Wellington's 1st corps in general and of its forces of the Netherlands in particular.

It had already been through Constant Rebecque that the prince had ordered to general Collaert on the 2nd of June that he wanted to hear from the outposts, even in case there would be no news, and it was on the 7th of June that Constant Rebecque instructed general Collaert:

“In antwoord op UH.Ed.G. missive van gisteren no.122 heb ik de eer UH.Ed.G.te verwittigen dat Z.K.H. de prins van Oranje van voornemen is de ligte kavalerie in de cantonnementen die zij thans bezet te laten verblijven, en vooral dezelve geene andere dorpen regts van de chaussée van Mons naar Maubeuge te doen occuperen, als die van Acquillies en Bougnies. Z.K.H. verlangt dat de kavalerie van den generaal Dörnberg de post van Genly blijft bezetten. Ik inviteer UH.Ed.G. om niet uit het oog te verliezen dat in geval van eene attaque van den vijand met eene superieure magt de terugtocht der twee brigaden ligte kavalerie en der artillerie te paard naar Fay moet geschieden om zich met de 3<sup>e</sup> divisie infanterie te vereenigen.

Terwijl Casteau het punt van vereeniging der brigade zware kavalerie van de generaal Trip moet zijn.

Z.K.H. beveelt mij ter uwer kennisse te brengen dat er veel beweging in het fransche leger plaats heeft en UH.Ed.G. te waarschuwen zeer op uw hoede te zijn, en oplettend op al hetgeen ginds der frontieren geschiedt.”<sup>34</sup>

The reason for this letter was the proposal of Collaert (as drafted by his chief of staff major De Paravicini) to Constant (dated 6th of June) to relocate both brigades of light cavalry of the army of the Netherlands in such a way as to link up to the Hanoverian outposts to the west of the road Mons – Maubeuge.<sup>35</sup> This was upon the request of Von Dörnberg at Mons, who

wished in this sense for cavalry units of the army of the Netherlands west of the road Mons – Chimay.

Though the general idea of the proposal was rejected, the result was that the positions of the brigade of Van Merlen were extended further west, but not further as the villages of Acquillies and Bougnies, which were occupied by the 5th regiment of light dragoons. These were the only villages the prince of Orange had permitted to be occupied. From there, the outposts linked up to those of Von Dörnberg at Genly.<sup>36</sup>

Two days after, on the 8th of June, Constant Rebecque requested general Chassé to hold his division into readiness in case of need, so as to be able to collect near Fay.<sup>37</sup>

On the 9th of June, Constant Rebecque ordered general Collaert, on behalf of the prince of Orange, to move his heavy brigade of cavalry on the 10th of June to Roelux (headquarters), Goegnies, Houdeng, Meignault and to hold his troops ready during the day to move on the first alarm, until further notice:

“S.A.R. le prince d’Orange désire que la brigade du général Trip vienne occuper demain matin les communes de Roelux, Goegnies, Houdeng et Meignault; le général Trip prendra son quartier à Roelux.

Jusqu’à nouvel ordre toutes les troupes de l’armée doivent se tenir prêtes à marcher au premier avis, et pour cet effet se concentrer par régiments dans leurs cantonnements prêtes à prendre les armes; la nuit, si tout est tranquille, elles doivent rentrer dans leurs quartiers; des mesures seront prises pour que les troupes quoique concentrées puissent faire la cuisine comme de coutume.

Le lieutenant général baron de Collaert est prié de faire donner au général Trip les ordres nécessaires pour le faire marcher dès demain-matin dans les cantonnements ci-dessus mentionnés.”<sup>38</sup>

Despite this order, Constant also sent the same directly to the commander of the heavy brigade of cavalry of the army of the Netherlands, Trip, who was at Bauffe:

“Par ordre de S.A.R. le prince d’Orange vous voudrez bien marcher demain-matin avec votre brigade de cavalerie pour lui faire occuper les cantonnements de Roelux, St.Foeillien [<sup>39</sup>], Goegnies, Houdeng et Meignault.

Vous prendrez votre quartier à Roelux et donnerez les ordres nécessaires pour que votre troupe puisse être rassemblée au premier avis à l’endroit que le lieutenant-général baron de Collaert vous indiquera.”<sup>40</sup>

It had already been on the 4th of June that the brigade of Trip was moved from Braine l’Alleud and its surroundings towards Lens.<sup>41</sup> This new order was now complied with on the 10th of June.<sup>42</sup>

To Chassé, Constant Rebecque wrote about changes proposed by general Collaert to the prince in the positions of the cavalry (see below) on the 8th of June:

“Den lieutenant generaal baron de Collaert aan Z.K.H. hebbende voorgedragen Roelux, Goegnies, Houdeng, St.Foeillien en Meignault door de kavalerie onder deszelfs bevelen te laten occuperen, zoo gelast my Z.K.H. U.H.Ed.G. te verzoeken om mij wel te willen opgeven de kantonementen welke U.H.Ed.G. door uw divisie in plaats van de bovenvermelde vermeend te doen bezetten.

Z.K.H. oordeelt het nodig om de samentrekking uwer divisie welke op zaterdag [sic] den 10<sup>e</sup> op de heide te Casteau plaats moest hebben uit te stellen. Hoogstdenzelve verlangd [sic] dat uwe divisie zich gereed houd om dadelijk als de omstandigheden zulks vorderen op het terrein bij Fay zich te vereenigen.”<sup>43</sup>

One day later, on the 9th of June, Constant Rebecque alerted general Chassé as follows:

“Son Altesse Royale le Prince d’Orange désire que vous donnez l’ordre à votre division de se tenir prête à marcher au premier avis. A cet effet les bataillons devront se concentrer dans leurs cantonnements dès demain matin, et rester concentrés et prêts à prendre les armes jusqu’à la nuit, à la nuit si tout est tranquille les troupes pourront rentrer dans leurs quartiers. Les mesures nécessaires seront prises pour que les bataillons quoique concentrés puissent faire la cuisine comme de coutume.

Cette mesure sera continué tous les jours jusqu’au que S.A.R. en ordonne autrement.

S.A.R. désire que vous évacuez les cantonnements de Roeux, Goegnies et Houdeng dès demain matin pour que la brigade de cavalerie du général Trip puisse les occuper, et elle approuve que vous fassiez occuper par les bataillons qui y étaient cantonnés les villages de Fay, Baume et St.Paul. Le lieu de rassemblement de votre division est en avant de Fay comme auparavant.”<sup>44</sup>

Resulting, Chassé instructed his brigades “om zich te Faijt te concentreren zoo spoedig het geschut een aanval te kennen geeft.”<sup>45</sup>

And for the daily concentration he wrote to his brigades on the 10th of June:

“In gevolge order van Z.K.H. den prins van Orange zullen de bataljons elken morgen en tot nader order zich concentreren in hunnen cantonnementen en zig [sic] gereed houden op de eerste waarschuwing onder hun geweer te kunnen treden [...]”<sup>46</sup>

And the day after both he and his chief of staff, colonel Van Delen, reported back to Constant Rebecque that the 3rd division had evacuated the cantonments of Roeux, Gougnyes and Houdeng and that the 35th battalion of chasseurs was now at Haine Saint Paul, the 2nd battalion of the line at Fay and the 3rd battalion of national militia at Baume; the division took up its arms at daybreak to manoeuvre and then to return to its bivouacs by 9 a.m.<sup>47</sup>

The 2nd division of the army of the Netherlands, the one of De Perponcher was also alerted on the 9th of June by Constant Rebecque:

“S.A.R. le prince d’Orange désire que vous donniez l’ordre à votre division de se tenir prête à marcher au premier avis. A cet effet les troupes doivent se rassembler par bataillons dans leurs cantonnemens depuis le matin jusqu’au soir; et cela tous les jours jusqu’à nouvel ordre. Lorsque toute est tranquille elles pourront rentrer la nuit dans leurs quartiers; les mesures doivent être prises pour que les troupes fassent la cuisine comme de coutume dans les villages où elles seront concentrées. Les lieux de rassemblement pour votre division sont comme auparavant Nivelles pour la première brigade et Quatrebras pour la seconde.”<sup>48</sup>

In turn, it led De Perponche to issue the following order to his division:

“Ingevolge bekomen last van Z.K.H. den generaal en chef zal de divisie zich gereed houden om alle oogenblikken te marcheeren, waartoe Z.E. de generaal van divisie beveelt dat alle morgen tot nader order precies om 5 uren, ieder bataljon vereenigd zij in het cantonnement van deszelfs staf om aldaar onder de wapenen te verblijven tot des avonds zeven uren. Wanneer de commandeerende officer van het bataljon des avonds om zeven geene nadere order heeft, laat hij ieder weder inrukken, in deszelfs cantonnement respectif, tot des anderen daags.

Niets zal in de cantonnementen mogen achterblijven en zullen alle wagens gepakt zijn, vermits op de eerste trommelslag alles zal moeten marcheeren, zonder iemand te mogen achterlaten.

De troepen zullen hunne vivres meebrengen en zal de commandant van het bataljon eene gelijke repartitie doen der huizen naast bij het rassemblement-punt gelegen, alwaar door de koks het eten escouades-gewijze zal worden bereid en vervolgens de troep bij vijfde gedeeltes, telkens een quartier uren, zich zal mogen verwijderen om te gaan eten. In cas van alarm blijven de dispositien gelijk dezelve bij de vorige orders zijn bepaald.”<sup>49</sup>

It was on the 8th of June that Alten's division was tested for an alert.

Lieutenant Biedermann, of the 2nd battalion light infantry KGL (brigade Von Ompteda) at Ecaussines-d'Enghien wrote that day: "Heute früh hatten wir einen plötzlichen Lärm. Unsere ganze Division versammelte sich mit Gepäck schlagfertig auf der Heerstrasse von Soignies nach Mons, und mancherlei Gerüchte kamen sogleich in Umlauf. Das ganze war aber ein falscher, von unserem Feldherrn absichtlich veranstalter Lärm, um zu sehen, in wie kurzer Zeit die Division sich wohl zusammenziehen könnte. Alles ging sehr Geschwind, in guter Ordnung und zu gänzlicher Zufriedenheit unseres Befehlshabers vonstalten." <sup>50</sup>

On the 10th of June, ensign William Thain of the 33rd regiment (brigade Colin Halkett, 3rd division Alten) wrote that his unit was under orders to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice. <sup>51</sup>

Captain Von Brandis, adc of colonel Von Ompteda (Alten's division) confirms this as having received a few days after the 8th of June "jeden Augenblick zum Abmarsche bereit zu halten. Man hatte im Hauptquartuier Nachrichten von einer Bewegung französischer Truppen an der Grenze erhalten." <sup>52</sup>

Assistant commissary-general Tupper Carey of the commissariat department, and attached to the division Clinton, states:

"As no concentration of [French] troops took place in the front during the first fortnight in June, we had no indication of any immediate movement. The troops, however, were held in state of readiness to march from one day to the other." <sup>53</sup>

And for the Royal Horse Artillery, sir A. Frazer, wrote on the 10th of June:

Yesterday there was some firing in the front, supposed to have been a feu-de-joie — perhaps on account of the arrival of Bonaparte, who is said to be at Maubeuge. Biscuit for four days has been delivered to some of the troops." <sup>54</sup>

Within the division of De Perponcher it was captain Wirths, of the 2nd battalion of Nassau infantry, who wrote: "Das 2. Bataillon [...] hatte erhaltenen Befehl gemäss, sich schon seit mehreren Tagen [before the 15th of June] Morgens vor Tages-Anbruch in Position vor Frasnes versammeln müssen, um daselbst, bis es völlig Tag geworden, und die umliegende Gegend durch Patrouillen durchspähet, zu verbleiben, dann aber – wenn sich nichts verdächtiges gezeigt, wieder in seine Cantonnements einzurücken." <sup>55</sup>

For the division of Chassé, captain Rochell of the 19th battalion of national militia reports about an order of the 7th of June for the brigade to be ready to march at any moment. And three days later, on the 10th of June, there were further orders of the prince of Orange that the battalions of the division should assemble each morning and be under arms between 2 and 5 a.m., and to maintain readiness to march off at a moment's notice. <sup>56</sup>

And it had already been on the 9th (or possibly the 8th of June) that Van Merlen had reported to Von Zieten, at Charleroi, about a French attack to be expected soon (see below in the section on the Prussian army) so Van Merlen must have been on the alert too.

And of the brigade of De Ghigny (division Collaert) part of the 4th regiment of light dragoons got into the outposts on the 10th of June.

For that purpose the third company, led by major Krayenhoff, went to a position in front of Havay (near the Roman road), from where he sent out patrols towards Goegnies-Chaussée, the Roman road and the road leading to Maubeuge. Here, they faced outposts of the 6th regiment of chasseurs à cheval towards Malplaquet (7 kilometers north-east of Bavay, on the Roman road) and the 5th regiment of lancers towards Vieux Reng (about 10 kilometers north-west of Maubeuge). Havay itself was occupied by a company of the 5th light dragoons (brigade of Van Merlen). <sup>57</sup>

While these precautions were taken, other units were not in a state of readiness to march at a moment's notice at all.

For instance on the 9th of June, colonel Rice of the 23rd regiment (brigade Mitchell, 4th division Colville) wrote: "we are at present quiet; all a matter of conjecture as to what is to be done. The great duke knows, but we poor devils know nothing." <sup>58</sup>

And within the British cavalry expectations were apparently also quite different as colonel Ferrior, commander of the 1st Life Guards (brigade Somerset) wrote to his brother on the 7th of June: "as soon as the Prussians come up and join us, no time will be lost in commencing hostilities." <sup>59</sup>

From Brussels ensign Gerard of the 42nd regiment wrote on the 8th of June: "we are still completely in the dark with regard to our future motions." <sup>60</sup>

Wellington wrote to Hardinge at 11 a.m. on the 10th of June: "I have received intelligence that Buonaparte arrived at Maubeuge yesterday, and I believe he has gone along the frontier towards Lille. I have received nothing further this morning." <sup>61</sup>

It would have been on the 8th of June that some sort of a general staff meeting took place in Brussels. In this meeting a defensive strategy must have been discussed as at least the value of the position of Mont Saint Jean must have been a subject of discussion. Lieutenant colonel Carmichael Smyth would have suggested to Wellington "de fortifier le plateau de Mont Saint Jean par des épaulements au nord du château de Goumont et de la ferme Papelotte et par plusieurs batteries à rétablir sur les crêtes de la position." But the duke would have refused to do so by stating that "l'infanterie anglaise devait non pas se lier à des remparts, mais rester complètement libre de prendre position là où elle pourrait le mieux déployer sa valeur." <sup>62</sup>

At Ghent, sir Charles Stuart had the following intelligence as he sent it to lord Castlereagh on the 9th of June:

"Accounts have been received at Ghent from Paris to the 6th of June.

Since the arrangements for the Assembly of the two Chambers have been completed it appears that Buonaparte has turned his undivided attention to the collection of the force necessary to resist the attacks of the allies and make head against the progress of the insurrection in la Vendée.

Eight hundred carts have been distributed along the road from Saint-Denis to Maubeuge for the purpose of conveying that part of the guard to this frontier which has not marched towards la Vendée.

Marshal Soult quitted Paris on the 5th for Laon where the head quarters are at present established. It is expected that he will be followed very shortly by Buonaparte who will direct in person the first attack against marshal Blücher.

This conjecture is founded on the movement of a great part of the force cantoned near Philippeville to the right since the departure of Reille's corps.

No regular troops remain in Lille, and the garrison is entirely composed of national guards, three of the gates have been walled up.

Although all officers who have quitted the service have been directed to retire to a distance of 50 leagues from the frontier, and strong measures have been taken to awe the disaffected, the inhabitants in the departments du Nord and du Pas-de-Calais continue unfavourable to the government.

These feelings have given rise to partial movements at Cambray, St.Omers and Dunkirk, which are perhaps exaggerated by the accounts we receive from the frontier. On the 29th of May it is certain that the Vendean insurrection extended to Le Mans and letters from Alençon justify the expectation that before this time the white flag is displayed in that town." <sup>63</sup>

When it came down to the invasion of France, it was on the 5th of June that general Von Müffling wrote to Gneisenau that he had put his proposal for the advance into France in the hands of Wellington and the duke agreed in it. He also wanted to besiege Valenciennes, which Von Müffling told him was a very strong city and accordingly Von Müffling proposed to besiege Landrecy, Le Quesnoy, Avesnes, Cambrai and Maubeuge instead.

Wellington would think about that. At the same time, the duke was still waiting for information from Schwarzenberg about the date for the operations to commence; as soon as this date would be known, Wellington would join in.<sup>64</sup>

The same day, on his last day at the headquarters of the duke of Wellington, Lowe wrote to lord Bunbury: "I have just seen general Müffling. By what I can understand from him prince Schwartzberg has written to the duke and to prince Blücher to say a courier will probably reach them in two or three days, with notice of the day on which operations are to commence, and that both the duke as well as the marshal are anxious to have the intelligence that they may strike the same day as him. General M. observing again upon the difference of time in the march of the armies said that this army and that of prince Blücher would have twenty days to spare, which they might very well employ in attacking some of the fortresses while the other armies were advancing. He adverted on this occasion to the demands made by general Gneisenau and asked me in what light they had been regarded if they were likely to be acceded to. I mentioned the difficulty about arms when he told me they had got up 20.000 hand for their deptos which would serve in part for their new organisations, however I believe an early answer on all the points will be most kindly considered by them. G.M. told me nothing could exceed the unanimity which prevailed between the allies of the two armies and expressed himself as peculiarly gratified by the duke's conduct to communication to him. The nominal strength of the Prussian army between Liège and Namur is 160.000 men but perhaps deducting superfluous [...] may amount to 140.000."<sup>65</sup>

### **The Prussian army.**

Intelligence.

On the 4th of June, Blücher informed Von Thielmann that according intelligence received the 4th French corps had marched off from Metz and Thionville to join the 3rd corps.<sup>66</sup>

He did the same to Von Kleist:

"Da mir die Nachricht zugekommen ist, als marschierte das IV.französische Armeekorps von der Mosel nach der Maas zur Vereinigung mit dem III.Korps, so ersuche ich Euer Excellenz mir alle Ihnen über diese Bewegung zukommenden Nachrichten sogleich zuzuschicken."<sup>67</sup>

The same day, he wrote to king Friedrich-Wilhelm about his feelings on the invasion into France:

[...] "Die lange Verzögerung des Anfangs der Feindseligkeiten halte ich für höchst nachtheilig. Der Feind verstärkt sich von jetzt an verhältnismässig weit mehr als wir, und Bonaparte gewinnt wieder Zeit, seine Macht im Innern Frankreichs fest zu gründen. Da ferner hier durch die nicht guten Anstalten der niederländischen Behörden die Verpflegung mit jedem Tage schlechter und die Last für das Land drückender wird, so muss ich Ew.Majestät allerunterthänigst bitten, den Anfang der Feindseligkeiten möglichst zu beschleunigen."<sup>68</sup>

The 6th of June brought some more intelligence.

There was a message that "am 3. Wurde der Weg Mons-Chimay bei dem Orte Lecoq durchschnitten. Man erbaut dort ein Fort."<sup>69</sup>

Also the same day, Zieten wrote to Wellington confirming the Champ de Mai had taken place on the 1st of June and that the French corps of Vandamme would count 18.000, the one of

Reille 25.000 and the one of d'Erlon 60.000 men (which Zieten thought was too strong).<sup>70</sup> It can be assumed that Zieten sent this information to Namur as well.

From Mons, count de la Porterie wrote to major Von Bardeleben, adc of Gneisenau, about the fact that Napoleon would make a feint attack on Charleroi, and the real one upon Mons or Tournay between the 7th and the 10th of June

His headquarters would be at Laon; near Valenciennes would be 80 guns and more would be underway from Vincennes.<sup>71</sup>

The 7th of June was another day in which more intelligence dropped in.

It may have been the reports written by the duke of Wellington to colonel Hardinge of the 6th and 7th of June:

“All accounts which I receive from the frontier appear again to concur in the notion of a collection of troops about Maubeuge. Buonaparte was expected to be at Laon on the 6th, and there were on all parts of the road between Paris and the frontier extraordinary preparations for the movement of troops in carriages. The numbers of the latter collected are immense in some of the towns.”<sup>72</sup>

“I have heard nothing new since I wrote you yesterday evening [see above] , excepting general reports of an intention to attack, which very possibly are circulated in consequence of the weakness in our front, and the fact that there are great many carriages for the transport of troops at every stage on the road.”<sup>73</sup>

And it was Zieten again who wrote to headquarters:

“Die Douaniers haben sich in die 2. Linie zurückgezogen und sollen sich bei Annäherung des Feindes sammeln und als Tirailleurs den Rückzug des Korps decken. Auch die Posten an der Sambre haben einen gleichen Befehl zum zurückgehen. Zwischen Beaufort und Landrecies fährt man fort, die Chemins travers zu verhauen und zu verderben.”<sup>74</sup>

On the 8th of June a message reached Namur which stated:

“General Bournonville schliesst aus dem bisherigen Verhalten Napoleons, er werde sich zwischen den Festungen zu halten versuchen, er fürchtet die Überlegenheit der verbündeten Kavallerie.”<sup>75</sup>

The very same day, Zieten wrote Wellington about the withdrawal of the French posts in front of Maubeuge, back towards the fortress of this town. He enclosed a report from Charleroi dated 6th of June stating that the total French forces amounted to about 300.000 and that 102.000 of them were between Maubeuge and Sedan (of which 12.000 of the line). The garrison at Philippeville would consist of 2000 men; at Maubeuge would be about 3000. In the region between Beaufort and Landrecy the French would continue to cut up the roads.<sup>76</sup>

It was again on the 9th of June that intelligence had come in again about the movements of the French 3rd and 4th corps.

In this context, colonel Von Clausewitz, chief of staff of the 3rd army-corps, wrote to general headquarters: “Vandamme habe sein Korps bei Couvin gesammelt, um nötigenfalls nach Philippeville marschieren zu können.”<sup>77</sup>

And lieutenant colonel Hardinge wrote this day to Wellington:

“I am informed by general Gneisenau that he has received intelligence, on which he relies, of the march of the 4th corps from the neighbourhood of Thionville, and of the arrival of part of it at Mézières. His report gives no date or numbers.”<sup>78</sup>

And Gneisenau himself reported then to Von der Knesebeck:

“Durch zwei auf verschiedenen Wegen gekommene Reisende erhalten wir soeben die Nachricht, dass das 4. Armee-Korps nun ebenfalls mit dem 3. bei Mézières sich vereinigt. Die Reisenden haben die Truppen im Marsch gesehen.”<sup>79</sup>

Von Steinmetz reported on the 9th of June to Von Zieten about a report which had come from Van Merlen (at St.Symphorien) that a French attack was to be expected soon, that he had alerted his outposts to be extra vigilant and that he had made the arrangements “dass des Abends die auf dem äussersten rechten Flügel gelegenen Truppen in Allarmhäuser sich sammeln.”<sup>80</sup>

And it was also from Zieten who wrote to Wellington (so apparently to Gneisenau as well) about the French movements (whatever they may have been) to have been caused by his movements on the frontier; other than that, the enemy would have moved 4000 men from Marienbourg to Maubeuge, but that there had not been any French reinforcements at the frontier and its surroundings till the 8th of June. Napoleon would still be in Paris.<sup>81</sup>

On the 10th of June, Zieten wrote to general headquarters:

“Die Gestern bei Marienbourg vernommenen Kanonenschüsse haben der Ankunft Napoleons gegolten. Es scheint mir, dass das 4. Korps Gérard über Marienbourg auf Maubeuge gezogen wird.”<sup>82</sup>

It was on the 9th of June that Von Müffling wrote to Von Gneisenau that Von Dörnberg had reported to him privately that Napoleon would arrive at Valenciennes on the 7th of June and that it would be his intention to destroy the allied armies in Belgium before the arrival of the Russian army.<sup>83</sup>

Von Valentini, the chief of staff of the 4th corps of general Von Bülow asked general headquarters on the 4th of June whether units of the 4th corps could occupy the canton of Dahlem (northeast of Liège). It remains unclear why he did so, but Von Grolman’s reply was clear:

“Da bei Anordnung der Dislokation des IV. Armeekorps stets zu Grunde liegen muss, dasselbe in einem Tage bei Hannut konzentriren zu können, so habe ich Ew.Hochwohlgeboren auf das Schreiben vom 4.d.Mts. zu erwidern , dass man bei Belegung des Kantons Dalhem diesem Grundsatz zuwiderhandeln würde und folglich selbige nicht stattfinden kann.”<sup>84</sup>

The situation within this corps when it came down to discipline must have been unacceptable as on the 6th of June general Von Bülow wrote to his corps:

“[...] Es sind kürzlich von mehreren Unteroffizieren und Gemeinen des Corps grobe Exesse begangen worden; um dergleichen für die Folge zu verhüten, fordere ich die Herren Regiments-Commandeurs auf, genau darauf zu halten, dass den einzelnen Compagnien und Escadrons zum öfteren die Kriegs-Artikel vorgelesen und die Aussicht über die Leute ausser dem Dienst geschärft werde. Zu meinem grössten Erstaunen und Missfallen habe ich indess erfahren, dass bei einigen Truppentheilen des Corps sich sogar unter den Herrn Offizieren ein subordinationswidriges Betragen geäussert hat. Es ist mir dieses ein Beweis, dass die Commandeurs der betreffenden Truppentheile nicht mit der gehörigen Strenge die Aufrechterhaltung der Ordnung bewirkt haben. Ich mache den Regiments-Commandeurs zur strengsten Pflicht aufs genaueste und vor allem auf Erhaltung der Subordination zu sehen, indem neulich die schärfsten Befehle Sr.Majestät eingegangen sind. Dasjenige Regiment, von dem mehrere Anzeigen derart einlaufen, werde ich sogleich directe dem König melden und so ungern ich es auch thun werde, auf Entfernung der Commandeurs bei dem Könige antragen.”<sup>85</sup>

The invasion into France.

It may have been on the 9th of June that Blücher received the letter from Berlin of king Friedrich Wilhelm, dated 6th of June:

“Ich habe mit Ihem Berichte vom 26ten v.M. das Schreiben des Fürsten von Schwarzenberg nebst seinem Plan über den bevorstehenden Feldzug, Ihre Gegenbemerkungen, so wie ein Schreiben des Fürsten Wrede, dass diesen Plan ebenfalls beantwortet, erhalten, und bin sowohl mit Ihren Ansichten als auch damit ganz einverstanden, dass die lange Verzögerung des Anfangs der Feindseligkeiten für uns sehr nachtheilig ist, und zu wünschen wäre, dass er möglichst beschleunigt werden möge.”<sup>86</sup>

In the same sense of a swift invasion Blücher wrote to his nephew, Conrad-Daniel von Blücher-Altona on the 9th of June:

“Der Krieg soll einmal sein, also ihm so bald wie möglich anfangen ist das klugste: gut wird die Sache gehn [sic], davon bin ich sicher, aber es wird wieder Menschen kosten. Vor einiger Zeit war Ich bei meinem Nachbar Wellington in Brüssel: auch dieser ist mit mich einverstanden, dass wir keinen Tag verlieren müssen.”<sup>87</sup>

And the same day Gneisenau gave his opinion on the situation to general Von Dobschütz:

“Der Feind wird uns indessen nicht angreifen, sondern selbst bis an die Aisne, Somme und Marne zurückweichen, um dort seine Kräfte zu konzentrieren.”<sup>88</sup>

One day before, so probably on the 8th of June (no exact date is given) Gneisenau wrote out his new plan for the invasion into France for Von Boyen:

“Sie kennen meinen frühern Feldzugsplan. Dieser war auf grössere Schnelligkeit der Verbündeten berechnet. Nun man dem Feind so viele Zeit gelassen hat, seine Rüstungen mehr zu vervollständigen und da dessen Entwürfe mehr sich entwickeln, so muss auch ich meinen Feldzugsplan abändern und zwar folgendergestalt. Es ist wahrscheinlich, dass der Feind an der Grenze unmittelbar einen hartnäckigen Widerstand nicht leisten wird. Er wird fechtend bis Laon, Chalons s/M, Troyes zurückgehen, den Partisankrieg an unsern Rücken erregen, und dann gegen eine oder die andre unsrer Armeen seine sämtlichen Kräfte vereinigen.

Man muss demnach Übereilung vorgehen, die sämtlichen Armeen des Saumes der reichen Länder, die östlich und südlich der obengenannten Städte liegen, sich bemächtigen, ihre Reserven die Belagerungen fester Plätze machen; zwischen diesen und den vorgedrungenen Armeen müssen Stellungen vorbereitet, andere wichtige Punkte befestigt werden und in der Nähe der genannten Städte angelangt, muss man sich nicht übereilen, weiter vorzugehen. Wir ernähren und besolden die Truppen aus dem eroberten Flächenraum und müssen denn suchen, den Aufruhr im Süden und in der Vendee weiter anzufachen. Bonaparte kann dann, mit seiner Armee auf einen geringen Flächenraum zusammengedrängt, einen solchen gespannten Zustand nicht aushalten und ist gezwungen, die Schlacht zu suchen, die eine jede Armee nur da annehmen muss, wo das Terrain ihr günstig ist, zu welchem Zweck man lieber um einige Märsche zurückgehen muss. Eine Niederlage Bonapartes, selbst nur eine halbe, muss dann das Signal zu einem allgemeinen Hurra ! auf Paris sein, das man in der ersten Verwirrung vielleicht erobert; wo nicht, so muss dasselbe Verfahren von neuem beobachtet werden; und ist für die Versorgung mit Lebensmitteln in Paris nicht sehr gut gesorgt, so darf man erwarten, dass es durch Vertrag in unsre Hände fallen werde.

Man hüte hiebei sich nur, die Bewegung einer jeden Armee durch die der andern bestimmen zu wollen. Verwicklungen und Unentschlossenheit werden die unvermeidliche Folgen einer solchen Anordnung. Grosse Massen zusammenzuhalten ist hier notwendiges Gesetz.

So wünschenswert eine schnelle Entscheidung des Krieges unter so manchen Gesichtspunkten auch ist, so muss doch diesem Zweck nicht das Schicksal des Krieges geopfert oder auch nur in Gefahr gestellt werden, und es ist besser, den Krieg eine Zeitlang altsystematisch zu führen und durch Bezwingung mehrerer Festungen uns für den Krieg und Frieden zugleich zu sichern.

Andere Umstände geboten im letzten Kriege ein anderes, aber man muss seine Entwürfe nach jenen ordnen, und nicht immer dasselbe tun wollen. Damals hätte man sogleich nach der Schlacht von Leipzig mit Hurra ! auf Paris losgehen sollen, und man tat es leider nicht, sondern erlaubte dem Feind, Kräfte zu sammeln, die uns beinah gefährlich werden wollten. Jetzt möchte

vielleicht mancher dasselbe raten, aber Bonaparte hat jetzt 200.000 Mann Feldtruppen, die einer oder der anderen Armee gefährlich werden könnten, die nicht vorsichtig vorgeht. Darum muss man ihn langsam einzuschnüren suchen, gleichsam durch Laufgräben und Zickzacks mit Parallelen. Der allgemeine Sturm muss nur dann geschehen, wenn er einen Ausfall gewagt und zurückgetrieben ist. Paris ist die Zitadelle, die vielleicht im ersten Sturm in unsere Hände gerät, vielleicht auch erst durch einen abgesonderten Angriff, oder durch Erschöpfung ihrer Mittel, oder durch Hunger bezwungen wird.”<sup>89</sup>

The same day, Gneisenau wrote to Knesebeck about the quality of the Anglo-Netherlands-German army, in the sense of it being dependent upon the vicinity of the Prussian army as: “[.] Das Verlassen dieses Kriegstheaters unsererseits würde auf die Wellingtonsche Armee aber äusserst unglücklich wirken und die gänzlich lähmen, denn sie kann unserer Nachbarschaft nicht entbehren. 80.000 Mann sind alles, worüber sie verfügen kann, nach Abzug der Besatzungen; Sie würde bei ihrer nicht vorzüglichen Zusammensetzung nichts unternehmen können. Die Belgier sind unzuverlässig; die Holländer neu und unerfahren; die Braunschweiger ebenfalls, die britischen Bataillone zur Hälfte ebenfalls neu. Nur die britische Kavallerie ist gut und diejenigen Truppen, die jetzt erst einzeln aus Amerika zurückkommen. Wenn wir also mit dieser Armee nicht Arm an Arm stehen, so wird sie ganz unbrauchbar.”

On alert.

On the 9th of June the alert in Zieten’s headquarters at Charleroi had increased in such a degree that it led Zieten to issue the following disposition to his brigade-commanders:

“Es scheint sich die Concentrirung der französische Armee bei Maubeuge nunmehr zu bestätigen, daher es nöthig wird, die Truppen so bereit zu halten, dass sich die Brigaden auf das erste Signal auf den angewiesenen Sammelplätzen concentriren können.

Indem Ich Ew.Hochwohlgeb. ersuche hierzu die Veranstaltung treffen zu wollen, so bringe ich zugleich die früher gegebenen Dispositionen vom 2.Mai in Erinnerung, damit für den Fall einer Zusammenziehung des Corps oder eines Marsches es durchaus an nichts fehlt, daher sämtliche Wagen zur Fortschaffung der Bestände wie auch die Bagage zum Abfahren in Bereitschaft zu halten ist.

Zugleich ist den Vorposten die grösste Aufmerksamkeit zu empfehlen, damit man über die Bewegungen des Feindes nähere Aufschlüsse bekommt.”<sup>90</sup>

For the 1st brigade, resulting, Von Steinmetz replied to Von Zieten the same day:

“Da es überhaupt für den Fall eines feindlichen Vorrückens von Bienne-les-Happart auf der Strasse nach Fontaine l’Eveque, für die nach Binch zu gelegenen Quartiere Schwierigkeiten haben würde, auf dem Sammelplatz der Brigade anzulangen, so habe ich die Anordnung getroffen, dass die erste Aufstellung derselben auf dem zwischen Piéton und Carnières gelegenen Plateau, mit dem linken Flügel das in einiger Entfernung liegende Fontaine l’Evêque und die nach Marchienne führende Chausse festhaltende statt habe.

Von dieser Stellung aus glaube Ich am ersten im Stande zu sein, von dem Fortgange der feindlichen Bewegung eine Übersicht zu behalten und nach befinden der Umstände, entweder meinen weitem Rückzug nach der mir in der erhaltenen Disposition angewiesenen Position bei Gosselies zu marschieren, oder auch im Fall die feindliche Absicht eine blosser Allarmirung gewesen, wieder Bewegungen vorwärts zu machen.”<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, on the 10th of June, Blücher took his precautions towards Von Kleist at Trier:

“Euer Excellenz ersuche ich ergebenst, die Veranstaltung treffen zu lassen, dass Ihr unterhabendes Corps so mit Lebensmitteln versehen ist, dass es ohne Aufenthalt von der Mosel nach der Maas in Bewegung gesetzt werden kann, sobald diese heranziehen nötig sein wird.”<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, on the 10th of June, Thielmann explained his difficulties to Gneisenau for the concentration of his corps:

“Meine entferntesten Infanterie Cantonnements haben immer 9 und meine entferntesten Cavallerie Cantonnements 11 Stunden auf Namur. Soll mein ersten Marsch durch Namur durchgehen, so ist es eine fast unerreichbare Entfernung. In dem Falle eines Marsches auf Namur würde daher meine Concentrirung des 3.t.Armeecorps bey Assesse wohl nothwendig werden, wobey die Vorposten auf der jetzigen Linie stehen bleiben müssten. Da sich [?] indessen schon wegen der Besorgnisse die dieses bey dem Feinde erregen würde, eine solche Bewegung nicht vornehmen darf.”<sup>93</sup>

Observations.

In the period from the 4th until the 10th of June, Wellington was alerted in several ways about a returning threat as coming from Maubeuge. Yet, even though the duke saw the apparent danger, he adopted a somewhat awaiting attitude and took no special measures. And although it was by the 7th of June that he issued detailed instructions for the defence of the fortified places in the west of Belgium, these must have related to his fear for a French irruption between the sea and the Lys the moment the allies would invade France.<sup>94</sup>

The prince of Orange, however, by the 9th of June, turned his vigilance into actual orders for his 1st corps.

It was on the 7th of June that he warned the cavalry of Collaert in front to be on the alert in their observations of the enemy, but two days later he issued instructions for the divisions to have their units assembled on a daily base in their cantonments from early morning until in the evening so as to be in readiness to march off at a moment's notice – and all this until further notice. This implied that the instruction was still valid by the 15th of June.<sup>95</sup>

Though Constant Rebecque wrote in this sense to general Collaert, on behalf of the prince of Orange that “jusqu'à nouvel ordre *toutes les troupes de l'armée* [<sup>96</sup>] doivent se tenir prêtes à marcher au premier avis etc.”, I do not believe that the instructions stated above applied to the whole of Wellington's army, as there are no such references for all divisions, only for those of the 1st corps (plus possibly the 2nd British division).<sup>97</sup>

This can also be explained by the fact that the 1st corps of the prince of Orange was immediately in front of the most probable danger-zone, the front between Valenciennes and Maubeuge.

Within the sector of the prince, it is here that his concern for Nivelles in particular is apparent as he instructed the divisions of Chassé and Collaert, in case of a superior French attack, to collect their units more near Fayt (and Trip at Casteau), i.e. towards the road which leads from Binche through Nivelles to Brussels.

Within the Prussian army a more or less similar situation can be observed. Here it was Zieten, who, based upon the concentration of French forces in and around Maubeuge, ordered his brigade-commanders also on the 9th of June [...] “die Truppen so bereit zu halten, dass sich die Brigaden auf das erste Signal auf den angewiesenen Sammelplätzen konzentriren können.” Yet, at the same time, Gneisenau doesn't seem to have expected an attack from this sector and there are no indications from other documents that the other army-corps were instructed in a similar way.<sup>98</sup>

At the same time, Blücher, however, in his turn sent out instructions to Von Kleist to be prepared to move to the Meuse after all. This meant that he seriously must have taken an attack from Napoleon upon the left bank of this river into account.

Regarding the coming invasion into France, the situation essentially didn't change: while both Wellington and Blücher were still waiting for Schwarzenberg's reaction when he would start his operations, the Prussians again expressed their eagerness to start operations.

It was in this context that sir Hudson Lowe wrote on the 5th of June to lord Bunbury about the general feeling of the start of the invasion: “[..]The Prussians I understand are anxious to get forward and desirous to [...] capture of a frigate [?] as the commencement of hostilities. The general opinion however is that eight or ten days will yet elapse, before the “fiat” from the grand headquarter of the sovereigns and plenipotentiaries will reach this army when all will come [?] together.[..]”<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, due to changes in France itself, Gneisenau submitted an adapted version of his plan for the invasion to Von Boyen.

Revised: 6th February 2009

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<sup>1</sup> Starklof, R. - Das Leben des Herzogs Bernhard von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach p.171  
Rössler, A. von , Geschichte des Königlich Preussischen 1.Nassauischen Infanterie p.69  
Schmidtborn, Antheil des herzoglich-Nassauischen Truppen an den Kämpfen des 16.17 und  
18 Juni 1815 p.7  
Cf. Oracle, 8th of June 1815. Cf. [www.1789-1815.com](http://www.1789-1815.com)

On the 22nd of May, the regiment was transported by ship over the Rhine towards Ehrenbrestein, from where it marched through Linz-Königswinter to Köln. From there it marched through Weisweiler to Aachen, where it arrived on the 30th of May. After having taken a day of rest, the men proceeded their march to Maastricht, from where they went to Tongres, where the regiment got on the 3rd of June. In: Wacker, P. Das Nassauische Militär etc. Vol.I p.78

<sup>2</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.440  
Cf. Hussey, J. Orange and Nassau etc. p.31

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Oracle, 5th of June 1815. Cf. [www.1789-1815.com](http://www.1789-1815.com)

<sup>4</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.447

<sup>5</sup> General order dated 31st of May. In: Gurwood, lieutenant colonel (ed) - The general orders of field marshal the duke of Wellington p.375-376  
An undated document as produced by sir Augustus Frazer refers to the same arrangement, but has been erroneously been put between those dated 15th and 16th of June, thereby suggesting it had been arranged on the 15th. In: Sabine, E. (ed) , Letters of colonel Sir Augustus Frazer p.537

<sup>6</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.416

<sup>7</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.416

<sup>8</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.417

<sup>9</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.417-418

<sup>10</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.421-422

<sup>11</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.422-423

<sup>12</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.422-424

<sup>13</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.425

<sup>14</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.449

<sup>15</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.426 Von Dörnberg claims in a later account that about 8 days before the war broke out, an French officer from the office of general Bertrand came to him to report that Napoleon would attack in about 8 to 10 days and that he would direct his attack between the armies of Blücher and Wellington. Yet, according to the reports available, this claim is unfounded.

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In: Aus einem Manuskript etc. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Vorgeschichte etc. p.292

<sup>16</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.453

<sup>17</sup> A detailed report on the (insufficient) state of defence of this town was drawn up by general Van der Wijck for Constant Rebecque on the 4th of June. In: NA, 2.13.14.01. nr.7-8

<sup>18</sup> Wellington to the prince of Orange, 7th of June 1815. In: WD, Vol.XII p.450-452  
Von Müffling to Gneisenau, 5th of June 1815. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Vorgeschichte etc. p.323-324

<sup>19</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.428-429

<sup>20</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.429-430

<sup>21</sup> NA, 2.13.14,01 nr.7-8

<sup>22</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.432

<sup>23</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.432-433

<sup>24</sup> Von Müffling to Von Gneisenau. In: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Die Vorgeschichte etc. p.327  
In: GSA. VI.HA.NL.Gneisenau kt.23 nr.84

<sup>25</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.436

<sup>26</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.437

<sup>27</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.437

<sup>28</sup> Pécriaux, R. La région du centre avant la bataille de Waterloo p.72-73 From: NA, Staatssecretarie, no.6568

<sup>29</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.437-438

<sup>30</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Oracle, 10th of June 1815. Cf. [www.1789-1815.com](http://www.1789-1815.com)

<sup>32</sup> Malmesbury, lord - A series of letters of the first earl of Malmesbury 1745-1820 p.440

<sup>33</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von Belle Alliance p.29

<sup>34</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –150  
NA, 2.13.14.01. nr.6 – 160

<sup>35</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

<sup>36</sup> Journaal van de divisie kavallerie etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.383  
The general idea was basically that the brigade of De Ghigny was pulled further south, to the west of the one of Van Merlen and to the east and south of Mons.

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The outposts in the east, of Van Merlen, stretched to the Roman road. As Zieten had moved up his towards that road from the east, Van Merlen had pulled his in from Haulchin on the third week of May (see above).

It was near the Bois Bourdon, near the crossing of the old Roman road and the road which lead from Mons to Maubeuge, that on the 10th of June a skirmishing took place between the Dutch light dragoons and French hussars, of which three were taken prisoner. After consultation of the duke of Wellington, however, the prince of Orange arranged their release. Cf. the prince in a letter to his father, dated 13th of June (see below).

<sup>37</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 – 161

<sup>38</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01. nr.6 – 165

The fact that also the 4th regiment of light dragoons was supposed to be ready at a moment's notice, and then from the 7th of June onwards, is confirmed by its commander, colonel Renno. Cf. Diary of lieutenant colonel Renno. In: Groninger Museum, Groningen. Collection Offerhaus Foundation

<sup>39</sup> St.Feuillien, a hamlet immediately south of Le Roeux.

<sup>40</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.167

<sup>41</sup> The three regiments of carabineers were placed at Cambron-Saint-Vincent, Montingies-lez-Lens, Cambron-Casteau, Gages, Lens, Jurbise, Bauffe, Herchies, Erbisoeul and Erbaut; headquarters were established at Bauffe. Cf. Journaal van de divisie kavalerie etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.382-383  
Constant Rebecque erroneously claims that this took place on the 7th of June. Cf. Journal. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

<sup>42</sup> The brigade was accordingly placed at Houdeng, Goegnies, Le Roeulx and Mignault. Headquarters at Le Roeulx. Cf. Journaal van de divisie kavalerie etc. In: Bas, F.de La campagne de 1815 etc. Vol.III p.382-383  
Constant Rebecque. Cf. Journal. In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25 He claims the order was executed on the 11th of June.  
Though much further west, the assembly point was Casteau.

<sup>43</sup> NA, 2.13.52 nr.3 nr.1113 -161

<sup>44</sup> NA, 2.13.52, nr.3 nr.1113  
NA, 2.12.13.14.01 nr.164

<sup>45</sup> NA, 2.13.52., 3 nr.1119 nrs.237-238

<sup>46</sup> Register of the 3rd division. NA, 2.13.52.3 nr.1119 – nrs.241-242, dated 10th of June 6 p.m. The fact that the division had been put on an alert for some days before the 15th of June (i.e. a concentration for the night) can be found in captain Van Omphal's account as well. Cf. His autobiographical notes. In: NIMH, nr.104/7

<sup>47</sup> NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

On the 10th of June, Chassé reported in the same way to Constant Rebecque, coupled to some intelligence (see above). In: NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.7-8

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The same day, Aubremé reported back to colonel Van Delen on the march of the 3rd battalion of national militia from Houdeng to Beaume. In: NA, 2.13.52. nr.3 nr.1113

<sup>48</sup> NA, 2.13.52. (2) nr.1095 nr.166, nr.1091 nr.212  
NA, 2.13.14.01 nr.6 –166

<sup>49</sup> NA 2.13.52 – 2 nr.1091 nr.212  
Journaal der tweede divisie infanterie. In: NA, 2.13.52 1090 p.27b (daily orders nrs.211-214)

<sup>50</sup> Biedermann, E. Von Malta bis Waterloo p.174-176  
His battalion had been late March in Tournai and early April in Courtrai. On the 16th of April it moved through Audenarde to Grammont.

The fact that also the Bremen and Verden battalion of the brigade of Von Kielmansegge marched that day to Soignies and back again is confirmed by captain Von Scriba. He also indicates that the units of the brigade became more and more concentrated from late May till the 15th of June. In: Das leichte Bataillon etc. p.78

<sup>51</sup> In his diary. In: Duke of Wellington's regiment archive, Wellesley Park, Halifax.

<sup>52</sup> Dehnel, H. Erinnerungen p.282

<sup>53</sup> Reminiscences of Waterloo p.726

<sup>54</sup> Sabine, E. (ed) , Letters of colonel Sir Augustus Frazer p.531-532

<sup>55</sup> Aus der Schlacht bei Waterloo p.142

<sup>56</sup> Cf. his account – in private archive.

<sup>57</sup> Major Krayenhoff (4th regiment of light dragoons). Account in: Rijksmuseum nr. NM 10255b

Cf. Fundter, J.C. Geschiedenis etc. p.11

Both French cavalry regiments were of Piré's division (2nd corps).

<sup>58</sup> Mockler-Ferryman, A.F. The life of a regimental officer during the great war p.277

<sup>59</sup> HL, MS 88/4

<sup>60</sup> BWRA-16

<sup>61</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.457

<sup>62</sup> In: Bas, F.de and T'Serclaes de Wommersom. La campagne de 1815 Vol.II p.50  
The source of De Bas' claim for this meeting remains unknown. Yet, major Van Gorkum of the general staff of the army of the Netherlands states that on the 9th of June a map of the position of Mont Saint Jean was shown to him by lieutenant colonel Carmichael Smyth in Brussels on the 9th of June. Cf. his memoirs in a private collection.

This might mean that Van Gorkum attended the meeting itself as well, or that their meeting was a result of the one which took place on the 8th of June.

<sup>63</sup> Malet, A. (ed.) Louis XVIII et les Cent-jours à Gand Vol.II p.164-165

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- <sup>64</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Vorgeschichte etc. p.321-322
- <sup>65</sup> BL, Add.ms.37.052 f.150-151
- <sup>66</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.513
- <sup>67</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von – Bundestruppen p.99
- <sup>68</sup> Ollech, Von – Geschichte p.51
- <sup>69</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.514
- <sup>70</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.425
- <sup>71</sup> GSA, VPH-HA, VI, nr.I nr.7 p.9 From: KA VI.E.I.III  
Von Lettow Vorbeck mentions just a few details of the said report. In: Napoleon's Untergang p.514
- <sup>72</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.449
- <sup>73</sup> WD, Vol.XII p.453
- <sup>74</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.514
- <sup>75</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.515
- <sup>76</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.429-430
- <sup>77</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.515
- <sup>78</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.437
- <sup>79</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.515 He cites from the report in the former Kriegsarchiv.
- <sup>80</sup> MWB, 1846 p.22
- <sup>81</sup> WSD, Vol.X p.437-438
- <sup>82</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.515  
That day, a mission of a member of the 2nd Silesian Jäger Battalion nr.6 (brigade Von Steinmetz) from the outposts near Fontaine l'Evêque towards Beaumont resulted in the information that French camps could be seen in that direction. In: Otto, F.von - Geschichte des 2.Schlesischen Jäger Bataillons nr.6 p.77
- <sup>83</sup> Von Müffling to Von Gneisenau. In: GSA, VI.HA NL Gneisenau kt.23 p.84  
Also in: Pflugk Harttung, J.von Die Vorgeschichte etc. p.327 nr.15  
The original came from the archive of Von Gneisenau in the chateau of Sommerschenburg
- <sup>84</sup> Conrady, E. von – Leben und Wirkung etc. p.293

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In: GSA, VPH-HA, VI. Nr.II.13.p.3 (from KA, nr.VI.C.53)

<sup>85</sup> Thielen, H.von – Geschichte des Magdeburgischen etc. p.14-15

<sup>86</sup> MWB, 1846, p.14

<sup>87</sup> Blücher's Briefe, p.279

<sup>88</sup> Lettow Vorbeck, O.von Napoleon's Untergang p.515 He cites from the letter from the Königlich Haus-Archiv. Unfortunately only this sentence is quoted by Von Lettow Vorbeck, therefore the reasons as mentioned by Gneiseau (cf."indessen") why he thought Napoleon would not attack are not available.

<sup>89</sup> Griewank, K. - Gneisenau. Ein Leben in Briefen p.317-319

The date is taken from the fact that on the same day Gneisenau wrote to Kneesebeck in which he said he would write in the same sense as he did to him as to Boyen. Cf. Lettow Vorbeck. Von – Napoleon's Untergang p.189

<sup>90</sup> GSA, VPH-HA, VI, nr.I nr.3 p.29

MWB, 1847 p.162

Ollech, Von – Geschichte etc.p.88

<sup>91</sup> MWB, 1846, p.19

<sup>92</sup> Pflugk Harttung, J.von - Bundestruppen p.100. From : KA, VI.D.94.26

<sup>93</sup> GSA, VPH-HA, VI nr.I nr.7 p.12

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Wellington to the prince of Orange, 17th of April 1815. In: WD, Vol.XII p.312-313

<sup>95</sup> On the afternoon 15th of June, the prince wrote to Constant Rebecque:

“À moins que vous ayez des nouvelles depuis ce matin qui puissent vous faire croire nécessaire de tenir les troupes dehors toute la nuit, je vous prie de leur envoyer l'ordre en mon nom de se rendre à leurs cantonnements, mais d'être rassemblées de nouveau demain matin à 4 heures aux points fixés. Veuillez dire à Abercombray, en mon nom, d'en faire autant pour les troupes anglaises. Le duc de Wellington désire que je reste ici ce soir. Je ne partirai donc qu'à minuit ou une heure.”

From this document it becomes clear that, on the one hand, the alert then still was valid and that, on the other, this also applied to the other forces of the 1st corps, other than those of the army of the Netherlands. Cf. chapter on the 15th of June.

That at least the British cavalry certainly did not receive such orders can be taken from colonel Gurwood when he writes: “It is clear the the regiments of cavalry were not in hand, as they ought to have been by order of their brigadiers and that under the circumstances they ought to have been assembled daily at an hour after daylight on their respective alarm posts. In consequence of this want of arrangement nearly four hours were lost in the assembly of brigades and the brigade to which I belonged made several large very long halts waiting for orders before it arrived at Braine le Comte and afterwards trotted with 22 stone weight [?] for several miles to 4 Bras.” In his letter dated 24th of September 1842 to Wellington. In: HL, MS61 WP 8.2.3

<sup>96</sup> The italics are mine.

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<sup>97</sup> In his journal, Constant Rebecque uses the following phrase on the 11th of June: “ les divisions de l’armée concentrent leurs cantonnemens” [sic]. And for the 12th of June, he states: “ Les troupes recoivent l’ordre de se tenir prêtes à marcher et chaque division se rassemble tous les matins au lieu de son rendez-vous et rentre le soir dans ses cantonnemens [sic] serrés.” In: NA, 2.21.008.01 nr.25

<sup>98</sup> Von Busse, however, states that on the 8th of June the units of the 2nd corps “in engere Kantonirungen und in mehrere Annäherung an die Kantonirungen der Niederländischen Armee verlegt [wurden].” He gives no source for this claim.  
In: Geschichte etc. p.162

<sup>99</sup> BL, Add.ms.37.052 f.148-149