

The Napoleon Series

The Campaign of 1814: Chapter 18, Part VII

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THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

(after the documents of the imperial and royal archives of Vienna)

THE ALLIED CAVALRY

DURING THE CAMPAIGN OF 1814

CHAPTER XVIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE ALLIED ARMIES FROM 25 MARCH 1814 IN THE MORNING
UNTIL THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN.

FÈRE-CHAMPINOISE. -- SAINT-DIZIER. --PARIS.

Positions of the Army of Silesia on 28 March in the evening. --The advanced guard of Katzler bivouacked around Villeparisis; the 9th Brigade (Klüx) on the level of Montzaigle, the 10th (Pirch) between Claye and Villeparisis, connected by the farm of Grosbois with the 9th Brigade. Kleist remained with the cavalry reserve of Zieten at Montzaigle.

The Prussian Ist Corps stopped to the right and a little behind the IInd Corps, the division of Horn at Souilly, the division of Prince William of Prussia with Yorck at Messy.

Langeron who, at the request of Yorck, had been directed to the Beuvronne, arrived in Saint-Mesmes and his vanguard had pushed still further to the route des Petits-Ponts.

The two other Russian corps (Sacken and Vorontsov) had completed the crossing of the Marne at Trilport towards the end of the day; they were in echelon between Trilport and Meaux where the headquarters of Blücher was found.

Bülow still continued the siege of Soissons; he had conducted on the night of the 27th to 28th, the opening of the second parallel. An energetic sortie of the garrison was able to destroy and disrupt some of the work of the Prussian sappers.

Situation in Paris. --Council of War of 28 March. --Until 28 March one had preserved, or at least affected to maintain in Paris illusions about the situation. But the news received during the course of the day no longer left any doubt about the movements and intentions of the Allies, and when the 28th at 8:30 in the evening, King Joseph, lieutenant general of the Emperor, decided to convene urgently the Council of Regents there was no time to take the

most necessary measures to prepare defensive works before which it had retreated in fear of alarming the population.¹

The appearance of the Allies was now certain. One barely had a few hours to act upon the most urgent, to perform the formal orders of the Emperor related to the departure of the Empress and the King of Rome, to press the return of the Marshals and Compans.

If there had not been among the members of the Council of Regents a number of characters who had continued to conspire and whose emissaries and envoys had otherwise caused, at least precipitated the Allied march on the capital or if there had been in Paris an energetic man with personal authority, influence and talents which were lacking to King Joseph, one would not have hesitated to comply with the will, the decisions of the Emperor and the entire government, leaving the capital along with Marie-Louise and the King of Rome, would have gone on the Loire. But each of the dignitaries and the lieutenant general of the Emperor, more than any other, trembled before responsibility, even fictitious, before the application of measures dictated by wisdom and ordered by the sovereign. Some had to reproach their ignorance or their shyness; others, on the contrary, not daring to throw away the mask, but working in silence to the overthrow their sovereign, ascertained, with a satisfaction that they hid less and less, the worsening the political point of view of a situation already seriously compromised by the military point of view.

Keeping the government in Paris had therefore committed a more serious offense, even worse than those that had not stopped accumulating from the last six weeks and all the activity, too late, that Clarke was to be powerless to repair. Keeping in the capital the great bodies of the State, one had given, without realizing it, a fulcrum to Talleyrand, to Montesquieu, to Dahlberg, to provide the necessary weapon in the commission of their plots, ensuring their ability to satisfy their hatred, to satisfy their ambition, to arrogate power and substitute their conduct, hitherto hidden, with negotiations covered by an appearance of legality. During these dismal days, only the betrayers had understood their role.

29 March. --Insufficient measures taken for the defense of Paris. --Causes of this insufficiency. --Of all the ministers, all members of the government, Clarke, alone, was still trying to restore the situation by redoubled zeal and activity. Until the last moment everyone had refused to believe in the possibility of the Allies marching on Paris. Even at a time when nobody had anything to worry about, when the Emperor was driving before him the remains of the army of Blücher, neglected, in February, he had begun working on the defense of the capital. It was thought unnecessary to study, to issue a possible plan of defense, to prepare special formations, arms depots. One had only served to send reinforcements to the army, one had merely made Paris a huge depot of men and horses; Now, in just hours, amid the general confusion, the confusion caused by the departure of the Empress and the King of Rome, he would have to create everything, improvise everything, because, since the departure of the Emperor the army had lost the habit of obeying him. One had discussed his orders, had hidden the truth, firstly to better effect his down fall, conspiring to aid and organize the betrayal; on the other, because, tired of these constant struggles, discouraged by bad fortune, one had neither confidence in itself, nor faith in the genius of the Emperor.

Napoleon, however, had determined and simplified the mission he entrusted to the politicians and generals left at Paris. Before even thinking of leaving the capital, the Emperor, taking an idea he had had during the campaign of 1805, where he had indeed given to Clarke, from 11 January, the following instructions: "My intention is of making Paris a stronghold...It is necessary to establish at the Invalides and the Military School great workshops of armaments, to make in all manners 1,000 pieces of field guns, 300,000 cannon balls and 12 million cartridges. All

¹The Emperor, however, had spared no criticism for Joseph, who he had been wrong to appoint his lieutenant general. On 13 March, for example, he had written from Soissons (*Correspondence*, n° 21477)

"My brother ... everywhere I have complaints from people against the mayors and the bourgeois who check those who defend themselves. I see the same thing in Paris. The people have the power and honor. I fear that some are leaders who do not want to fight and that will be all fools, after the event, to what will happened to them caused by themselves."

must be ready in early February."² The next day, or at most a few days later, in his note on the current situation in France,³ he pointed to a clear and precise way what there was to do in Paris and set in few lines, the essential conditions, the basis for the defense of the capital.

"In any case," he wrote, "suitable measures must be taken and in no case accept the abandonment of Paris. Consequently all the depots should come between Paris and the Loire, to complement in Paris, all the cadres of soldiers trained on military equipment and unarmed artillery equipment in order to have an immense superiority of artillery over the enemy. It takes 60 or 80 pieces of artillery to defend the gates of Paris. We must allow for the refitting of the portion of the wall of Paris⁴ not completed and order secret fences, chevaux de frise and barriers that would be placed so as to close the opening. All the heights of Paris to be occupied should be reconnoitered by engineering officers, as well as the bridges of the Seine and Marne and studied for the position to be taken by the army. By this means the National Guard of Paris, with 60 pieces of cannon, can ensure the defense of the city; the National Guard of Saint-Cloud and Versailles guard the bridges of Saint-Cloud and Sèvres, the National Guard of Meaux, the bridges of Meaux, Corbeil and others." And in the summary that ended this note, he still insisted on some points: he ordered to gather in Paris 80,000 to 100,000 bags of flour so that the subsistence of the army and the city is guaranteed for four or five month; to place under construction siege emplacements, garnish with pieces and emplacements the heights of Paris, to place them on the redoubts and bridges.

And he added further: "He would have a great advantage: that of being useful and produce a great effect." He wanted to know how many fathoms (toises) of wall that were not completed and, as the season did not allow to complete the masonry, he prescribed the order to move a large amount of big palisades, that could be in a few days, planted. He even commanded to make a quantity of fences, to build tambours (small redoubts) on all gates, it not being the season to undertake earthworks, and make the entanglements that could be moved where one wanted to put the infantry positions away from the cavalry.

On 13 January, he yet again renewed these orders in a letter to Bertrand.⁵ He knew at that moment that the part of Paris which had no walls did not measure less than 400 yards and reiterated the order to prepare stockades "intended to be placed, when the time arrived, in front of the current stockade that seemed too low." He again prescribed the making of tambour for thirty principal gates and condemned the others. Everything had to run so that the workers might not suspect the use for which their work was intended.

Ten days later, 23 January,⁶ he gave the order to form two, and if it were possible, four artillery companies with the men of the Hôtel des Invalides, and place them at the different barriers. He charged the same time, General Chasseloup-Laubat organizing the engineers of the National Guard, to work with Marshal Moncey and General Hulin, on the defense of Paris. He had so little lost sight of his previous orders, that he asked the Minister of War to let him know when the entanglements, barriers and palisades he had ordered, would be placed.

Quitting Paris for the army, appointing Lieutenant-General Joseph, the Emperor had taken care to leave him formal instructions relating to the organization of the defense of the capital, the formation of the National Guard. He had clearly determined his powers, placing under his command Marshal Moncey, who became his chief of staff, the

²*Correspondence*, n° 21084.

³*Correspondence*, n° 21089. This note only bears the date of January 1814. It appears in the *Correspondence*, at the date of 12 January, with the note "is probably the 12th".

⁴He indicates here the toll booth wall.

⁵*Correspondence*, n° 21095.

⁶*Ibid.*, n° 21125.

generals d'Ornano and Hulin commandants, the first troops of the guard, the second those of the 1st Military Division. Finally, he particularly drew his attention to the question of arming the National Guard.⁷

Later, a few days after La Rothière, when he was about to fall on Blücher, he returned again to the need to hold fast to the gates of Paris, to place two cannons at each of them, to put in positions armed National Guardsmen with fusils. He would even fix the composition of each of these items.⁸

Forty-eight hours later, he fixed at nine the number of batteries destined for service at Paris and renewed the order to keep the barriers by the National Guard. "We must," he says, "accustom the National Guard act alone to service barriers, because when we take away the Paris line troops to move forward, the National Guard will think themselves lost."⁹

The 15th of February, after beating Blücher, and about to turn against Schwarzenberg, whose army had pushed the marshals on the Yverres, he looked again at the defense of Paris. "I suppose," he wrote to Joseph,¹⁰ "the barriers on the side of Jardin des Plantes are ready and we have placed there bodies of guards and cannon." The 23rd and 24th of February, returning to the observations of Joseph and Clarke, he agreed to give up his idea of doubling the size of the National Guard of Paris.¹¹

The day after the battle of Laon, responding to a letter from his brother to whom an inspection of the barriers had shown that the Committee of Defense, pending approval of a general plan submitted to the Emperor, had merely performed odd jobs, Napoleon renewed from Chavignon the order to raise redoubts on the heights, especially in Montmartre. The day before he had prescribed to devise means to raise, under the title of a levée en masse of the National Guard, 30,000 men "from all this population that sought refuge in Paris and all the workers who are unemployed." And he added: "Since you have fusils, it must be easy for you."¹²

Two days later, Joseph, who began to fear the consequences of his negligence and delays by the Committee of Defense, reminded the Emperor that the work under the project had been delayed by lack of funds, and Napoleon was confined to reply "that the plan in question was too complicated, that it was very simple things."¹³

⁷*Correspondence*, n° 21134, Instructions for King Joseph, Paris, 24 January: "The great difficulty for the National Guard is the arms: we have none. We now are trying to establish a workshop for the National Guard. It must arm themselves with all the hunting fusils we can find." And further, he added. "There is nothing in Paris that can thwart the will of the Government."

⁸*Correspondence*, n° 21195 to King Joseph, Nogent, 7 February: "There must be at every barrier 50 men armed with fusils, 100 men armed with hunting guns and 100 armed with pikes, which will make 250 men. You have to train every day a reserve of 400 to 500 men armed with regulation fusils, double shotguns and a third armed with pikes; this will make a reserve of 2,000 men to move everywhere it be necessary coupled with batteries of the Guard and the École Polytechnique." The same day, in another dispatch to Clarke (*Correspondence*, n° 21198), he still insisted on the need "to place cannons in battery at the main gates. The mere presence of these cannons will impose on the enemy cavalry parties."

⁹*Correspondence*, n°s 21224 and 21226, to King Joseph and Clarke, Nogent, 9 February.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, n° 21264, La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, 15 February, 2 o'clock, afternoon.

¹¹*Correspondence*, n°s 21356, 21358 and 21360, Châtres, 23 February, and the village of Noës, Troyes, 24 February.

¹²*Ibid.*, n°s 21460 and 21461, to Joseph, Chavignon, 10 and 11 March.

¹³*Ibid.*, n° 21477, Soissons, 13 March.

Finally on 14 and 18 March he was involved for the last measures to be taken at Paris,¹⁴ charging Montalivet to submit a draft decree forming in Paris twelve battalions of 1,000 men and writing from Épernay to Clarke "the movement of the enemy has always been on Paris to the point of neglecting the strongholds it has not blockaded, it is on Paris that I have brought all conscripts, it is on Paris that I must bring all the means of armament."

But it was not only the organization and arming of the National Guard, on the implementation of the state of defense of Paris that the Emperor had turned his attention, distracted necessarily at times by the seriousness of events, the importance and urgency of military operations. He had also not failed to have given the Council of Regents formal instructions determining the conduct that should be kept in extraordinary circumstances, to provide for measures relating to his family and members of the government. A few days after he wrote to Joseph from La Rothière to leave Paris to an Imperial Commissioner. "Seek," he wrote, on the choice for the role, "mutual counsel on this with the Chancellor and the ministers of Finance, Treasury and Interior. I think that it should not be left to any minister. But I hope that the circumstance will not happen."¹⁵ And two days later, he added: "I told you about the possibility of Paris; you just have to come back ... I have orders for you to the Empress, the King of Rome and our family that circumstances will dictate ... If it happens that a battle is lost or news of my death, you would be informed before my ministers. Make the Empress and the King of Rome depart to Rambouillet; order the Senate, the Council of State and all the troops to assemble on the Loire. Leave for Paris, either the prefect, or an imperial commissioner or mayor ... In the very difficult circumstances of the events of the crisis, we do what we must and we leave the rest." And as if he had foreseen the future, he finished this letter with the sadly prophetic words: "I would rather slit the throat of my son than see him ever raised in Vienna as an Austrian prince ... I have never seen *Andromache* represented that I have not complained of the fate of Astyanax, surviving in his house and that I have looked for him to be happy not to have survived his father."¹⁶

On 16 March he had completed his instructions in a more formal and even more imperative way: "My brother," he wrote to Joseph,¹⁷ "according to verbal instructions I gave you and the spirit of all my letters, you must not allow that in any case the Empress and the King of Rome fall into the hands of the enemy. I will maneuver so that it is possible that you will be several days without news of me. If the enemy is advancing on Paris with such forces that resistance became impossible, make depart in the direction of the Loire the Regent, my son, the great dignitaries, ministers, officers of the Senate, the presidents of the Council of State, the great officers of the Crown, baron of La Bouillierie and the Treasury. Do not leave my son and remember that I would prefer to know he's in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France. The sort of Astyanax prisoner of the Greeks, always seemed to me the most unhappy fate of history."

The negligence and indolence of some, intrigues, occult conduct and betrayal of others forced the Emperor, not only to direct from afar the preparations for the defense of Paris, to renew any orders relating to the departure of his family and Government in case of extraordinary events, but to be concerned about the public spirit, to report the principal traitors even those who had a duty to lead the public, to discover, monitor criminal conspiratorial actions known also by all. Without repeating here the reproaches he had sent several times to the ministers and which we have talked of previously, we will limit ourselves to reproduce some passages of his letters to Montalivet, Cambacérès and Joseph from the end of February 1814. Thus we find him writing on 26 February from Troyes to Montalivet:¹⁸ "I cannot be more unhappy than I am with the little that is done for the public spirit. It is not by verses, by odes alone that we can achieve animation, but by facts and simple and true details. It is a very simple thing to understand. I do not want to see false articles in Paris. I do not want to deceive the public, we only need put the conduct of enemies in front of all ... We need cities that were occupied by the enemy, to send deputies to

¹⁴*Ibid.*, n° 21487, to Montalivet, Reims, 14 March and n° 21516, Épernay, 18 March.

¹⁵*Correspondence*, n° 21189, to Joseph, Troyes, 6 February.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, n° 21210, to Joseph, Nogent, 8 February, 11 o'clock in the morning.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, n° 21497, to Joseph, Reims, 16 March.

¹⁸*Correspondence*, n° 21375, to Montalivet, Troyes, 26 February.

Paris to tell the story of what they saw and learned, from what happened at home ... all of these facts will generate rage and indignation. That is when everyone will feel the need to run to a defense." And he adds: "But I am no longer obeyed. You have all more spirit than me and without stopping to oppose resistance objecting to me, with *but*, with *if*, with *because of* ... I cannot write to all my ministers. This letter must be communal. France would already be entirely under arms without the pusillanimity of ministers who still fear to place everything before the administration. Police must collect daily quantities of letters from all parts of France ... these need to be printed, we will put out all the names and hide nothing from the public."

After Laon, 12 March, he said to Joseph:¹⁹ ' If the Parisians want to see the Cossacks, they will repent, but still it will be fatal, tell them the truth. I never sought the applause of Parisians. I'm not an opera character. Besides, you have to be more practical than you are to see the spirit of this city, which has nothing in common with the passions of the 3,000 or 4,000 people who make a lot of noise. It's simple, and it is more expedient to declare that we cannot make a levy of men than trying to do it."

That Rovigo, ignoring or not believing in the existence of plots against the imperial dynasty, was afraid to arrest Talleyrand without a formal order from the Emperor or King Joseph, evaded the order to imprison or at least distance the Vice-electoral from the capital, was his dupe or his accomplice, that's something that we cannot find here. What is certain is that the Emperor, about to leave for the army, had already said in the very presence of Talleyrand: "I know I leave in Paris more enemies than I will fight." What is also certain is that twice he had formally reported to his brother and his ministers the conduct of Talleyrand and one could have, one should have taken action against him if one had wanted to, if one had not lost the habit of obedience.

The Emperor, in fact, had written, for example Cambacérès from La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, 3 March:²⁰ "My cousin, I see that in Paris you have the full spirit for all subjects of fear . There is no cure for this. Just think that today the capital is not really compromised. There is much wrong with the spirit of all that relates to the administration, since the Prince of Benevento, this much I know; it is they who propagated since November a bad spirit in opinion."

A month earlier, he had been even more emphatic in a letter addressed to Joseph and containing the orders relative to the conditional departure of his family.²¹ "I have a right to be helped by the men who are around me for the very reason that I have helped them myself ... I do not understand how you cover with praise such impolitic proposals from unworthy traitors, from advisors without honor. Do not use them, even in the most favorable circumstance."

And some lines later he was clearer, more clairvoyant again: "I confess that your letter of the 7th, at eleven o'clock in the evening, makes me sick because I see nothing remaining of your vision and that you have let go to gossip and opinions of a bunch of people who do not think. But I will tell you frankly. If Talleyrand is for something in this opinion to leave the Empress in Paris when our forces evacuate, it is a betrayal they must be plotting. I repeat, beware of this man. I have the experience of sixteen years; I even granted favor for him; but he is surely the biggest enemy of our house, now that fortune has abandoned it for some time. *Stick to the advice I have given. I know more than these people.*"

Once again, the Emperor was right, and the Council of Regents of 28 March would prove too late for some servants remaining faithful to his fortunes in the midst of this multitude of schemers, plotters and traitors that, although far from his capital, Napoleon knew better than them and the character of the men he had left behind and the heart of the French people. But the 28th in the evening, the evil was irremediable.

One was too late for punishing traitors, influencing public opinion, making up for lost time, to proceed *in extremis* with levees before which it had declined by pusillanimity, and undertake the work of defense it was impossible to enforce.

¹⁹ *Correspondence*, n° 21467, to King Joseph, Soissons, 12 March.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n° 21423.

²¹ *Correspondence*, n° 21210, to King Joseph, Nogent, 8 February, 11 o'clock in the morning.

With the weakness and timidity of the heads of government, through information that their high position allowed them to gather without difficulty or danger, Talleyrand and his accomplices had finalized the guilty work they had undertaken. Not content to correspond on a continuing basis with headquarters of the sovereign, the Deputy Elector, putting his wonderful skill into the service of the hatred he had dedicated to the Emperor, had managed to influence public opinion, too neglected by the government to spread among the people of the capital of the news that only increased anxiety, increased the general discouragement.

Such was the state of mind of the Parisian population when, on 28 March in the evening it became known that Compans left Meaux to fall back on Paris, when forced to comply with the express orders of the Emperor, the day after was fixed for the departure of the King of Rome. The National Guard was not organized, its total number was barely 12,000 men, for the most part incompletely dressed and equipped, only half of which were armed with guns of all kinds and all sizes.

The defense works were a little more developed and better understood than the organization of the garrison. After the rejection of the project that the Committee of Defense had presented to the Emperor in the course of January, it was content to raise small redoubts at the gates, to crenellate the buildings with barriers, to close with palisades the unfinished parts of the toll wall, affect the defense of the enclosure with about 80 guns, barricaded the bridges of Saint-Maur, Charenton and Neuilly; but neglected to entrench the outer suburbs; to arm the heights overlooking the city.²²

The 29th in the morning there remained in Paris, after the reinforcements that General Compans had found at Claye, after the placing in route the 1500 infantry and 300 cavalry that served as escort for the Empress and the King of Rome,²³ 600 men, 300 cavalymen and 4,000 conscripts that were hastily formed in an improvised division under the command of General Michel, and the National Guard. General Compans had stopped at Bondy and despite the speed with which the Marshals executed their retirement, it was still impossible to know whether they would arrive in time to participate in the defense of the capital.

²²It was only on 23 March that King Joseph began giving real signs of anxiety. Writing that day to General Hulin, he informed him that "the operations of the Emperor could demand that Paris was in the circumstance to defend itself for days against parties or even against a corps that would bring cannon." He also informed the General that "beginning from 21 March, the line troops would guard and defend the advanced posts and would be used in external patrols and reconnaissance." To make them available, he ordered to relieve with National Guard those among them who were previously employed to guard the gates. The National Guard would now only be responsible for the defense of the enclosure. The villages and outer suburbs that were occupied by line troops entrenched in front, King Joseph invites General Dejean, first inspector general of the engineers, to draw on the works, to perform the first closing work, to do close roads, local roads or exploitation that lead to villages and outer suburbs, to wall up the doors of the enclosure walls, walls and gardens that overlook the countryside, so that the garrisons of these villages and the suburbs have continuous enclosure formed by these walls and these fences. Finally, as it was necessary to have the artillery emplaced on the main heights and at the head of the suburbs, King Joseph again invited General Hulin to ensure the resources available to the management of the artillery of Paris to immediately position a few batteries of cannon and howitzers.

²³"There is no doubt," said Gohier, "nothing would have been more conducive to reassure the Parisians against the alarms of this unexpected departure (that of Marie-Louise and the King of Rome) than the presence of Napoleon's brother if, his military talents were lacking, he would have at least supplemented by a strong resolve and been unshaken. But while he limited the duration of effort he expected from the brave he commanded, even his proclamation announced uncertain determination. In only asking them for a few moments of resistance, he also announced that he had decided not to sustain long fights A leader worthy of the brave men who were in Paris, would have obtained more than Prince Joseph asked, could count not only on a short resistance, a few moments of combat, but the strongest, more constant defense." (*Memoirs of GOHIER, president of the Directorate on the 18th Brumaire, 3rd Part, v. II, p. 236; Contemporary Memories to serve in the history of France and mainly that of the Revolution and the Empire.*)

At dawn, one had posted the proclamation of King Joseph²³ while Moncey, d'Ornano and Clarke, assembling the National Guards and barely trained regiments they had divided with positions among the National Guards and troops of the line. The fractions of the Guard who remained to d'Ornano were ordered to join Compans the same day, while the cavalry would occupy Pantin.

Since the night before, Clarke redoubled his efforts and tried to redress by indefatigable activity, the mistakes he had made, mistakes that he was powerless to avert. General Boyer de Rébeval, although still suffering from his injuries, came as did General Michel, to make themselves available to the minister and had to take on the 30th in the morning command of a small division formed of three battalions of the 11th Voltigeurs, one of flaqueurs-grenadiers and a battalion drawn from another regiment, representing a total of 1700 to 1800 men.²⁴

Before going to the Council of Regents, the Minister had sent to the two Marshals the order to continue, without any delay their march on Paris, leaving on the Seine at Nogent and Bray, the division of General Souham.²⁵ Allix was to approach Sens to support Souham who, responsible for the defense of the Seine from Nogent to Montereau, was to fall back on Montereau if he was forced. Allix monitoring the Yonne and the Loing, would evacuate Auxerre and occupy Montereau, if there was no one at Pont-sur-Yonne.²⁶ General Grouvel would hold as long as possible in Villers-Cotterêts, until too superior forces emerged from the forest. He then would fall back by Nanteuil on Dommartin.²⁷

On the night of the 28th to 29th, Clarke had sent to Compans, in Bondy, ammunition, a Polish battery and six small battalions of 400 men each "with orders to hold his position to gain time."²⁸ Finally, making a brief account to the Emperor of the military events of the day, the positions occupied by Marmont, Mortier, and Compans, the 28th in evening, the Minister concluded his brief dispatch with the words: "Only the presence of Your Majesty can address the threats we face."²⁹

Orders of movement of Schwarzenberg. --While Clarke was trying to cope with insoluble difficulties of a desperate situation, the Generalissimo had issued on the 28th in evening at the headquarters of Quincy, the general disposition for the day of the 29th.³⁰

"The Army of Silesia will leave one of its corps in Meaux on the right bank of the Marne. The rest of this army will march by the route Soissons so that it can continue moving to Paris, either by both Saint-Denis or the same route of Soissons."

"The VIth Corps (right column of the Allied Great Army), will cross the Marne at Trilport and will regulate its march so that its tail has gotten beyond Meaux at five in the morning, at which time the guards have to file through the bridges of the Marne in Meaux. The VIth Corps will take the road leading right to Paris from Claye, will occupy the forest of Bondy and will connect to the right with the Army of Silesia, awaiting issuance of further orders."

"General Count Pahlen will push at the same time towards Belleville and on the direct route to Paris."

²⁴Journal of Boyer de Rébeval. (*Archives of the War.*)

²⁵The Minister of War to Marmont and Mortier, Paris, 28 March, 6 o'clock in the evening. (*Archives of the War.*)

²⁶The same to Allix and Souham, Paris, 28 March. (*Ibid.*)

²⁷The same to Grouvel, Paris, 28 March. (*Ibid.*)

²⁸The same to Compans, Paris, 29 March, 2 o'clock in the morning. (*Ibid.*)

²⁹ The Minister of War to the Emperor, Paris, 29 March, 3 o'clock in the morning. (*Ibid.*)

³⁰ Prince of Schwarzenberg, Disposition for 29 March, Quincy, March 28, evening. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv., III, 478.*)

"The IVth Corps (left column) will be joined by the Austrian grenadiers, cross the Marne at Meaux, where its column head will be at eight in the morning at the latest. It will cross the river immediately after the guards and reserves. The IVth Corps will then follow the highway until it will be possible to take the shortest route to fall back on the road from Lagny to Paris. It then will continue its march to the level of Chelles, will connect to the right with the VIth Corps and push its outposts as far forward as possible on the side of Gagny and Neuilly-sur-Marne. The IVth Corps will also direct a flying column on the bridge of Saint-Maur."

"In the case where we have managed to complete the bridge of Lagny, the IVth Corps will cross the Marne on this point."

"The guards and reserves will leave their positions at five in the morning, cross the Marne in Meaux and follow the VIth Corps which they will support."

"The IIIrd Corps will support the IVth and will continue to be under the supreme command of the Crown Prince of Württemberg. In case it is impossible to make use of the bridge of Lagny, the corps will only begin its movement at seven in the morning, cross the Marne in Meaux and follow, after a halt of three hours, the direction taken by the IVth Corps. It also will push forward as possible without imposing on the men too much fatigue. The cooks of this corps will leave tonight, so that the troops can make a hot meal immediately after their arrival at the big halt. If the bridge of Lagny is practicable, the IIIrd Corps will move on this city and will resume operation after a break of three hours, during which one will allow men and horses to eat. H. R. M. the Crown Prince of Württemberg will inform in due time Count Feldzeugmeister Gyulay, the direction he will take depending on the state of the Lagny bridge."

"The Vth Corps will move on Meaux, will be established on the left bank of the Marne and will leave most of its cavalry on the line Crécy - Sancy. The bulk of its outposts will remain in Coulommiers."

"The reserve artillery will cross the Marne at Meaux, the baggage and supply columns at Trilport and then park this artillery to the right and left of the road to Paris."

"The Russian reserve artillery will follow the guards and stop on a point that will be indicated to it by H. E. Commanding General Barclay de Tolly. The sovereigns will come to Souilly, near Claye. The Generalissimo will be at his headquarters in Claye. All reports will be sent by the road of Paris."

First and second movement orders of the Army of Silesia. --Before having received communication of the orders from the Generalissimo, it was resolved at the headquarters of the Army of Silesia, to give the 29th as a day of rest for the corps of Yorck, Kleist, Langeron and Sacken. One had prescribed at the same time clearing the roads "to allow the corps of Vorontsov, the guards and reserves to use the highway of Paris." One had further authorized the aforementioned corps to be joined by their baggage, some from La Ferté-Milon, the other stopped near Meaux. Finally one had sent to generals Jagow and Witte the order to rally their corps. But as soon one had received in the night of 28th to 29th the general disposition of Schwarzenberg,³¹ the first order prescribed were canceled. One had then prescribed Langeron to start his movement at nine in the morning and take, in passing by Compans and Le Mesnil-Amelot the road from Soissons to Paris; for Yorck and Kleist to leave at eight, to go through Mory, to embark on the road of Petits-Ponts and to flank themselves on the right with their advanced guard.

³¹It has been claimed, wrongly in our view, that political considerations had led the movement to the right, that one had made the Army of Silesia execute, as one could have, leaving Yorck and Kleist to continue straight ahead, attacked Paris the 29th at night, that is to say at a time when the Marshals would have been unable to take part in the defense of the capital. It has been said and printed, that the Emperor Alexander had sacrificed the interests of the Coalition to the satisfaction of being first to enter Paris at the head of his guards. It was alleged, in support of this opinion, wrong in our view, that parliamentary couriers were sent carrying letters addressed to Clarke and proposing an armistice for a few hours to facilitate the opening of negotiations. But one deliberately forgets to see that this movement to the right was essential as the Great Army needed the road to Strasbourg and the space between the road and that of Germany to complete its deployment and move forward. Finally, for purposes of this case that seems difficult to sustain, one naturally must ignore the first dispositions of the General Staff of the Army of Silesia, which, taken before the receipt of the general order, granted a day off of the only four corps of the army capable of acting on Paris.

The corps of Sacken had to stop between Meaux and Trilport and face the Marne and bridge of Trilport.

The infantry of Winzingerode starting at nine o'clock and passing by Crégy, Neufmontiers, Saint-Mesmes and Mory, was ordered to commit to following the two Prussian corps on the road from Petits-Ponts that the Prussian staff would follow and on which one had to send news and collected information.

The Allied armies thus formed three large columns. The right consisted of the whole Army of Silesia, except Sacken one had stopped in Meaux, and Bülow that had not yet come back from Soissons, was to move by Charny and Mory to Aulnay-les-Bondy and the route of Petits-Ponts. That of the center with the cavalry of Pahlen, the VIth Corps and the guards and reserves, marched from Claye on Bondy by the road from Metz and Strasbourg, while the IVth and IIIrd Corps forming the left column going from Charmentray to join to the east of Chelles the Coulommiers road and had been directed from there on Vincennes.

Delays encountered by the columns of the Allied Great Army. --Although one had thought that all contingencies had been accounted for to avoid a hitch, the slightest delay in the implementation of the planned movements, the bulk of the Allied troops, however, did not manage to reach the positions that were given to them. The Army of Silesia indeed only completed filing by the two bridges of Trilport morning of 29 March, while the VIth Corps was found early in the march unable to comply with the disposition. Far have getting beyond Meaux at five in the morning, the corps which formed the head of the center column, only could debouch to the right bank of the Marne with a delay of several hours. It was very close to noon when Pahlen's cavalry reached Villeparisis and there relieve the Prussian vanguard of Katzler when the VIth Corps arrived at Claye and go to the positions occupied until then by the troops of the Prussian IInd Corps. The guards and reserves who have passed in the morning on the stone bridge in Meaux that had been repaired, followed the VIth Corps and marched behind it on Claye.

On the left wing one had not only failed in all attempts to restore the bridge of Lagny, but one had not even been able, using improvised means, to successfully throw onto the right bank the 4th and 5th Regiments of Württemberg cavalry. Therefore one had to resign themselves to take the path of Meaux for the IVth and IIIrd Corps. Also, when the cavalry of the IVth Corps, which had started at five in the morning, arrived at Meaux, it found the bridge there crowded by guards and reserves and their baggage. Before taking position in the column, it had to wait so long that it was forced to stop on the evening of the 29th at the level of Chelles. The infantry of the IVth Corps which followed the cavalry of General von Walsleben, only began to move towards evening and, like the tail of the corps completed its crossing the 30th at three in the morning, the Crown Prince had to install his bivouac at Annet, on the same river bank.³²

The IIIrd Corps, arrived at Crécy at 7 o'clock in the morning, had received notice of the congestion of the bridge of the Marne at Meaux, and arrived about noon at a short distance of the city. After realizing himself of the impossibility of passing the 29th, his army corps on a bridge that was still encumbered at 4 o'clock in the afternoon with wagon trains of the guards and reserves and which had to serve for the IVth Corps before him, Gyulay ordered his troops to settle into bivouac, at Nanteuil-les-Meaux. The IIIrd Corps ended up making its crossing of the Marne, the 30th in the morning, 24 hours later than the provisions of the disposition.³³

The Vth Corps, forming the rear guard of the Great Army, had, on the 29th in the morning, left the vicinity of Chailly-en-Brie and from La Ferté-Gaucher for its move to Meaux. Upon arrival at a little distance from Crécy, at 8 o'clock in the morning, Wrede had sent the Generalissimo a note of Colonel von Swichow, brought from Vitry-le-François to La Ferté-Gaucher by a Prussian officer, and announcing that the advanced guard of Napoleon's army entering Sézanne the 28th in the evening; Wrede, indeed, hastened to add that he did not believe in the news that nothing had come to confirm.

³²STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III. 1.)

³³ STÄRKE, Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März. (*K. K. Kriegs Archiv.*, III. 1.)

A few hours later the Bavarian Field Marshal was at Quincy. In the presence of the absolute traffic congestion he recognized the impossibility of continuing his march to Meaux; he had consequently informed the Generalissimo that he was taking the measure to stop his infantry in Quincy and he had sent to General Frimont orders to leave the brigade of General von Geramb as a rearguard at Coulommiers and join him in Quincy with the rest of his cavalry. Finally, at 10 o'clock in the evening, Wrede sent word to the Generalissimo that the bulk of his cavalry had arrived after leaving the light cavalry brigade of Geramb at and an extreme rearguard in La Ferté-Gaucher. He added that "the the cavalry patrols, sent on the 28th by Frimont to Sézanne, had nowhere found the slightest trace of the enemy, that he had been informed of the retreat of Winzingerode and of Tettenborn on Châlons and Épernay and the presence of French outposts belonging to the army of the Emperor, who became established the 28th around Vitry." The Bavarian field marshal concluded his dispatch saying: "Despite that information, I do not think that Napoleon will march through Sézanne and Montmirail and follow the cavalry of Winzingerode; but I continue to believe that if the Marshals Marmont and Mortier were actually headed to Bray, like General Seslavin announced yesterday, Napoleon will follow the right bank of the Aube to operate as soon as he joins the corps of the Marshals and garrison of Paris."³⁴

The cavalry patrols sent on the afternoon of the 29th from Coulommiers and Quincy on Rebais, Sézanne and Provins, also returned without having seen any French column.

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³⁴TAXIS, *Tagebuch* (K. K. *Kriegs Archiv.*, XIII. 32); STÄRKE, *Eintheilung und Tagesbegebenheiten der Haupt-Armee im Monate März.* (*Ibid.*, III, 1).

Wrede to Prince Schwarzenberg, Crécy, 29 March, 8 o'clock in the morning. Quincy, 3 o'clock in the afternoon and 10 o'clock in the evening. (*Ibid.*, III, 488.)

The troops of the Vth Corps, perhaps because they formed the rearguard, had been pointed out in recent days by so many acts of looting and brutality that the Emperor Alexander, moved by complaints provoked by the conduct of the Bavarians, had addressed the 28th in the evening to Wrede the following letter: "as we approach the walls of Paris, it is possible for us to achieve the great results that we are to expect thanks to maintaining the strictest discipline. You were one of the first to declare that it was important to win our cause with the inhabitants of the capital of France. Therefore it would be contrary to our interests to unnecessarily devastate the neighborhood of Paris, instead of placing them under the protection of our troops. Knowing your principles and your character, I am sure you cling to maintain, in that decisive moment, the most comprehensive in order troops under your orders, and I urge you to use all means in your power to prevent and stop all acts of violence and looting. It is absolutely necessary to make the heads of the corps bodies and detachments personally liable for the disorder and abuse by their men. Your personal intervention will earn you the general recognition and further increase the esteem in which I hold you." (the letter signed by Emperor Alexander to Wrede, Quincy, 28 March.)