

Een vertaling in het Engels van **VI-02, bladzijde 132 – 141**

A translation from **VI-02, pages 132 – 141** see books on [www.englishspiel.eu/boeken.php?taal=en](http://www.englishspiel.eu/boeken.php?taal=en)

## **UBBINK - DOURLEIN**

Pieter Dourlein and Ben Ubbink were in adjacent cells in Haaren, a former seminary turned into a prison camp for hostages, political prisoners, and captured agents. Their cellmates helped them escape through the small, barred windows over their cell doors.

**Ubbink** had been caught with his comrade, Herman Overes, by the SD on November 30, 1942. **Dourlein** was captured with Arendse and Boogaart on March 10, 1943. Initially, Ubbink was put in a cell next to Lauwers. After March 1943, Overes and Ubbink were allowed to share a cell. They were visited by Ernst May, a German code specialist, who was sent by Schreieder to get as much information as possible from the captured M.T.V.-agents.

May went from cell to cell asking detailed questions as though he were writing an academic thesis. He built up an encyclopaedic knowledge so that if the agents tried to lie he would find them out. For example, Ubbink gave him the wrong address in Switzerland where escaped agents should go to. 'No', said May angrily, "the right address is: Herr Serge Lang, Kanonengasse 27 in Basel. So you see, Ubbink, we know a lot already so stop telling lies.'

'But you would do the same if you were in my shoes.' said Ubbink. said. 'Yes, that is true', May admitted, 'but in your case it doesn't make sense. I and my colleagues sympathise the way in which you and the other agents have been deceived by London. The more you co-operate with us, the better you will be treated and the more lenient your prison sentence.'

However, Ubbink's determination to escape increased. Every time when the prisoners were exercised cell by cell he looked through his high cell window down to the inner court, hoping to recognise other agents who were imprisoned. It was very discouraging; Ubbink got the impression that not one agent was still free. Among the prisoners, Ubbink saw his old friend, the coaster captain Harmen Veling, who helped the young Engelandvaarder Ubbink when he first escaped from the Netherlands in 1941. Ubbink knew the Germans took revenge. (It happened after his escape from Haaren. The SD took his diabetic mother from her home in Doesburg, even though the woman didn't know that her soon was in the Netherlands. She was denied insulin injections for a long time when she was in prison in Arnhem.)

Nevertheless, Ubbink and Overes continued to make plans to escape together, however much they were dissuaded by the other agents. They expected it would end in execution, while the Germans had guaranteed they would only be imprisoned until the end of the war. Many of the prisoners in Haaren thought that the end of the war was in sight and eventually, after careful consideration, those arguments proved decisive for Overes. He decided to stay in Haaren and not to escape.

In the last week of May 1943, Overes and Ubbink were moved to cell 45 with Arendse. Cell 46, housed Dourlein, Boogaart and Klaas van de Bor. It didn't take a long for Ubbink to find in Pieter Dourlein a resolute supporter for his plans to escape. Dourlein didn't trust that the Germans to keep the prisoners alive. If he were going to die eventually, he'd rather take the risk in escaping. Whispering through a small hole in the wall under the wash-bowl between the two cells, Ubbink and Dourlein discussed for weeks on the most practical plans. They decided the escape should be done on a Saturday or Sunday evening when the guard in their wing was reduced from two to three, to one. They were thin enough to wriggle their bare upper bodies

through the bars of the window above the cell door. They proved it could be done by practicing on the bars of their beds. The windows above the doors were covered with ply wood. The nails holding it were worked loose by a spoon and fork. It took them and their cell mates fourteen days.

The best time to leave their cells and slip into the corridor was around half past five in the afternoon when the orderly delivered the evening meal, pushing a metal trolley. It made a lot of noise as it went through the corridors and that could be used as cover. As soon as the rations for cells 45 and 46 had been delivered, Ubbink and Dourlein would wriggle themselves through the bars when the trolley disappeared round the corner of the next corridor. However, when the orderly finished his rounds he retraced his steps, so the two needed somewhere to hide. Close to cells 45 and 46 was a big store-cupboard with cleaning materials. The door was never locked. They could hide in that store-cupboard until the orderly had disappeared. After that Ubbink and Dourlein would have to run to the toilets used by the guards and lock themselves in until midnight. They didn't have watches but could hear tolling every half hour the clock of the chapel. The barred windows of the toilet had a view of the inner court and the barbed wire fences.

The distance from the toilet windows to the ground was about 13 meters. In order to climb down they each made half of an approximately 25 meter long rope, made out of material from the mattresses in their cells. They knotted both parts together looped the rope around the bars. After the decent they could just pull down the rope and get rid of it. One further difficulty was that the prisoners had to leave their clothes on a chair in front of the door of their cells, but because now there were three prisoners to a cell the missing clothes would probably not attract immediate attention.

They made their escape attempt on 29 August. Everything went according to plan as far as the locking themselves in the guards' toilet. Twice a guard a guard rattled the door until Ubbink snarled 'Bezetzt' and the guard, possibly full of beer, moved on to the next one.

Around half past twelve there was heavy thunder accompanied by heavy rain. This was a stroke of luck to be used. They wriggled themselves through the bars on the window of the toilet, looped the long rope around the bars and first lowered down their clothes. Dourlein got down very quickly. The most dangerous thing at this point was the guard manning the turntable searchlight. But their timing was lucky. As soon as Ubbink had reached the ground alongside Dourlein and they made for the shadow along the wall of the chapel. Ubbink threw the rope into a drain. In the pouring rain they dressed quickly and started climbing the wide, high wire fence. A strong wind blew up which covered the noise they made climbing over the wire. The heavy rainfall had forced the sentries into their sentry-boxes.

Without losing their concentration or their nerve, they passed unnoticed and unhindered through the entanglement. After the barbed wire they had to cross a wide ditch, and then they waded through marshes and meandered in the woods all night to put off being tracked by the SD-guards and their dogs. In the morning of Monday August 30 at half past five they found themselves in Tilburg. Jan Kist in a neighbouring cell had given the address of the chemist, A. Mutsaers ('Arjen') at the Heuvelstraat, a helper of the espionage group 'Harry' from Eindhoven. Dourlein and Ubbink urgently rang the bell but the door was not opened. Finally the soaking wet escapers went into the Grote Kerk (Big Church) in the town centre where an early service was for a handful of people was taking place. After some some difficulty, a chaplain brought the two men into contact with the smuggler H. van Bilsen, a former police inspector from Ginneken and an old acquaintance of Dr. Jan Somer from the OD 1941 -1942 .

In his report of December 19, 1943, written in Lérida (Spain) Ubbink remarked: 'Now it seems very simple. The problems were so big and every step so dangerous that it is a joke to talk

about 'luck'. We were guided by Divine Providence, to Whom I have prayed to protect us.

The successful escape of Ubbink and Dourlein was a big set back for the Germans. Although the 'Englandspiel' was over, the SOE and the MVT in London were not yet informed of everything the two knew about what had happened.

They received considerable help for weeks while still in the Netherlands from van Bilsen, before weeks before they could escape to Switzerland. (After van Bilsen's discharge from the police, because he had refused to work for the Germans, he found a job as porter. However, because of his alleged collaboration with the Germans, van Bilsen was killed by a local KP.) Van Bilsen found a place for Dourlein and Ubbink to hide: a small farm in Moergestel. In the ten days they stayed there they prepared a telegram for Colonel de Bruyne. One of van Bilsen's helpers, Mr. Vinken from Tilburg smuggled this message into Belgium from where it could be transmitted to London.

Before that could be done, Giskes also sent a telegram to MVT, using one of the lines at his disposal, with the 'warning' that Ubbink and Dourlein were traitors and had been released by the SD because of their co-operation with the Germans.

At the end of September the two were being hidden by the Laureyssen family at the Piusplein (Pius square) in Tilburg, and de Bruyne sent a message via the Belgium line that the two agents should stay in the Netherlands if they could not reach a neutral country. What de Bruyne meant was: the return of Dourlein and Ubbink was not appreciated.

One month later, Major Jan Somer, head of BI in London, heard from Captain Charles Seymour, one of the SIS offices, that there was communication between Colonel de Bruyne from MVT and the two escaped agents. Seymour had seen the coded telegrams. Quite rightly Captain Seymour, who was liaison officer between the British and Dutch intelligence services, considered it his duty to tell major Somer that de Bruyne had not tried to get the two escaped agents to London as soon as possible.