

A judgment error in 1943: three Dutch 'deserters' led to the slaughter.

In the latter part of 1943, three Dutch airmen stationed at Canberra, Australia were dealt with by a Dutch Naval court martial. The court martial alleged that they were planning to steal an aeroplane and then fly it to Japanese occupied Java, where they were to divulge military secrets to the enemy. The proceedings did not take place in Australia, but in Colombo, the capital city of Ceylon, without any witnesses being present.

Pilot second lieutenant pilot Will Burck (born in 1911) was sentenced to life. The prosecution wanted him sentenced to death.

Pilot sergeant Erich de Lyon (born 1916) was given twenty years. The prosecution wanted a life sentence.

Pilot sergeant Hendrick Kelder (born 1920) was also given twenty years, although the prosecution wanted life for him as well.

The abovenamed incident was the result of a drinking session held on a night in 1942, attested to by mechanic, sergeant major Adriaan Scholte who was the 'fourth culprit' involved in discussing the flight plan. Scholte was a spy-agent who was under instruction from Major Simon Spoor of the Dutch military intelligence in Australia. In 1946, Spoor was promoted to lieutenant-general of the Royal Netherlands Indies armed forces. He was leader of the two political actions against the Indonesian rebels in 1947 and 1948-1949.

In the early 1960's, Joop Bijkerk (born in Batavia in 1928) read about the three cases in the Commission of Parliamentary Enquiry, which investigated the matter shortly after the war. At the time, Bijkerk was harbour master in Curacao, after spending ten years sailing as a skipper for the KNSM. He read about the incident again in 1986, eight years after his retirement, when he became aware of the drama of it all. For the next five years he perused files and spoke personally with surviving witnesses. This week his book 'De Colombo Tragedie' was published detailing how the lives of three pilots were ruined in a quest to 'pull a wayward squadron into line'. Free Netherlands newspaper tells the story of a deliberate travesty of justice, a setup, without the summoning of defence witnesses, and the quest for rightful pardon that has never been realised.

In the evening of 10 November, 1942, pilot sergeant Harry Kelder of 18 Squadron was walking along the streets of Canberra, alone, on his way to the Tourist Hotel. There he was to meet with Will Burck, Eric de Lyon and Adriaan Scholte. When he arrived at the hotel at about 8 o'clock, Burck and Scholte were waiting outside, standing beside a taxi. They impatiently asked where De Lyon was, and Scholte suggested that they go inside to De Lyon's hotel room.

In 1986 I spoke with Kelder. He was then 76 years old, and he told me what had happened on that night. He had never kept a written record of the events.

He recalled: 'When I went to go inside I found that the door was locked, and I didn't have a key. Scholte and Burck were cranky and asked me to go and get Eric straight away. I found him in a bar of a nearby hotel, and asked him for the key – he would come shortly – so I walked back again.

Again we went upstairs, to his room. Before I could get the key into the keyhole, Scholte began to whistle the tune 'Ramona', quite loudly.

Immediately after I let the others inside, the bickering started again. 'Our arrangements have come to nothing', said Burck. 'Where's de Lyon?'

When I assured him that Eric would turn up shortly, Burck again started to spruik about his plan to fly back to Java. I could hardly keep my eyes open, but knew that I would be denied sleep for a while yet. Burck handed out cigarettes, and soon the room was filled with blue smoke. After about 15 minutes of quiet, we heard loud stomping in the hallway. De Lyon was on his way. From outside the door he yelled out, 'I've brought us something for our farewell party!' I let him in. He was balancing a large tray filled with glasses of all sorts of booze. Burck relieved him of his burden, put the tray on the table and said to Eric: 'You're late! Why didn't you keep our appointment?'

'I needed some time' said Eric, seriously. 'I had to organize some booze'. There was a moment's silence, then Scholte sarcastically asked him was he plastered. 'Are you crazy?' Eric

answered seriously. 'Of course not! Come on, let's have a drink'.

This broke the icy atmosphere and then there was joking, laughing and more drinking. Some time later, Burck got his trumpet out of its case, placed it to his lips, and played 'Sag bei'm Abschied, leise servus'. It was a spontaneous, professional, rendition. The rest of the night is foggy, and I really can't remember what we spoke about. I can recall Burck and Scholte leaning over the table and looking at a map of the Pacific. We didn't know how far it was from Canberra to Java, but we couldn't work out exactly how far it was from such a small map anyway. In any case, Scholte, as a mechanic, would need to install an extra fuel tank. He would do that at the far end of the runway. Once airborne, we would saunter down to Melbourne and drop a bomb on Headquarters. This was considered hilarious, and everyone laughed loudly.

The next day, Burck, Kelder and de Lyon were arrested. Scholte, however, was not. He continued working for Military Intelligence. Immediately after the gathering, he made a statement that was later used against the threesome by the court martial. Scholte, himself, the most important witness, was not present. He stated that 'on the night of 10 November, 1942, after speaking with Lt Burck, he left in his car at about 7 o'clock; (.....) that Lt Burck showed him four books detailing the Australian terrain and some handbooks about machine guns and close-quarter fighting, and that the lieutenant gave him a folded map that he needed to take in his shirt to the meeting; that they had discussed their family origins; that de Lyon confided that his father was a German who was killed at Verdun; that Kelder said that his mother was German, whilst lieutenant Burck's background was half-German; that Scholte himself, had admitted that he was three-quarters German and that he had been attached to the N.S.B. in the Ned. Indies; that the lieutenant had said, whilst being taken home in his car by Scholte, that when they were back in the Ned. Indies, they might form a commercial airline under Japanese control (.....).'

George Cooke, a lieutenant at 18 Squadron, was present when statements were taken from the three airmen at the airbase. During a conversation in 1987, Cooke told me that he had not received orders to arrest the three on the 11th November, 1942, as had been officially stated on record by major Spoor, but on the previous night, on the 10th November, 1942. That was the night that Burck, De Lyon and Kelder and Scholte had their alleged 'conspiracy meeting'. That same night, Spoor was waiting impatiently for a report from his spy-agent, Adriaan Scholte.

Many of the airmen at 18 Squadron had to leave behind wives and children living on Java during the evacuation of March, 1942, yet the staff officers were allowed to take their families with them when they fled to Australia. Most were also frustrated and disappointed that they had not been able to put up a proper fight against the Japanese invaders, because of poor Dutch military leadership. In short time the Squadron had become a breeding ground for the disgruntled and those that were very bitter.

The Dutch military headquarters in Melbourne, fearing opposition, had resolved that morale must be restored with an iron fist. Members of Military Intelligence were called upon to assist with this mission. By orders of Intelligence Officer Spoor, but unbeknown to major B.J. Fiedeldij (then C.O. of 18 Squadron), Scholte had organised the gathering which took place on 10th November. The intension was that major Spoor would record the conversations from the hotel room adjacent to that of de Lyon. Instructions from Spoor to Scholte were quite simple: he had to lure the three airmen by convincing them that their plan to fly back to Java should proceed without delay. And he was to get them to reveal as much detail as possible. Scholte got outstanding results, because the three airmen got very drunk during that evening. At about 11 p.m. he told Spoor that his statement was being typed up by a stenographer. This report became the only evidence submitted against Burck, Kelder and de Lyon. It did not reveal that perhaps Scholte himself was also intoxicated on that night.

At the time of the gathering, Spoor was indeed in the adjacent hotel room as planned. He had to wait for a signal from Scholte that the 'conspiracy' was getting underway. In his statement to the court martial, Scholte wrote 'that they had arrived at the Tourist Hotel at about 7:20 p.m., where they met with sergeant Kelder, and they had all gone to de Lyon's room; that when in the hallway outside the room, he began to loudly whistle the tune "Ramona", as arranged with major Spoor (.....).'

Spoor needed a signal so that he could start his tape recorder. But when Scholte began to whistle his tune, Spoor did not start the recorder because he did not have it ready. In his statement

which was read to the court martial, Spoor said `that he had the opportunity to book the adjacent room in the hotel; that he was going to set up a microphone so that the stenographer, Kleerkoper, could record proceedings; that the walls of the Tourist Hotel were in fact too solid for the apparatus to work successfully as planned, without having to make a hole in the wall; that he thought he would need to attach the microphone to a stick so it could be held in place outside the window of de Lyon's room; that a meeting took place on the night of 10 November, 1942 at 7:20 p.m. in de Lyon's room; that he could clearly hear Scholte's voice; that further he heard the prearranged tune being whistled by Scholte; that the accused Burck, had firstly played a tune on a saxophone, before the conspiring began; that because of the rowdy, muffled nature of the voices, he had considered going out to listen at the door of the room; that he could scarcely hear a word of what was said other than the terms "Timor", "Java", and "airfields"; that at 8:02 p.m. another person had arrived, that later appeared to be de Lyon himself; that this last person was particularly boisterous; but he had not heard the words "crazy" or "beer" mentioned.

Interestingly, Burck played the trumpet, not a saxophone. As a son of Andre Spoor, violist and concertmaster at Amsterdam, Simon Spoor also had musical talent, and should have recognised the difference between the two instruments.

The three spent the night of their arrest in a Police station lockup. Two days later they were flown by a B-25 Mitchell bomber to Melbourne. Upon landing at Essendon, an airport near Melbourne, they were immediately taken into custody by Australian civil detectives. There were several Dutch servicemen present, including major Spoor. He led the procession that the three were shrouded in. Each prisoner was flanked by two Australian detectives. In separate, heavily guarded Police vehicles, they were taken to another Police station.

For seven long months, they were held in temporary custody. Firstly, they heard that they would be tried by Naval court, rather than by an Army one. After that, in March 1943, they were charged with the most serious of crimes: `conspiring to commit military betrayal during wartime' and `conspiring to desert to the enemy'. An additional charge was alleged against Burck: Espionage. After another month they were informed that their cases would be heard in Ceylon, and in June they were transported by an English freighter, the Tanda, to Colombo, the capital of Ceylon. Burck was transferred to the S.S. Plancius, a submarine depot ship, moored in Colombo harbour. The proceedings took place onboard this ship. The other two men were locked up in a British prison, 'Hulstдорf', just outside Colombo.

Without the other three airmen's knowledge, there was a fourth man arrested in connection with the affair. Sergeant – telegraphist H.J. Burgers was summoned to Major Spoor's office in the KNIL Headquarters in Melbourne on 29 November, 1942, 18 days after the others had been arrested. Spoor bluntly told him that he was under arrest because he had not reported the conspiracy to his superiors, and that this neglect could have harmful military consequences. Without further explanation, Sgt. Burgers was taken to a Police Station, where he would be informed of the full extent of his charges. Eventually it was alleged that he had failed to report the conversations he had had with Burck, and, according to his accusers, he should have revealed the flight-plan conspiracy details to his superiors.

About two months later, Burgers was also taken to Pentridge prison, and subsequently to a Military prison in Perth, near Fremantle, where the other three were already locked up. He was also taken to Colombo onboard the Tanda, and incarcerated in Hulstдорf prison. He would be the last of the four to be tried (his verdict was announced on 22 October, 1943).

Sgt. Burgers was not demoted, and it was considered that the time he had spent in custody in the meantime (from 29 November, 1941 to 25 October, 1943 : 11 months), was sufficient punishment. However, he was not returned to 18 Squadron in Australia, but became a Commando/Parachutist with Force 136, which was under command of the British Special Operations Executive and part of the Princess Irene Brigade in Colombo.

Mr. Fred R. Lettinga, who retired in 1953 as a Pilot Major, studied the files of the three accused immediately after the war. These files subsequently were inexplicably lost. In one of these missing files there was a report made by a certain A. Hagers. In 1986, Lettinga wrote of what he could remember of the Hagers report, from where he was then living in Canada. This was the only time that a friend that had served with Burck had given supportive information:

`(.....) together with Burck, Hagers went to see Commanding Officer Fiedeldij four times, requesting permission for the use of an aircraft, so that they might bring their wives and children to the safety of Australia.

At the time it would have been possible, because Java had not yet fallen to the Japanese. Their request, however, was denied on each occasion. The day after their last visit, Fiedeldij was not to be found in his office, and he 'was away' for some days. Upon his return, it became apparent that Fiedeldij himself had flown to Java and had brought his entire family, including their luggage, back to Brisbane. (.....) Hagers, who was to become an outstanding member of 18 Squadron, had enough self control to accept what had taken place, and put it behind him, but Burck could not. Burck became reclusive in his room, and even locked his windows shut, not reappearing for a month. When he finally emerged, and mixed with his friends again, he could not help but recount his wish to return to Java. Even in the officer's mess, and in the presence of Major Fiedeldij, he made everyone aware of his obsession to be reunited with his family.

In an undated memorandum from just after the war, Eric de Lyon wrote of how he had been drawn into Burck's plan:

'One day, whilst in the hangar, Burck asked me if I wanted to go back to my family on Java. (.....) To me it was a fantasy; 'wishful thinking'. (.....) On another day, Burck pointed out a sergeant major to me who was working on a B-25. 'That's my mechanic, Scholte, he's on my crew and flies with me all the time'. (...) In Batavia, Scholte had received music lessons from Burck, and used to come and visit him at home. Burck had also casually mentioned that he had told Scholte that Kelder had also indicated that he wanted to return to Java. (.....)

It was obvious that Burck had spoken about his wishes to save his family from the Japs to several others. To name each of them: Lt. Hagers (Burck's room-mate for a long time), Lt's. Hartevelde and Nieuwpoort, sergeant Barendrecht, sergeant Tijmons (deceased), sergeant Schalk (deceased), sergeant van Bremen (deceased), sergeant Maarschalkerweerd (deceased), and Lt. Hulscher. (.....)

Discussions about Java had already taken place months before in Brisbane, long before Kelder and I arrived in Australia. Captain Jessurun knew about it, and he considered it a physical impossibility, so he rightfully dismissed the whole thing as a non-event. My understanding, therefore, is that if all those people had been given the opportunity to give evidence of their associations with Burck, and of the so-called secret conspiracy to the Court martial in Colombo, then nothing would have come of it'.

The first time that Kelder was aware of the scheme was when he became involved in a flight to Melbourne, on 7 October, 1942. He said: 'We flew to Melbourne on an exercise. I had a motorbike, and Eric wanted to buy one similar. Eric had permission from Captain de Vries, to fly with us to Melbourne. Upon arrival, we booked into the Oriental Hotel. Eric and I had no luck in finding a suitable motorbike. That night we returned to the hotel for our evening meal.

We were seated for about 10 minutes in the dining room, when I saw Burck and Scholte amongst a group of people at reception. They came and sat with us, and in no time we were getting along just fine. We had ordered some bottles of wine, and soon all our tongues were wagging. I can still picture the events in my mind: Burck and de Lyon sat on either side of me, Scholte was directly opposite'.

In the case against Kelder, it was reported that the gathering went as follows: '(.....) that night we were seated in the Oriental Hotel, and, on Lt. Burck's suggestion, champagne was ordered; at sometime de Lyon said: 'I'm going back to the Indies, who's coming with me?'; that the lieutenant had replied that he had the same idea, whereupon they shook each other's hands; that the lieutenant had subsequently asked him how he felt about it, and that de Lyon had said that he, Kelder, would definitely go along; that the lieutenant had then asked him, and he had replied that he agreed to go, and had also shook hands; that the Lt. had also said that the allies would not win the war, and he had revealed that he was pro-German, whereupon he himself, (Kelder) declared that he was also pro-German, and would therefore go along, and if necessary, was prepared to fight for the Germans.

This written report from the undercover agent (Scholte) was accepted as factual by the Court martial, with no redress or challenge from anyone. In his report to Spoor, Scholte stated that for over a year he had done some detective work for a Police Inspector named Sijdeveld in Soerabaja, 'for the

love of it'. However, he admitted that he had no formal qualifications in that field, and that he was only self-taught.

On 25 November, 1942, fourteen days after the arrests, Vice-admiral C.E.L. Helfrich, head of the armed forces Eastern Command, in Colombo, sent a coded telegram to the Dutch headquarters in Melbourne. In it was the 'Ministerial Decree No. Int. 8/11/11, 12 and 13, Top Secret, which ordered that Burck, de Lyon and Kelder be transferred to the Royal Navy, and that they would be required to appear before a Naval court martial in Colombo, even though they were Airforce personnel. The telegram went via the office of the 2IC of Armed forces Eastern command, to F.W. Coster, who was Commander of Dutch forces in Australia. On 4 October, 1949, Coster was questioned by the Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry 1940-1945, but, conveniently, he couldn't remember much at all.

Coster swore that he had no certain recollections about the Court martial in Colombo. According to him, an ordinary court martial could have been held in Melbourne - 'Then I would have been involved'. Obviously, Coster would not admit that the proceedings should have taken place in Melbourne, even though all the necessary military units of the Royal Navy were there: Navy headquarters, from which the court martial members could have been selected, and Dutch warships or Merchant vessels were available upon which the proceedings could have taken place.

An explanation can be found in documentation from Ch. O. van der Plas, ex-member of the N.E.I. Commission in Australia, that was heard by the Parliamentary Enquiry on 12 February, 1953. Van der Plas told the Commission: 'The Australian Military made it clear that this fact (the relocation of the proceedings to Ceylon) must remain secret; it caused us great concern when we became aware of it. There were a lot of very distasteful aspects associated with it (.....) and it was very disturbing when we were informed of it'.

On Friday, 16 July, 1943, Burck was the first to undergo court martial. It's members could do nothing but accept the evidence as presented, because there were no defence witnesses present. There were only written statements and reports submitted to the court. In this regard alone, the court failed its duty miserably. The statements by Major Spoor and Sgt. Mjr. Scholte were simply accepted as factual on their word. There was not one witness, not even Scholte, brought from Australia to Ceylon to allow any cross-examination.

On Monday 26 July, 1943, the Prosecutor took about ninety minutes to make his opening address and statements, wherein he made it clear that he wanted the death sentence verdict for Lt. Burck. Next day, the opening address of the defence counsel, S.J. baron van Tuyll, took about two and a half hours. Records of examination and cross examination are not to be found.

On 14 August the verdict was handed down by the President : life in captivity. The other two were dealt with in September (de Lyon) and October (Kelder), with both receiving twenty years. The Prosecution was calling for life sentences for both.

The court martial spoke highly of the evidence produced by secret agent Scholte, but Spoor could have made Scholte look just as guilty as the three defendants, by his provocation and entrapment techniques. It found 'that the work of the military investigators was, in the circumstances, very difficult and thankless; (.....) that, importantly, he generally displayed adequate competence in his transcripts, so that the accused did not have a chance to slip through the net; that, at least in the subject case, major Spoor and Scholte, in some aspects, indeed went too far, but in others earned their keep for revealing a conspiracy, that they really could have ignored(.....) that there was no reason to label witness Scholte as unreliable (.....)'.

In 1986, I spoke with then 81 year old Van Tuyll, defense counsel for Burck. He had had an impressive civil career: Secretary-general of the department of Overseas Affairs from 1952 to 1965 and head of the Council of State from 1965 to 1980, including four years as Counsel with the Legal Office.

He informed me that a proceeding of a court martial during WWII, usually didn't take very long to arrange. Prosecution, defense and verdict were generally dealt with in less than a day, and the sentence was mostly announced within 15 minutes. In Burck's case, the procedure took 21 days.

After reading the book *The Military air-arm of the KNIL in the years 1942-1945* by O.G. Ward, Van Tuyll wrote two letters to the author, wherein he detailed how the evidence against Burck had been compiled. Van Tuyll concluded that Burck should be exonerated on the grounds of miscarriage of justice: 'The Prosecutor, Vermeer (who studied Law after the war, and became a lawyer working in Amsterdam) set up a miscarriage of justice, whereby (.....) qualifications were assumed, for the most part, not permitted by rules of Natural Justice and acceptable sentencing, which Vermeer admitted to in his own words.

'We'll just have to fly back to Java' cannot be construed as being a plan, because to constitute a crime, a plan must be capable of being carried out. With assistance from a British airforce officer, I proved that under no circumstances (wind direction, mass, altitude, airspeed etc.) could the distance to Java be achieved without landing at Port Darwin. The aircraft at that time couldn't even fly that far because they needed additional fuel tanks to relocate the Squadron from Canberra, A.C.T., to Batchelor, N.T. So the plan was not possible by any means. And no person can be punished for a crime that cannot be committed. That Burck was condemned to life in prison is therefore a gross miscarriage of justice. The Prosecution's closing remarks should have been: 'Well, we've gained some degree of satisfaction, albeit by unjust means'. (.....), the court martial outcome should have been acquittal.

This result is confirmed by a living eyewitness to the proceedings that took place in Colombo. One of the former members of the court martial, was Navy Lt. G.B.M. van Erkel (later vice-admiral). He wrote in 1986 that the court had over-reacted to Burck's antics, and that he believed that the 'plan' was impossible to implement. Two members of the court had spoken in support of the death sentence, and two were in favour of life. According to the letter, 'to deter others' was not warranted, since in 3 years of war there had not been any other case of conspiracy to commit treason. There were no further occurrences either. If anything, Burck's was a pathetic case. It was for these reasons that the head of the court opted for the lesser sentence of life imprisonment'.

Six days after the Japanese capitulation, the Australian newspaper, *The Sun*, broke news of the secrecy of the three arrested Dutch airmen. On 21 August, 1945, the paper ran a full-page article of five columns: 'Sydney, Monday – for the first time in Australia, death sentences have been carried out following a court martial in 1943, involving three Dutch airmen and a sensational plan to fly to Japanese-occupied territory, and defect to the enemy. (.....) The arrests of the men caused a sensation in Canberra, but to save embarrassment, it was kept in secrecy. The story can now be told for the first time. (.....)

The three involved in the scheme were regarded as trusted Dutch airmen until their plans were exposed by another member of their unit. It was alleged that they had a radio with which they planned to send information to the enemy. (.....)

A court martial in Melbourne found them guilty and sentenced them to death, and the executions took place outside Australian territory.'

The next day, on 22 August, an erratum was published:

'The headquarters of the Royal Netherlands-Indies forces revealed yesterday that the three airmen were sentenced to death for conspiring to steal a military plane so that they could defect to the Japanese.

According to an official statement, the flight plans of the airmen did not involve disloyalty to the allies in general. It was the result of an emotional, impulsive wish on behalf of the accused, to save their families from the invading Japanese on Java. The plot was discovered by officers of the Dutch Intelligence branch. The accused were dealt with by a Dutch court martial outside Australia, and were sentenced to penalties from 20 years imprisonment, to life'.

Meanwhile, the three offenders were taken to an English military prison near Lucknow in India. On 8 May, 1946, they were taken to Bombay, from whence they were transferred to Rotterdam onboard the *Willem van der Zaan*, arriving on 7 June. That day, they were taken by car to Den Haag, where, according to Kelder, they were locked up with black marketeers. On 21 June, 1946, they were taken to their final place of incarceration, Leeuwarden prison.

In his attempt to secure exoneration, Burck's legal counsel in the Netherlands, Mr. P.B. Wind, asked the Minister for Justice to send the files of the three men to Leeuwarden. There was no reply : The files were in the Dutch East Indies, and the responsible person in the foreign Affairs department in Den Haag had already asked that the relevant documents be sent back to Holland. In 1949, de Lyon's father wrote a letter about this situation to Queen Juliana. The files were allowed to be taken to the Netherlands-indies by Admiral Helfrich, when he went to Batavia (now Djakarta) in September, 1945. Apparently they had been left behind by the 'Court Martial of the Navy in Soerabaja, East Indies'.

After Helfrich was nominated as Commander of Naval Forces by the Dutch cabinet in December, 1945, he returned to Holland. The following is an excerpt of a letter, and it shows that Admiral Helfrich remained interested in the Colombo Affair: 'Herewith I have included for your Excellency's attention, the files of: 2nd Lt. W. J. Burck, sergeant-pilot H. Kelder and sergeant-pilot E.H.J. de Lyon, dated 18 June, 1946 (.....) in accordance with your request.'

The letter is from 'The Prosecutor, Naval court martial East Indies, and was sent on 10 October, 1947, from Soerabaja. It appears then, that Helfrich was in possession of the three files six months after he arrived back in Holland.

Reassessments of the sentences were finally made at the end of 1949. On 14 December Dr. A.H.J. Lovink, the High Commissioner for the Crown in Indonesia, sent a letter to the Foreign Minister in which he advised that the sentences for Kelder and de Lyon were reduced to 8 years and the life sentence for Burck had been reduced to 12 years. 'Although some might say that they would not be fooled by such a grave matter,' wrote Lovink, 'where would he be now if he had not got up to his monkey business and thoughtless bragging?'

When the other defendants were successful in having their terms reduced, the Minister for Justice wrote on 21 February, 1950: 'I consider that the three men have been punished far too severely. In view of the tragic outcome of the proceedings, we need to make good whatever is left that can be made good.'

On 28 April, 1950, the chief warden of the prison informed the three men that their applications had been successful, and that they would be released the following day. However the release was postponed, as they had to meet with a rehabilitation officer. That night they were invited to be guests of warden, Jansen, who lived at the prison. Jansen had made a habit of inviting inmates to be his guests on the evening of their release.

Will Burck was met at the gates of the prison by his wife and his mother. He moved in with his family in Amsterdam. Eric de Lyon went to his family in Den Haag. Harry Kelder took a train to Deventer, where he lived for some time with his parents.

In 1981, Burck died in Munchen, where he had lived a solitary, lonely life, long divorced from his wife, and with no contact with his children. He was 69 years old.

De Lyon died on 15 June, 1976, as a result of an accident in his home in Zeeuwse. He was only 60 years old.

Kelder is still living. He is 71 years old (or was as at 5 October 1991 when this article appeared in the Dutch newspaper), and he no longer has the will to pursue an official apology or exoneration.