



C. Brand, *Gevallen op het Binnenhof. Afgetreden ministers en staatssecretarissen 1918-1966* (Dissertatie Universiteit van Amsterdam 2016; Amsterdam: Boom, 2016, 368 pp., ISBN 978 90 8953 311 1).

The dissertation *Gevallen op het Binnenhof* by the Nijmegen-based historian Charlotte Brand provides a good image of the fall of nineteen ministers in the period 1918-1966. The reasons why and the circumstances in which their fall occurred, are well described. Apart from ‘normal’ political conflicts that caused the fall of some ministers, there were also some cases that had more remarkable causes, which ended up making this description worthwhile. For example, a liberal-minded minister (Marchant), who converted to Catholicism; a newly appointed minister and former businessman (Van den Bergh), who became caught up in the divorce affair of his new love; and a minister (Smallenbroek) who, after a nighttime collision with a parked car while intoxicated, called in late. Not exactly what you would call ‘standard affairs.’

And then there were ministers who, maybe, should not have advanced to that position in the first place. A vice-admiral (Naudin te Cate), who was startled to such an extent by the criticism in the *Tweede Kamer* that he immediately quit; a young lawyer (Bijleveld), who owed his appointment as minister of the Navy to a friend, who himself had become minister of Finance; and a mayor (Van Rooy) who, as minister of Social Affairs without any knowledge on wage politics and social security, had to debate with political heavyweights and trade union leaders. In such cases, it was not surprising that it turned awry. In many cases, the desire to finally form a cabinet or fill in a vacancy, was all too decisive. This was also the case with the appointment of De Geer in 1922, even though he was factually opposed to a, in his eyes, fleet plan that was too expensive. A similar example could be observed in 1935, when a proponent of devaluation (Steenberghe) became minister in the Colijn cabinet, which was opposed to devaluation.

Sometimes, the risk of an early departure was accepted. This means that the number of ‘real’ conflicts between parliament and a minister that led to the latter’s departure from office, was limited. There were only four or five examples of this. In one case, the fall of minister Van Karnebeek in 1927 in the *Eerste Kamer* (Senate), there was no rejection of his general policy. On the contrary, Van Karnebeek was a minister of Foreign Affairs who was appreciated by many. After the defence of his lifes work, the Treaty with Belgium, in the *Eerste Kamer*, both his proponents and opponents applauded

for him. He turned the treaty into a matter of honor, and chose to leave his post after it was rejected. The hypothesis that, as in the aforementioned case, the *Eerste Kamer* can denounce its trust and that this leads to the fall of a minister, is a conclusion that is reached a bit too easily. In the two other instances where the *Eerste Kamer* played a role, in 1950 with Schokking and 1958 with Kranenburg, the trust the *Tweede Kamer* (the House of Representatives) had placed in them had already descended to a low point. The *Eerste Kamer* only gave them the last push towards their departure.

Some knowledge of the business of politics is a requirement. Without any foreknowledge on the mutual relationship between the Christian parties or, for example, about the relations within the vvd at the time of P.J. Oud, it might be difficult for the reader to place some events in their context. In the same way, it would be useful to have some knowledge on the way in which politicians looked at some ministries. Defence ministries (War and Navy), and the Water Management ministry, for example, were seen as ‘technical’ ministries that required specific knowledge. Even though some important cases played out in these ministries, they can be seen as apolitical.

One can say a lot about the choice of the author to solely describe cases that led to the fall of a minister. On the other hand, this does leave the unanswered question as to why one or some ‘weak’ ministers had to leave their post, whereas other, equally ‘weak’ ministers could remain. Moreover, it is understandable that a scientific study is rounded off with a conclusion. However, seeing the diverse nature of the cases treated and the special (sometimes unique) circumstances, some more restraint in drawing conclusions would have been desirable. One cannot really formulate a general conclusion. Or it has to be that the appointment of some ministers in the period 1918-1966 may be called dubious and that in some instances, the outcome was determined by chance or emergency measures. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that well-organized parties sometimes were not able to find good candidates prepared to lead a ministry. It seems that nowadays, this process has improved, but still instances of unluckily chosen ministers do occur.

Despite the minor criticism, Charlotte Brand’s dissertation is definitely worth reading. It makes very good use of sources, and there are few to no mistakes in the description. With the fall of Van Rooy, she exchanged the names of the father (Jan) and the son (Frans) Andriessen, but such a small mistake is (almost) inevitable. For those who enjoy stories on parliamentary history, *Gevalen op het Binnenhof* is a good recommendation. The reader can then judge him/herself about the conclusions.

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