

**Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining
the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba
and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians**

Introduction.

The subject under examination was particularly complicated and extremely delicate. Moreover, the period under examination was more than forty years ago. Numerous witnesses are today deceased, while others could not or would not accurately relate the facts that they had witnessed.

It was therefore a question of accurately establishing those facts, in their totality and in precise chronological order. The co-operation of historical research specialists was required for the success of such a mission.

The Committee places on record the fact that its work unfolded in an excellent atmosphere and that the results achieved by far exceeded its expectations.

The Committee is convinced that this positive assessment is due to the working method that it followed. At the beginning of its work, after a call for candidates, it designated experts, selected after hearings based on their curriculum vitae, their scientific skills and their neutrality.

These experts were able to carry out their research and to formulate their findings in complete independence and freedom.

Fortunately, the Committee spontaneously obtained free access to all the public and private archives that it wanted to consult, as well as the co-operation of their owners. It should however be observed that numerous archives were lost in the Congo itself and that it is impossible to guarantee that all the documents have been consulted.

What's more, it was only after having familiarised itself with the experts' first reports that the Committee proceeded with the hearing of witnesses, who, as a result, were able to be heard by the Committee in the full knowledge of the facts and who were confronted, during their testimony, with information that the Committee had already obtained.

For the successful conclusion of research on this scale, the Committee wanted to allow itself the necessary time, and requested a six-month extension of its overall mandate.

The contribution of the experts to the Committee's work was of paramount importance, but for the historians themselves, their co-operation with this Committee represented a unique opportunity for obtaining access to important sources of recent history. Furthermore, the Committee enacted all the expert's requests when they solicited any additional duty of enquiry. The very existence of this investigative committee merits a mention in itself: research into the colonial and post-colonial past is still relatively rare.

To formulate its findings, observations and recommendations, the Committee was able to base itself on various scrutinised reports and on the precise historical findings of its experts, and would in consequence like to express its sincere appreciation of their work.

It would also like to thank the departments of the House for their traditionally excellent co-operation, without which this book could not have been concluded.

Fruitful co-operation reigned on this occasion, no doubt for the first time in Belgium's parliamentary history, between the political world and the scientific world.

On the basis of these observations, the Committee would consequently recommend further recourse, in the context of parliamentary activity, to the expertise available in the academic world, in the research establishments and in the international organisations.

This expertise would contribute to making the debates, including the ordinary committee work, more profound and more objective.