

GENERAL PRESS RELEASE Spring 2018

## **CHE IN CONGO - A DREAM OF LIBERATION**

2017 / UK / 67 mins

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Debut feature documentary of award winning producer/director/filmmaker Ben Crowe and co-producer/photographer Jan-Joseph Stok

### **HEADLINE**

An urgent meditation on the legacy of revolutionary violence in DR Congo, a country on the cusp of democratic transition or a slide into civil war.

### **SYNOPSIS**

An urgent meditation on the legacy of revolutionary violence framed by the combatants, survivors and inheritors of violence. 1965: Che Guevara undertakes a secret mission to DR Congo to support the liberation movement. Fifty years later we travel to Belgium, Cuba, Tanzania and eastern Congo in search of those who fought alongside – and against – this global icon. We find the Belgian former mercenary who says his years fighting in the mountains of eastern Congo were the best of his life; the Cuban generals and Congolese soldiers that Che Guevara trained. We hear from men and women as they strive to raise their children in the long shadows of war and colonialism. Narrated by a Congolese radio journalist, her voice and rare footage and images, provide signs for the country's vital future as it wavers once again on the cusp of great generational change.

### **THE HISTORY**

Che Guevara's mission to Congo was a failure and it remained a state secret of Cuba for decades. Even after the publication of Che's memoir of the Congo expedition - a treatise on revolutionary warfare - the story is shrouded in mystery. Thirty years after the mission, in 1996, Laurent Kabila led an invasion of eastern Congo with the aid of Ugandan and Rwandan forces to depose the dictator Mobutu. Laurent Kabila installed himself as President. In the following years a brutal regional war engulfed the country involving neighbouring states. Many millions of people died.

### **WHY NOW?**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara and potentially the first peaceful transfer of power in DRC since Independence from Belgium in 1960. But incumbent President Joseph Kabila has broken the constitutional two-term limit of the Presidency and repeatedly suspended planned elections. A precarious national dialogue has been established to manage a transition of power in December 2018 but it remains unclear if this is a tactic by the President to buy-time. There is increasing State repression and signs that some provinces are preparing for secession. Democracy activists across the country have grown into a peaceful movement for social and political reform but the pressure for armed revolt in eastern Congo is growing. A return to civil war and mass upheaval would have huge implications for the whole of east and central Africa.

### **KEY THEMES**

Congo (DRC); east and central Africa; legacy of revolutionary violence; memory; colonialism; neo-colonialism; democracy; civil rights; black liberation politics; electoral reform; racism; communism; Che Guevara; Cuba, Imperialism

## FILM DETAILS

Filmed and Directed by Ben Crowe  
Produced by Ben Crowe with Co-Producer Jan-Joseph Stok  
Duration: 67 mins  
Date of production: 2017  
Production company: ERA Films Limited  
Website: [www.cheincongo.com](http://www.cheincongo.com)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/cheincongo](https://www.facebook.com/cheincongo)

## FESTIVALS TO DATE

Doc/Player Sheffield International Film Festival 2017  
Cape Town International Film Market and Festival 2017  
DOCfeed 2018 (Eindhoven, Netherlands)

## LINKS TO PROJECT MEDIA COVERAGE TO DATE

[Le Monde](#) (print and [interactive web versions](#))  
[BFI Sight & Sound](#)  
[Time](#)  
[Roads and Kingdoms](#)  
[De Correspondent](#)  
[The Voix](#)  
[VPRO Radio Interview](#)

## CONTACT

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## BIOGRAPHIES

**Ben Crowe** is an award-winning writer-director. His work encompasses character-driven narrative, social documentary for online and TV broadcast and experimental filmmaking. He has been nominated for the Cannes Film Festival's prestigious Palme D'Or (2005) for his first short film and his debut feature VERITY'S SUMMER received critical praise and a theatrical release in Summer 2013. For the last ten years Ben has worked internationally as a video journalist and a human rights video producer through ERA Films. Two recent global multimedia campaigns he has produced include the International Trade Union Confederation's Qatar Exposed and [Samsung Exposed](#).

**Jan-Joseph Stok** is a Dutch photojournalist who grew up in France. He is specialised in background stories about conflict and post-conflict zones. For more than 15 years, he has been working on the African continent in countries such as DRC, Somalia, Darfur (Sudan) and Mali. He is co-author of two journalistic books: "Bloodmobiles, Coltan in Congo" (with Seada-Nourhussen) and "Welcome to Darfur, this is our life" (with Elwin Verheggen). Member of the photo agency Hans Lucas (France) and De Beeldunie (Netherlands).