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Maman Colonelle

Mama Colonel

Dieudo Hamadi

Producer Christian Lelong, Kiripi Katembo Siku. **Production companies** Cinédoc Films (Annecy, France), Mutotu Productions (Kinshasa, Congo). **Written and directed by** Dieudo Hamadi. **Director of photography** Dieudo Hamadi. **Editor** Anne Renardet. **Sound** François Tariq Sardi, Dieudo Hamadi.

Colour. 72 min. Lingala, Swahili, French.

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Colonel Honorine Munyole is a robust forty-four-year-old widow and mother of seven young children – four of her own, three adopted. She wields her uniform, beret and black handbag like a protective shield, which her daily work desperately requires. More or less on her own, she runs a small police unit dedicated to protecting women who've been raped and children who've suffered abuse in the war-plagued regions of the Congo. At the start of *Maman Colonelle*, she's transferred from Bukavu to Kisangani, arriving only to discover her future home and office in a desolate state. While she deals with such practical obstacles with suitable feistiness, the traumas and social deformities of the people around her have nightmarish dimensions: the envy surrounding those with state-recognised 'victim' status, hope for help from the 'whites', depression, helplessness. Although it's hard for a Western audience to understand from where exactly this woman draws her strength, we follow her mission with growing fascination nonetheless. The film is at once a tribute to a heroine of our times and the document of a true achievement with respect to civilization.

Dorothee Wenner

The Six-Day War of Kisangani

In 2000, the Congo was riven by war. The country was split in three. The east was controlled by rebels backed by the Rwandan army. The north was controlled by other rebels backed by the Ugandan army. These two heavily armed groups and their backers converged on the west of the country – controlled by loyalist troops – in order to overthrow the Congolese government.

In May 2000, the two rebel armies, which until then were gradually advancing to the west, met in Kisangani – the obligatory passage to the capital Kinshasa. Who would control the ‘strategic’ city? They were unable to reach an agreement. A violent clash broke out between the Ugandan and Rwandan armies that would last six days (hence the name ‘Six-Day War’), causing thousands of deaths and considerable infrastructural damage.

I witnessed this terrible event, as a native of Kisangani. I was still young back then, but the memories of this atrocious war have never left me. I still can’t understand why there have never been trials, reparations, or a simple outcome to this ‘affair’, which cost the lives of thousands of human beings.

By choosing to follow Colonel Honorine on her long journey between Bukavu and Kisangani, I had no idea I would have the opportunity to tell the story of this terrible war. I was even more emotionally moved to see, fifteen years later, that there were women who had never restarted their life after such a long time, having lost husbands, children and all they owned. I thus seized this rare chance to highlight in a documentary the story of an unjust war that the majority of Congolese have chosen to forget.

A Mother Courage

This isn’t a documentary about the Six-Day War. It’s not a question of making an exhaustive, historical, educational film about what happened between Rwandans and Ugandans on the streets of Kisangani in 2000. It’s a film about a courageous woman – known as ‘Maman Colonelle’ – who, by discovering the extreme suffering of a group of women, raped and broken by this war, decides to try to help these women to rebuild themselves and their lives. The Six-Day War is therefore treated exclusively from the point of view of Maman Colonelle. Viewers discover this reality with her; they seek to understand what happened along with her; and through her eyes, they will be surprised by the gravity of the situation and by the indifference of people towards the victims. The film has neither narration nor interviews. The sequences are put together according to the chronology of the real events, and their succession constitutes the narrative of the film. Maman Colonelle is always dressed in her blue police uniform when at work, but in civilian clothes when at home with her family. The shooting set-up is simple: one hand-held camera for three-quarters of the film. That way viewers will have the impression of walking the chaotic streets of Kisangani, following in the footsteps of Maman Colonelle as she puts all her energy into helping the women victims of the Six-Day War.

Dieudo Hamadi



Dieudo Hamadi was born in 1984 in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He studied medicine at University of Kisangani from 2005 to 2008. He then attended several documentary workshops. In 2013, he made his first feature-length film, *Atalaku*.

Films

2009: *Zero Tolerance* (16 min.), *Ladies in Waiting* (24 min., Episode in *Congo in Four Acts*, Berlinale Forum 2010). 2013: *Atalaku* (62 min.). 2014: *National Diploma* (90 min.). 2017: *Maman Colonelle / Mama Colonel*.