

COLD MOUNTAINS, RED ARMIES

A veteran Japanese director returns to the violence and fervour of the revolutionary '60s and '70s

On 10 November, 2006, the filming begins for *Jitsuroku rengosekigun Asama Sansou e no doutei* (Literal translation: *The Allied Red Army's Passage to Asama Lodge – An Authentic Account*). The crew sets up to shoot along the brook of the Okutama River, in the rural outskirts of Tokyo. The scene they are preparing depicts members of the new allied Red Army joining forces at the mountain camp. It's a cold day, with a mountain chill and there is tension in the air. However, the veteran director, with 100 films to his name, calmly proceeds with the first day, effortlessly completing several scenes.

By Go Hirasawa

One of the most anticipated projects in recent Japanese cinema, this film is Koji Wakamatsu's effort to bring to the screen the historic Asama Lodge incident. The activities of the Allied Red Army were of great significance not only to Japan's history of political and radical movements, but are also very relevant today. In 1968, while anti-establishment movements flared up around the world, Japan also had her own movement, named 'Zenkyoutou undo' (All-Communist Struggle). Essentially a student movement, it spread across campuses all over the country, but gradually waned when the police clamped down on their activities. From then on, the faction that advocated armed struggle formed the Communist Alliance. They sounded the battle call in Tokyo and Osaka, and urban guerilla warfare began.

The crew shift to Daibosatsutoke, the location for the following day. This mountain pass is the real historical location where Red Army factions conducted military training, and also where arrests took place. Both locations have remained unchanged ever since.

During military training in preparation for their ultimate goal of occupying the Prime Minister's official residence, many in the Alliance were caught by the authorities. Several senior cadres ended up hijacking a JAL flight and went into exile in North Korea. Fusako Shigenobu, from the international section fled to the Middle East, joined forces with the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), and formed the Arab



Red Army. Scattered over Japan, the remaining members formed an alliance with the Maoist Communist Revolutionary Leftists, and became a united front as the Allied Red Army.

They started to engage in guerilla warfare at their mountain base, but over ten people were sacrificed in serious internal purges. Eventually, members barricaded themselves inside the holiday resort, Asama Lodge, and a vicious gunfight took place. A hostage was taken, and the police laid siege for ten days (and broadcast it live on television). Not only did the Leftist group's all-out armed conflict against national authority create a fierce impact, later on, when the truth about the purges came to light, the movement was severely criticized and consequently it declined.

On Day Two, a large number of extras gather before the early morning shoot. Amidst the drizzling rain, a scene involving the riot police is followed by a sequence where Red Army soldiers hurl explosives as part of their military training. The crowd scenes are mostly completed in one take. Just after noon, they shoot a scene where a discussion is held at the base at the bottom of the mountain range. It's completed earlier than expected. The crew will be able to get back to Tokyo before dusk.

Wakamatsu's new film encompasses the New Leftist Movement, tracing events that lead up to the incident at Asama Lodge, presented in the manner of a factual account. Even though the protagonists are members of the Allied Red Army, the film does not seek to recreate incidents as spectacles. Instead, it probes, from a historical perspective, asking why such a movement

emerged in Japan and why revolution was thought to be necessary.

Two days later, in order to film the scene of the purge that took place at the mountain base, the crew makes their way to Miyagi Prefecture, in the northeast territory, which is actually Wakamatsu's home turf.

A radical mainstay of the early 1960s, Wakamatsu used the genre of Pink Film as an agent of anti-establishment and iconoclasm. Later on, when the Japanese Red Army sought allegiance in the Middle East, Wakamatsu went there with Adachi Masao, and made *Sekigun PFLP sekai sengen* (*Red Army-PFLP World War Manifesto*) together with Fusako Shigenobu (see Go Hirasawa's more detailed history of this period on page three). As the most ardent supporter of the 1968 era, few would contest that Wakamatsu is the most appropriate director for this project. Since films about the revolutionary 1960s and '70s (Such as Philippe Garrel's recent *Regular Lovers*) are being made all over the world, this work will certainly have its place within an international trend.

After these scenes are finished, the crew head back to Tokyo. They will shoot there for the remainder of December. In January 2007, the filming of the gunfight battle scenes at Asama Lodge will commence, and for that they will have to go back to the mountain.

A location diary of the shooting of the film is regularly being uploaded onto <http://wakamatsukoji.org>, with English translations to follow soon.

Translated by Maggie Lee.

All photos by Go Hirasawa.

"THIS MOUNTAIN PASS WAS THE REAL HISTORICAL LOCATION WHERE RED ARMY FACTIONS CONDUCTED MILITARY TRAINING, AND ALSO WHERE ARRESTS TOOK PLACE. BOTH LOCATIONS HAVE REMAINED UNCHANGED EVER SINCE."

