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Rikugun Nakano Gakko
(The Army Nakano School)
(JAPAN-SCOPE)

Tokyo, June 7.

Produced by Daiei Films. Producer, Shusaku Watanabe. Directed by Yasuzo Masumura. Photographed by Satsuo Kobayashi. Music by Tadashi Yamauchi. With Raizo Ichikawa, Daisuke Kato, Maiyumi Ogawa, Sachiko Murase, Kiyosuke Machida. Reviewed, Tokyo, June 1. Running time: 93 MINS.

This tight and expertly made film about prewar activities at Tokyo's notorious "school for spies" is not only a first-rate "documentary" about spying techniques in 1939 (including such unlikely but presumably necessary courses as social dancing and the seducing of females)—it is also a bitter and intensely felt denunciation of the perversion of honest men into calloused agents.

Director Masumura (who made that astonishing comic antiwar film "The Hoodlum Soldier" last year), never states this theme and here is one of the reasons it comes across so clearly. The reconstruction is immaculate, the feeling of reality is impeccable—the director's implication comes through the very restrained dialogue, the underplaying of all important scenes, the carefully drab photography, and a plot so cunningly wrought that the conclusion he desires—all patriots are monsters—is inescapable.

The transformation of plain, decent officers into spies, the chronicle of this murder of conscience, is powerfully paced with scenes of recalcitrant members forced to run themselves onto swords, and the hero's almost absent-minded murder of the girl who loves him and has been waiting for him.

It is a frightening, depressing, and devastatingly honest picture.

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