

Dutch filmmaker documents tragedy of Yokota abduction

The Yomiuri Shimbun

NIIGATA—As the North Korean passenger-cargo ship Man Gyong Bong-92 docked at Niigata-Nishi Port at about 8:40 a.m. Wednesday, the protesters who greet it every time it arrives here were joined by Dutch documentary filmmaker Mirjam van Veelen.

The ferry, which arrived just three days before Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was due to visit North Korea, will leave Thursday laden with relief supplies for the victims of last month's deadly train collision in Ryongchon, near North Korea's border with China.

As always, the vessel was met by members of groups calling for the release of Japanese abducted by North Korea, who shouted, "Bring back Megumi Yokota and the other people you kidnapped!" and other slogans.

Van Veelen, 43, who is making a film about Yokota's abduction, stood among them shooting video footage of the large white ship and the protesters on the quay.

She has made a career out of following the lives of people suffering terrible hardship when, for example, their country has collapsed.

"I think it's sad the Man Gyong Bong is allowed to sail in and out of port like this even though Japanese were abducted by North Korea," she said.

Van Veelen started work on her current project—her fifth film—when she read a Dutch newspaper article about the summit meeting between Koizumi and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in September 2002, at which Kim admitted North Korea had abducted Japanese.

Until then, she had never heard of the abduction issue, but what she read immediately sparked her interest. "I can't think of any other example of families being torn apart for years on end because a solution to what is basically a political problem has been so hard to find," she said.

She first came to Japan in autumn 2003 to find out more about Yokota's abduction. She met Yokota's parents Shigeru, 71, and Sakie, 68, who, despite 26 years of pain,

have never given up believing they will one day be reunited with their daughter.

It was then that van Veelen resolved to make a film about what had happened to Yokota's parents. "I want as many people as possible to know how the families of abduction victims have confronted these cruel crimes against their loved ones," she said.

Since returning to Japan on May 10, van Veelen has interviewed members of organizations for the families of Japanese abducted by North Korea and has visited Yokota's former primary school.

She will return to the Netherlands to do more planning for her film before coming back to Japan in October to start filming in earnest. She aims to finish the documentary in summer 2005.

After the film is finished, she will try to have it broadcast by television stations in several countries.



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Dutch documentary director Mirjam van Veelen films protesters greeting the Man Gyong Bong-92 as it arrives at Niigata-Nishi Port on Wednesday.

WEATHER

		TODAY'S FORECAST			Possibility of Rain (%)			Temperature		Yesterday's Temperature		TOMORROW'S FORECAST		Temperature	
		6 a.m.-noon	noon-6 p.m.	6 p.m.-midnight	6 a.m.-noon	noon-6 p.m.	6 p.m.-midnight	low	high	low	high	low high			
<input type="checkbox"/>	occasionally														
<input type="checkbox"/>	later														