

A Historical Drama by Alexander Sokurov

## THE SUN



**Drama, 2005, 110 min.**

Production:	Proline Film (Russia), Nikola-Film (Russia), Downtown Pictures (Italy), MACT production (France), Riforma Films (Switzerland)
Producer:	Andrey Sigle, Marco Muller, Igor Kalenov
Directed by:	Alexander Sokurov
Written by:	Yuri Arabov
Cinematographer:	Alexander Sokurov
Production designer:	Elena Zhukova
Composer:	Andrey Sigle
Main Cast:	Ogata Issey, Momoi Kaori, Sano Siro, Georgy Pitzhealuri

## Abstract

After "Moloch" and "Taurus", "The Sun" is the third film in Alexander Sokurov's tetralogy about personality and power.

The film tells about the destiny of a Japanese emperor Hirohito after the defeat of Japan in WWII at the end of 1945. Hirohito abandoned the idea of a divine origin of the emperor - the descendent of the Sun Goddess. Such actions broke a historical tradition of the country, and a wave of ritual suicides started in Japan.

Another protagonist of the film is an American general Douglas McArthur, commander of the allied forces. He was supposed to decide on the destiny of the captive emperor and the whole imperial dynasty.

## The World premier

2005 **Berlin International Film Festival** (A.Sokurov was nominated Golden Berlin Bear Award)

## Prizes and Awards

- 2005 **White elephant** - National award of film critics and film press | Best film | Best Director | Best music  
**Festival of Festivals in Saint Petersburg** - Grand Prix | XIII international film festival  
**II Eurasia International film festival** - Grand Prix | Best Director  
**Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival** - Grand Prix | Best Film  
**Russian Guild of Film Critics** - Golden Aries | Best Film | Best Director | Best Score
- 2006 **Cahiers du Cinéma** - Top 10 Film Award | Best Film Aleksandr Sokurov | Tied with **Private Fears In Public Places (Coeurs)** – Best film  
**Nika Awards** - Nika | Best Screenplay

## The Film Crew about the Movie

The film's budget is 2.5 million dollars, 45% of which is made up of subsidies from the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation. For a picture in the "art house" genre, of which the Sun is a Prime example, the scale of funding in Russia has no precedent. For the first time in the last few years, the production process of creating a film by Alexander Sokurov was concentrated in Russia. It was conducted by Russian production companies — Proline film, produced by Andrey Sigle, and Nikola-film, produced by Igor Kalenov.

"The Sun" is the third film in the tetralogy of a famous director Alexander Sokurov, dedicated to the great persons of the past century. "Moloch", the first film in the tetralogy, was dedicated to a European - Adolf Hitler, "Taurus", to a representative of Eurasia - Vladimir Lenin. This work, according to Alexander Sokurov, is dedicated to "a little — known or completely unknown part of the life of the Pacific ocean in which the Japanese live- an absolutely unique people."

The film takes place in 1945 when American troops entered Japan. The protagonists of the film are the Japanese Emperor Hirohito, an American troops commander Douglas McArthur and the people around them.

The Director notes that Hirohito was an amazing historical figure. "He is the only major political figure of the last century who, having passed through the main events of the 20th century and witnessed many things, remained alive: Hitler committed suicide, Mussolini was killed, Hirohito was not even tried," he says.

"When the American corps occupied the capital," says the Director, "Hirohito had an army of several million people at his disposal. If he had ordered the fight to the end, the Americans would have been defeated at great cost. Then the country's political honor would have been saved. Hirohito took a different path — political honor doesn't mean anything when it comes to people's lives."

At the same time, Sokurov notes, Hirohito, after Japan withdrew from the war, could have committed suicide, as many military personnel did. "He didn't do it, taking on all the shame, swallowing all the bitter medicine," Sokurov said.

### ***Alexander Sokurov on his new film - direct speech***

What makes a person great? Outstanding personal qualities, a blind game of chance, divine Providence? And how can we measure the greatness of a particular historical figure, in what units?

Hirohito ruled Japan from 1926 to 1989. During this long historical period, the largest militaristic Empire that kept Southeast Asia at bay and was partially responsible for the outbreak of world war II was destroyed by the Allied forces, but in the 60s of the twentieth century it was revived on new grounds, embodying the technological dream of mankind.

But an even more amazing metamorphosis occurred with the Emperor himself. Descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, the incarnate God on the Earth not only signed the surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945, but publicly renounced his divine origin a few months later. It wasn't easy. Such steps completely broke the historical tradition. Japan has been rocked by hundreds of ritual suicides of top dignitaries, some of which were committed right in front of the Imperial Palace.

Hirohito had the courage to abandon the past and ensure a decent historical future for the country. A small, thin man with a thin voice, a scientist who studied botany and Hydrobiology, he was physically and mentally not adapted to absolute tyranny at all. And his Palace, turned into a scientific laboratory, did not look like the bunker of a bloodthirsty God of war. But Hirohito had to play this role, put on this mask, and the rejection of it is one of the main plots of the film.

The plot is mainly based on a few days in August 1945, when the American occupation administration led by General Douglas MacArthur decided the fate of Hirohito and the entire Imperial dynasty of Japan. The Soviet Union sought the Emperor's trial and execution. But MacArthur was wiser. Without forcing or threatening directly, he succeeded in making the Emperor voluntarily limit his powers, eventually renouncing his divine origin...

Meetings between MacArthur and Hirohito, seemingly infinitely distant from each other people and their spiritual influence on each other occupy the main place in the composition of the film.

Creating the film "The Sun", we create a picture of people's lives. We must also draw the attention of the audience to the great power of the individual. This "individual" determines the main content of all events in the life of a person and society.

During the filming, the interiors of the Tokyo Imperial Palace were recreated, as well as the life of the Japanese Emperor, subject to ancient rituals.

A fundamentally new system of scenery was developed, which made it possible to create the impression of a single space of action, the flow of one episode into another. This is Sokurov's first film using computer graphics (in a large-scale scene of the bombing of Tokyo).

### **Sokurov about the film (from an interview)**

"This Chapter of the film tetralogy, which has not yet been completed, cannot be separated from the previous films — "Moloch" and "Taurus". What's the first thing they have in common? The situation of a hero experiencing a personal disaster. We find Hitler at the moment of the beginning of the disintegration of the very material of individuality at the moral and psychological level. We see Lenin at the end of his epoch and of his physical life. Everyone appears in the "landscape after the battle", everyone finds themselves in an existential choice in the face of disaster, and everyone behaves differently. Hitler brings the situation to a senseless tragedy: it is clear that the war is lost, but by his will, soldiers on both sides continue to die, and he takes many lives with him into oblivion. Lenin, too, resists non-existence; it is as if he throws into the future his dying bitterness, his intolerance."

"It turns out that there is another choice in a tragic situation. This choice is not found in Shakespeare's tragedies, which always end in a destructive ending. Japanese Emperor Hirohito is a symbol of a constructive ending, or rather, not an ending, but a continuation — life. After all, you can go to the destroyed city, see the ruins with your inner eye, and you can see dozens of surviving buildings — see the perspective. This requires a very special human nature. These paintings represent three different human natures in a critical situation, personal and social. If we abstract, we can see one image of Shakespeare's scale in these three types of internal crisis resolution by different characters."

"Power in Japan is difficult for a European to define and understand. Japan is characterized by a manifestation of quiet power, not brilliant, but deep and hidden. Japanese are not Asian. They are rather closer to the English and their island identity. And their mission is the same, but the beginnings are different and the pace of development is different as well."

"Emperor Hirohito entered the road of solutions when no one in the country could take on this mission. He prevented the destruction of his people. We have analogs when people were not told in time: "stop!". In the Nazi Reich, people continued to die for an idea whose leaders were already dead and their corpses rotted away."

"There is no difference in the worship of the Emperor of Japan in the 40s or, say, before Generalissimo Stalin in the 30s in Russia. The glorification of the institution of power is so deeply embedded in the consciousness of modern society that it is difficult to imagine what needs to be done today to convince people that power is not from God."

"The Japanese are a different human world. They are different from both the European and Asian world. This absolute separateness gives rise to unique examples of both subtlety and grace, as well as cruelty in behavior. Hirohito looks infantile because he thinks all the time. His opponent, American commander-in-chief MacArthur, doesn't need to think. He just watches. He's already made up his mind. He only needs to choose from the options. This European–American structure of variant thinking is completely unacceptable for the Japanese."

"For me, Emperor Hirohito is a very clear and understandable human being. If a character is a mystery to you, if they are not close to you, then it is pointless to approach them. Because in this case, you, as the author, begin to unceremoniously, rudely interfere in his life and break the motivation of his actions. You have to be there to know the essence of a person. I can't analyze it, I can only feel it. He is an absolutely extraordinary person. Even if he had made a different decision, his personal choice would have been justified by the internal drama. He has already come a long way with his country before this situation."

"Since the mid-XIX century, in the Meiji era, Japan has been faced with the question of which way to go so that the country is not destroyed by Europe. And a radical choice was made — the path of Europeanization of Japan. This question had to be decided in 1945 by Emperor Hirohito: either to become European-like country, or slavery and the death of the nation. Which way is salvation? He chose to change his clothes in order to preserve himself internally. He chose a hard, painful path, but it was the path of life. Not struggle. This was a way to break away from the pursuit. None of the Asian countries could make such a radical decision, except Japan. Emperor Hirohito was not a God — he chose the path of the human mind."

### **Alexander Sokurov Director, Cinematographer**



Alexander Sokurov was born in 1951. In 1974, he graduated from the history Department of Gorky state University, and in 1979 – from the directing Department of VGIK. Since 1980 - Director of the Lenfilm film Studio.

For more than thirty years, Alexander Sokurov has been working for the benefit of Russian culture and strengthening cultural ties between

Russia and other countries. His multi — faceted talent and outstanding film work are appreciated all over the world, as evidenced by the annual retrospectives of his films and numerous international awards and prizes: the FIPRESCI prize from the Cannes film festival, the Vatican award - "Third Millennium", the "Freedom Award" established by Andrzej Wajda, the "Time For Peace Film and Music Awards", the Robert Bresson award "For spiritual search in cinema" and many others. Sokurov's talent is also highly appreciated by the Russian audience, he was awarded the Tarkovsky prize, the all-Russian prize "Keepers of heritage" and others. He is a two - time Winner of the state Prize of Russia (1997, 2001), Honored artist of the Russian Federation (1997), people's artist of Russia (2004).

Over the years, Alexander Sokurov has created a considerable number of films that have become classics of Russian cinema and are included in the Golden collection of world cinema, among them there are both feature and documentary films, warmly received by viewers and film critics: "Moloch", "Taurus", "Sun", "Russian ark", "Father and son", "Alexandra", "the book of Siege", "Faust" and others.

### **Selected Filmography:**

2011- Faust

2007 - Alexandra  
2004 - The Sun  
2003 - Father and Son  
2002 - Russian Ark  
2000 - Taurus  
1999 - Moloch  
1996 - Mother and Son  
1993 - Whispering Pages  
1992 - The Stone  
1990 - The Second Circle  
1989 - Save and Protect  
1988 - Days of Eclipse  
1987 - Mournful Unconcern

#### **ANDREY SIGLE, Head producer**



Producer, composer. Born on May 15, 1964. Graduated from the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory and the Royal Academy of Music in Gothenburg. He has composed music for more than 40 films. In 2004, he founded the company Proline Film. The company's main goal is supporting Russia's independent filmmakers and carrying out international co-production projects. In 2002, he co-founded the ASDS Film Studio together with Dmitry Svetozarov. ASDS produces movies, television shows and musical content for Russia's leading television networks. Andrey Sigle's work has won many awards at film festivals in Russia and abroad. He has participated in international film forums (Cannes, Berlin, Venice). Mr. Sigle is an Honored Art Worker of the Russian Federation (2006), as well as a member of the European Film Academy (EFA) and the European Producers Club (EPC).

#### **Awards**

2013 Winner of a Nika award  
2012 Winner of a White Elephant award  
2011 Winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival for Alexander Sokurov's *Faust*  
2008 Winner of a St. Petersburg Governmental Award  
2008 Award winner at Time for Peace Film and Music Awards  
2007 Winner of a St. Petersburg Governmental Award  
2006 Award winner at Kinotavr Film Festival  
2005 Winner of a White Elephant award

2005 Award winner at Kinotavr Film Festival

### ***Selected Filmography***

2020 [PALMYRA](#)  
2020 [THE MELODY OF STRING TREE](#)  
2018 [THROUGH THE BLACK GLASS](#)  
2016 [KHARMS](#)  
2015 [ARVENTUR](#)  
2013 [THE ROLE](#)  
2011 [FAUST](#)  
2010 [MISSING MAN](#)  
2007 [CRIME AND PUNISHMENT](#)  
2007 [ALEXANDRA](#)  
2006 [THE UGLY SWANS](#)  
2006 [SERKO](#)  
2004 [THE SUN](#)

### **Production**



[Proline Film](#) was founded by [Andrey Sigle](#) composer and producer [Andrey Sigle](#) in 2004.

The studio specializes in independent film projects.

Proline Film works with Russia's best directors: [Alexander Sokurov](#), [Konstantin Lopushansky](#), Sergey Ovcharov, [Irina Evteeva](#), [Alina Rudnitskaya](#), and [Ivan Bolotnikov](#). The studio's films have competed and won at international film festivals, including the festivals in Cannes, Berlin, Shanghai, Venice, and Moscow.

Proline Film works in association with many independent European producers, as well as the leading foundations, film studios, and television networks, including Eurimages, LeCanal+ (France), Downtown Pictures (Italy), Mact Productions (France), Rezo Films (France), Barrandov (Czech Republic), Sagafilm (Iceland), Generator Post, and Illume (Finland).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhB0-4Vucwo>

<http://prolinefilm.ru/en>

<https://www.facebook.com/ProlineFilmStudio>

<https://vk.com/prolinefilm>

[https://www.instagram.com/proline\\_film/?fbclid=IwAR2xFnBECxCfIQaGGnltFvi0BFXnGSAznkFUk50lyicbtL0g2qKJ3Yc5-OQ](https://www.instagram.com/proline_film/?fbclid=IwAR2xFnBECxCfIQaGGnltFvi0BFXnGSAznkFUk50lyicbtL0g2qKJ3Yc5-OQ)

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