

# **Lecture: Contemporary Economic History of Japan**

**No. 16**

## **2-4 Livelihood of Populace in Wartime**

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## 2-4 Livelihood of Populace in Wartime

### 1 Zaibatsu in Wartime

- How did each economic entity accommodate in the unfolding economic control under the framework of all-out mobilization?
- Under the new order movements, enterprises aspired for business development by coming to terms with the producers' responsibility system, etc.
- In contrast with medium and small businesses whose existences were not recognized in the readjustment of enterprises, it was the Zaibatsu entities that played the central role in the development of ammunition industry, as clearly indicated in the charts to follow.

- The military, at the forefront of criticizing Zaibatsu in the beginning of the 1930s, depended greatly on its business strength with the deepening controlled economy. Business managerial strength of Zaibatsu was indispensable for sustaining the war regime.
- While Zaibatsu conglomerate increased their weight in the Japanese economy toward the end of the war, it was the rapid growth of the heavy chemical industrial sector under their control that supported their expansions.
- Zaibatsu concentrated most of their additional investment on heavy chemical industries related to military demand and supported the expansion of war-supplies output. They flexibly responded to rapid changes in industrial structure under the war footing.

# Expansion in Zaibatsu's Business Investment

		Mitsui	Mitsubishi	Sumitomo
Finance	1937	4.3	7.7	3.6
	1941	4.5	8.0	3.7
	1945	13.9	13.1	5.4
Heavy Industry	1937	5.9	5.2	3.4
	1941	7.8	6.0	3.6
	1945	12.7	10.7	8.3
Total Affiliated Business	1937	3.5	3.3	2.1
	1941	4.4	4.3	2.1
	1945	9.5	8.4	5.2



# Transit of Investment by Sector

		Composition of Investment Balance by Sector			Contribution Ratio of Increment	
		1937	1941	1945	1937-41	1941-45
Mitsui	Finance	11.5	5.4	5.5		5.6
	Mining	26.5	25.1	15.8	23.8	8.9
	Heavy Chemicals	22.1	39.9	56.6	55.9	68.9
	Light Industry	13.8	12.2	8.9	10.7	6.6
	Other	26.0	17.4	13.2	9.8	10.1
Mitsubishi	Finance	22.1	10.6	6.2		2.4
	Mining	18.6	20.3	10.6	21.9	2.3
	Heavy Chemicals	27.1	36.5	57.5	45.2	75.4
	Light Industry	11.5	7.7	2.5	4.1	-1.9
	Other	20.7	24.9	23.3	28.8	21.9
Sumitomo	Finance	15.1	10.3	4.1		0.7
	Mining	8.8	6.1	7.2		7.8
	Heavy Chemicals	35.2	65.5	80.5	131.4	88.7
	Light Industry	9.4	1.4	1.8	-16.0	2.0
	Other	31.4	16.7	6.4	-15.3	0.8

## 2 Mobilized Populace

- Labor movements and agrarian movements lost the foundation of their activities with the deepening war footing. Particularly, as the industrial patriotic associations were formed and employee organizations were integrated hereto, the subsistence of labor unions came to be scarcely admitted. As the result, number of labor unions, number of tenant farmers' unions, and their membership turned to a catastrophic state by the outbreak of Pacific War, as shown in the next chart.

# Labor Movement and Populace Movement

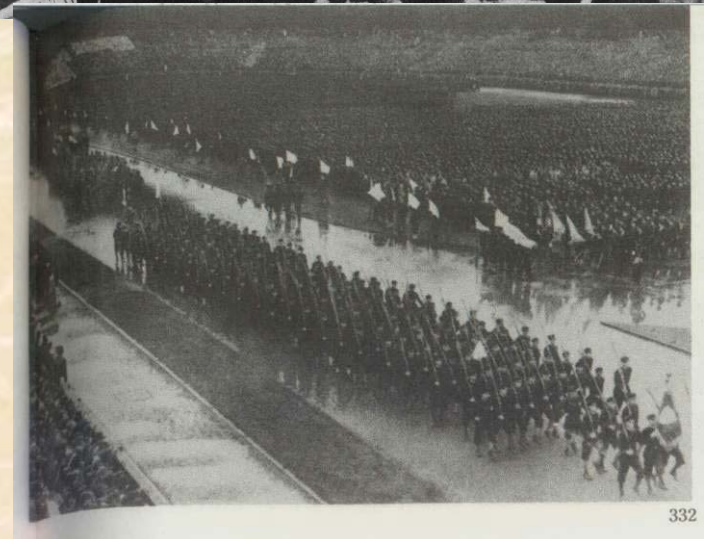
	Labor Union		Labor Dispute		Tenant Farmers Union		Tenancy Dispute	
	No. of Unions	Union Membership	No. of Cases	No. of Enlisters	No. of Cases	No. of Enlisters	No. of Cases	No. of Enlisters
1937	837	395,290	628	123,730	3,879	226,919	6,170	63,246
1938	731	375,191	262	18,341	3,643	217,883	4,615	52,817
1939	517	365,804	358	72,835	3,509	210,208	3,578	25,904
1940	49	9,455	271	32,949	1,029	75,930	3,165	38,614
1941	11	895	159	10,867	294	23,595	3,308	32,289
1942	3	111	173	9,625	185	15,802	2,756	33,185
1943	3	155	292	10,626	99	9,542	2,424	17,783
1944			216	6,627	34	3,742	2,160	8,213
1945	509	380,677	95	35,647				



- It was not that, even under such situation, all movements by populace demanding for improvements in labor conditions and tenancy terms fell to the ground. But, the actual state of things was reduced to the extent that pint-sized disputes occurred on a sporadic basis.
- Under the slogan of the “national unity”, the state not only mobilized peoples as military force but also requested for the mutual surveillance, or the cooperation of all noncombatant citizens toward the war framework.
- In 1943, the student mobilization was decided on, and in 1944 the formation of female volunteer corps was demanded, and furthermore, junior highschool pupils were mobilized to military plants to be involved in unaccustomed shop work.
- The war deployed unbounded mobilizations of common people: Those farmers who, being persuaded to emigrate, headed to Manchuria for settling; Korean and Chinese populace thrown in as labor force for the domestic mines and factories who were pressed/hailed coercively in many districts including Korea and Manchuria.



## Work mobilization and Departure of students for the war front



(Source left) Recorded meeting of Aomori's air raid

(Source both right) Japanese Contemporary History Studies,  
*one hundreds year of pictures vol.17*, p.1304

### 3 Misery of Populace's Livelihood

- Due to the production structure prioritizing the war production, the output of commodity required for the livelihood of common people was significantly constricted, which caused serious supply shortages, and the freedom of people's life as consumers was taken away under the rationing system.
- For instance, taking the quantity in 1937 as 100:  
Quantity of woolen fabric supplied: 23 in 1941, 8 in 1943  
Quantity of cotton fabric supplied: 14 in 1941, 8 in 1943  
As exemplified, the supply of civil requirements was extremely forced down and under.
- This sort of situation took place in any nations at war in varying degrees. Still, compared to Germany, another defeated nation, the level of personal consumption expenditure was cut down much larger in Japan.

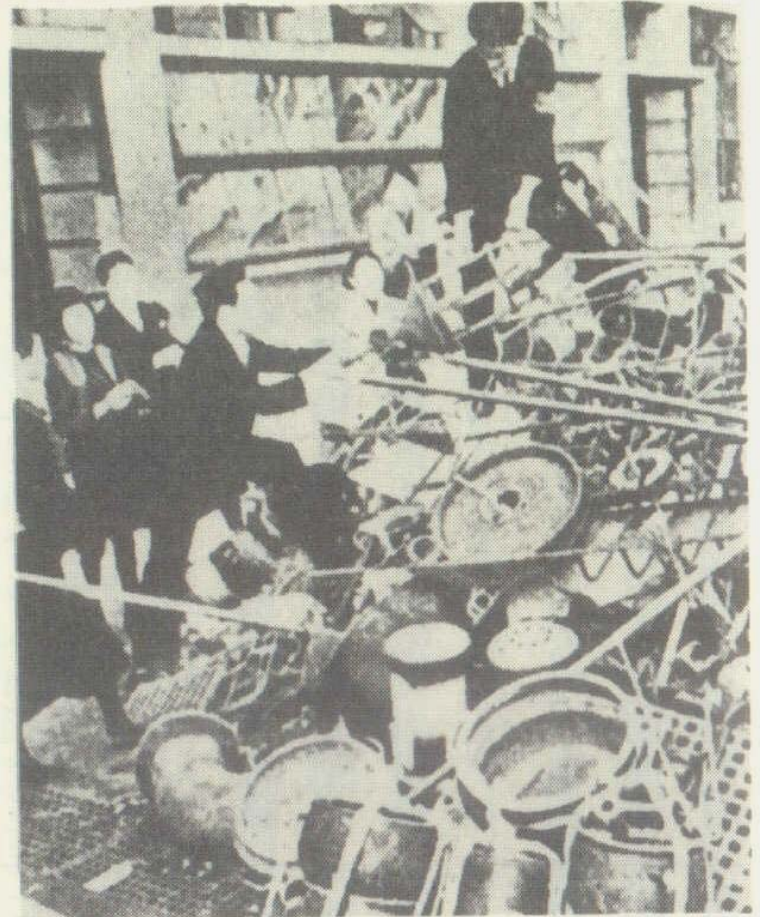


# Metallic Collection

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(Source left) Pavilion warehouse of Shouwa era; collection of metall



(Source right) Japanese contemporary History Studies, *one hundreds year of pictures*, vol.17, p.1312

Haruhito Takeda



Prohibition of  
eating rice and  
Alternative food

Because of circumstances of copyright processing,  
we omit the picture;  
“The rice plant in Shinobazu lake in UENO”.



白米禁止・代用食時代——1940年11月

The rice plant of Shinobazu lake of UENO



学童疎開  
戦争の悲劇は幼い子供達の上にも及びこんで来た

(Source both right) Japanese Contemporary History Studies, *One  
hundreds year of pictures*

Shool child evacuation



## Index of personal consumption expenditure

	Germany	Japan
1930	93.6	94.8
1931	87.0	93.9
1932	78.6	93.9
1933	79.3	93.9
1934	84.6	96.5
1935	88.1	93.1
1936	91.8	95.6
1937	100.0	100.0
1938	105.6	99.1
1939	114.0	93.9
1940	105.6	84.4
1941	102.7	81.7
1942	92.9	78.3
1943	91.4	73.9
1944	83.0	60.9



## People's Livelihood in Japan and Germany Under War Regime

- Take per capita food consumption per day, for example, Germany maintained 2800-2900 calories for 1939-43, and fell just slightly below 2700 even in 1945. In terms of the minimum supply of food, the amount of food consumption in Germany scarcely changed from the outbreak throughout the end of the war. Whereas in Japan, though the average level of the 1930s was maintained till '42, it fell off to 87% in '43, and in '45 down to two thirds the level. According to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Investigation Team, "Compared to Germany, the economic livelihood of citizens in Japan was in a deteriorated condition for a long time, and already reached a difficult stage prior to the beginning of the strategic bombing."



- ----Japanese citizens were much closer than those in Germany to the bare minimum borderline beyond which they would die from either starvation or sickness”, says the Team’s report. The answer to the question about this gap can be found in the difference in the regime foundations: While Nazi reins of government intentionally gave its consideration to maintaining the production for civilian use above a certain standard, as known by Hitler’s proclamation “not to want any further restrictions on purchases of civilian goods,” there was utterly no such policy consideration at all in Japan. Nazi regime, which, after all, was born as a movement “from below”, bore off the reins of government through the election, and attained the integration with an iron fist, could not betray his own constituency. The Japanese government never took account of livelihoods of its common people.