

満州事変（1931年）の頃、米国国務長官であったスティムソンは日本政府の命令に従わない関東軍を「狂犬」と呼んだ。外国人視点のその表現は正しいが、当時の軍の暴走には農村部の困窮という背景があった。多くの兵士は農村から陸軍に入隊している。

1. 日本農家の家計の構造：1929年の世界恐慌は日本の輸出において主要な生糸や米にも打撃を与えた。当時の日本の生糸輸出は、世界最大であり全世界の生糸市場の60～70%を占め、その輸出量の約80%がアメリカ向けであり、フランスとイギリスがこれに続いていた。生糸の価格は80%の下落また米についても52%の落ち込みだった（29年/30年比較）。

「明治の中頃から、全国約560万農家のうち、約4割に当たる222万戸が養蚕を兼業し、それによる収入が稲作による収入に次ぎ、家族の出稼ぎによる収入とならんで農家経済を支えている地方が少なくなかった。」(*1)

2. 借金の様子：さらに1931年の北海道・東北の大凶作が追い打ちをかけた。この時期の農林省の調査数値を引用する「借金の理由は生計困難のため32%、農業資金31%、である。いわば生存をかけた借金である。借りの相手も高利貸、貸金会社、地主、商人となっていて利子も1割以上が60%、2割以上が40%だった。」(*2)

3. 欠食児童数：同様に、省庁の欠食児童（安定した摂食のできない子供）の調査から報告された数字が紹介されている。「農漁村の窮乏から欠食児童が激増するので、文部省では係員を各方面に出張させ詳細な調査を行った。その欠食児童数の報告は、北海道10899名、青森6107名、秋田996名、岩手3539名、合計21500余名、（中略）なお当局の推定では、現在、既に全国の欠食児童は20万を突破し、未曾有の悲しむべき現況にあるとっている。」(*1)

4. 娘身売り：写真のように自治体による努力、婦人会や日本赤十字などによる身売り防止の活動があった。「困窮のため、女子の身売りも頻繁に行われた。矯風会や救世軍による身売り防止の運動も行われたがほとんど効果はなかった。」(*3)

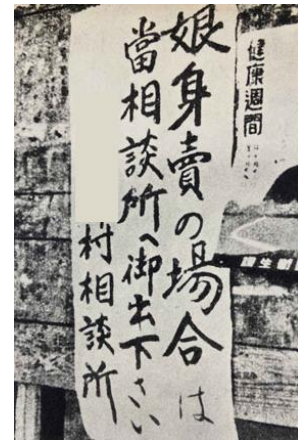
若い兵士は、上記の状況にある過酷な農村地域から軍隊に入った。仮に無謀な軍事作戦に加担し本人が死亡しても、戦死遺族恩給で瀕死の家族は救われるのである。

4. 「昭和8年には恩給法改正となり傷病兵遺族への恩給は増額になっている。例えば下士官は高級軍人の何分の一という冷遇であったにせよ、そうした保証に頼ったのではなかったか、そして平定作戦に従軍すれば1ヶ月は2ヶ月に加算され、そうすれば両親はゆとりのある生活し都会の巷にいる妹や村の娘を故郷に返せると考えたのではなかったか。」(*2)

*1「昭和東北大凶作娘身売りと欠食児童」p.48, p.96 山下文男 無明舎 2001年1月

*2「五・一五事件」p.158, p.161 保坂正康 筑摩書房 2019年4月（ちくま文庫）

*3「朝日クロニクル週間20世紀1933－1934」p.1 永栄潔 朝日新聞社 2000年6月



If you are in trouble, such as your daughter being trafficked, please come to the village counseling center.

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Around the time of the Manchurian Incident (1931), US Secretary of State Stimson called the Kwantung Army "mad dogs" for not following the orders of the Japanese government. That expression from a foreigner's perspective is correct, but the military's rampage at the time was also due to the poverty of rural farm areas. Many soldiers had joined the army from the rural areas.

1. The structure of Japanese farm households: The Great Depression of 1929 also dealt a blow to Japan's main exports, raw silk and rice. At the time, Japan's raw silk exports were the largest in the world, accounting for 60-70% of the global raw silk market, and about 80% of the export volume was to the United States, followed by France and the United Kingdom. The price of raw silk fell by 80% and rice by 52% (comparing 1929 and 1930).

"Since the middle of the Meiji era, 2.22 million households, or about 40% of the nation's 5.6 million farming families, have been engaged in sericulture as a side job, and in many regions, the income from sericulture, second only to that from rice farming, has supported the farming economy alongside the income from family members working away from home." (*1)

2. Debt situation: The 1931 severe harvest in Hokkaido and Tohoku added to the problem. Citing figures from a survey by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry during this period, “The reasons for debt were difficulty in making a living (32%) and agricultural funds (31%). In other words, it was debt for survival. The borrowers were also loan sharks, moneylenders, landlords, and merchants, and interest rates were 10% or more for 60% of lenders and 20% or more for 40% of lenders." (*2)

3. Number of malnourished children: Similarly, figures reported from a government survey of malnourished children (children who cannot eat steadily) are presented.

"Because poverty in farming and fishing villages caused a sharp increase in the number of children not eating properly, the Ministry of Education sent officials to various regions to conduct detailed investigations. The reported number of children not eating properly was 10,899 in Hokkaido, 6,107 in Aomori, 996 in Akita, and 3,539 in Iwate, totaling over 21,500. (Omitted) According to the authorities' estimates, the number of children not eating properly nationwide has already exceeded 200,000, and the current situation is unprecedented and sad. “(*1)

3'. Trafficking of girls: As shown in the photo, there were efforts by local governments, and activities to prevent trafficking by women's associations and the Japanese Red Cross. "Due to poverty, girls were frequently sold. Campaigns by Kyofukai and the Salvation Army to prevent trafficking were also carried out, but they were of little effect. “(*3)

Young soldiers joined the army from the harsh rural areas where the conditions were as described above. Even if they were killed in a reckless military operation, their impoverished families were saved by the pension for the bereaved families of soldiers killed in action.

4. “In 1933, the pension law was revised and pensions for the bereaved families of wounded soldiers were increased. For example, non-commissioned officers were treated poorly, receiving only a fraction of the amount paid to senior soldiers, but they relied on this guarantee. And if they participated in pacification operations, one month salary would be added to their usual salary,so their parents could live comfortably and send their trafficked younger sisters and village girls back to their hometowns. (*2)

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