Life in Yamagata During World War II

In the 1920s, Japan fell into chronic economic instability following World War I and the Showa financial crisis. To overcome this economic insecurity, Japan sought new territories on the Asian continent. In 1931, the Manchurian Incident incited conflict between Japan and China, and in 1937, a full-scale war began. After the Manchurian Incident, economic controls progressed, and Japan shifted to a wartime economy centered on military demand.

Industries shifted toward military production even in the city. In 1938, the metal industry prohibited the use of raw materials for anything other than military demand. Therefore, the casting industry of copper and ironware in Domachi was banned from producing iron kettles. As a result, some of those who lost their jobs found employment as subcontractors in military supply manufacturing. In addition, a Yamagata branch of military aircraft production company Nippon Aircraft Co., Ltd., was established in 1942. Recently unemployed local workers were integrated into the company under the controlled economy. Furthermore, metal was collected from the public for the war effort. This included not only gates and fences of public facilities, but also monuments such as the statue of Mizuno Saburoemon Motonobu at Horetsu Shrine.

From 1944 onward, air raids intensified throughout Japan. This prompted the evacuation of schoolchildren, and on June 30 Yamagata City received more than 600 elementary school student evacuees from Toshima Ward, Tokyo.