

C O N F I D E N T I A L

INFORMATION ON ((SASAGAWA)) Ryoichi
(Gist of the info passed to the FBI in Feb 84 and info from Nov 87
State cable)

In November 1987, billed by the Japanese press as the "Godfather of Japan", conservative business tycoon ((SASAKAWA)) Ryoichi, 87, is one of Japan's most controversial business figures. Sasakawa built his US Dollars 8.4 billion empire as a gambling impresario who operated motorboat racing concessions, the only privately-owned legal gambling operation in Japan. Besides being one of the country's wealthiest men, he is a former war criminal, motorboat gambling (legal) czar, right-wing leader, political broker and a modern philanthropist.

Sasagawa has been closely identified with right wing causes since his early career. During the 1930's, he organized a nationalist group involved in several political assassinations in the prewar years. His involvement with this group, plus a stint in the Diet during the war years, earned him more than three years in prison as a suspected war criminal. In the 60's he established the Japan Chapter of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL).

There is no info that would confirm or deny any present connection of Sasagawa with the Japanese underworld gangster organization (Yakuza). In 1979, however, Sasagawa received an award from the Japanese emperor. The award was for Sasagawa's philanthropic activities in Japan and the United Nations. The award probably would not have been given if Sasagawa's current record were not free from unsavory associations.

As head of the Japanese Shipbuilding Foundation, Sasakawa is reported to have contributed over 1.35 billion dollars to charities worldwide, including 50 million dollars to the UN, 45 million dollars to establish the US-Japan Foundation, and endowments to Harvard Medical School, Oxford University, and other academic institutions. Sasakawa's philanthropic efforts have earned him the Martin Luther King Peace prize, the UN Peace Prize, and the Linus Pauling award for humanitarianism, but have not yet captured the object of his lifelong pursuit, the nobel peace prize. As a result of his activism, he has developed ties with many international leaders, including Pope John Paul II, former President Carter and chinese leader Deng Xiao Peng.

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