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Ryoichi SASAGAWA  
(Phonetic: Sahsahgahwah)

JAPAN

philanthropist

Addressed as: Mr. Sasagawa

Billed by the press as "the Godfather of Japan," conservative business tycoon Ryoichi Sasagawa is one of Japan's most controversial figures. He built his \$8.4 billion empire as a gambling impresario who operated motorboat-racing concessions. As head of the Japanese Shipbuilding Industry Foundation, he has contributed \$1.35 billion to charities worldwide. While his philanthropy has earned him the Martin Luther King Peace Prize, the UN Peace Prize, and the Linus Pauling Award for Humanitarianism, it has 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 and former President Carter. (C NF)

Sasagawa has been closely identified with rightwing causes since his early career. During the 1930s, he organized a nationalist group that was involved in several political assassinations during the 1930s. 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 1960s, he established the Japan chapter of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL). Although the flow of funds is nearly impossible to trace, a report in a leading US newspaper links some chapters of the WACL to raising private sector funding for the contras in Nicaragua. We have no specific evidence indicating whether the Japan chapter of the WACL was involved in such alleged activities. (C NF)

NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT

EXEMPTIONS Section 3(b)  
(2)(A) Privacy   
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Sasagawa's flamboyant style and his reputed underworld connections lead many Japanese to criticize his activities. Most Japanese consider gambling money "unclean" and are embarrassed by his escapades, complaining that he is seeking to buy respect overseas that he does not enjoy at home. Sasagawa, a spry 87, thrives on publicity. His delight in boasting about his female conquests adds to his unpopularity in Japan. (C NF)

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