

Chapter 1

From Childhood in Meiji Japan... To Patriotism in the 1930s... To Wartime Membership in Parliament

I

1899-1930

SASAKAWA RYOICHI (1899-1995) was a man of many parts, whose career spanned the twentieth century. No stranger to controversy (he was twice held in prison for periods of years, while never convicted of a crime), this exuberant and irrepressible man went on to establish a name as a philanthropist who gave away fortunes and embraced lepers to comfort and console them. Ryoichi was born on 4 May 1899 as the eldest child of a local brewer of *sake* in a quiet rural community called Toyokawa, some twenty kilometers from Osaka.

The town, today called Minoo City, is strategically located between Osaka and Kyoto, two important and historic cities. Flying into Itami, the older of Osaka's two airports, the whole area is visible from the air. You see a great splash of dark green below, a national park established at Minoo in the late nineteenth century, and then rows and rows of apartment blocks known in Japanese as *danchi*.

At the time Ryoichi was born, however, the landscape was entirely rural. Osaka had yet to send out its tentacles that far. There were wooden farmhouses dotted here and there and paddy fields in between. The main crop was rice. The boy's father, Tsurukichi, used some of the rice to brew his sake, following in the tradition of his ancestors as the head of a family business established 150 years earlier. The seasons decided everything. The rice seedlings were planted in early summer and the rice was harvested in late September. Larks sang overhead in summer and tawny-winged kites floated over the forests and hills.¹

The Sasakawas had long owned considerable plots of land and served as village headmen or *sboya*. Local records indicate that the family line was established in the middle of the Edo Era (1603-1868). They also show that the authorities let the earlier generations of Sasakawas use their surname and permitted them to carry swords until the great social reforms of the ensuing Meiji Era (1868-1912). These were privileges normally reserved for samurai in the premodern Edo times, and were granted only to non-samurai of exceptional standing. Tracing the origins of their family line to 1747, the Sasakawas were a force in the community.

Tsurukichi, in fact, was the tenth-generation head of the small but stable family enterprise. Photos taken of Ryoichi's parents in the early twentieth century show his father looking wiry and determined in a western suit, and his mother, Teru, in a kimono. The settled look of the couple suggests that they were rooted in their neighborhood and comfortable with their place in the community. Toyokawa consisted of a number of villages, including one called Onohara. That was where the Sasakawa family lived a quiet existence centered on the local primary school, a Buddhist temple or two, and Shinto shrines, where the locals celebrated their festivals and weddings.²

Thus, Ryoichi was born into a family with deep provincial roots. Yet we do not know a great deal about his childhood. He himself was not a delver into his family past, although he was the eldest son and was devoted to his parents. He was one who always looked forward, and rarely back. He was busy with his projects, especially once he started up in business in Osaka in his mid twenties as an investor. Ryoichi was restless and he dreamed of distant lands. He was excited by the future. He kept remarkably few records of his early or middle years. Marriages and births hardly figure in Ryoichi's records. At most, Ryoichi described one or two episodes from his boyhood to others. Not that he lacked the time to write his memoirs had he wished to do so. He lived to the great age of ninety-six, rare for one born in the Meiji Era.

Never one to set modest goals, Sasakawa imagined himself, whether in jest or not, living to be two hundred. He had several heart attacks late in life, but he mostly enjoyed good health until very close to the end. Vigorous as he was, rarely missing a day at work, he outlived his contemporaries. Thus, there was no one I could talk to who had witnessed his childhood. Obtaining information about him was not easy. Then again, there was no full biography available at the time when I commenced research following his death in 1995. One explanation of the lack of a scholarly work was that intellectuals in Japan held negative views about Sasakawa. The media treated him as suspect — not that he was discouraged by this, as we shall see.

An oracular nun, a candid father

Ryoichi's birth just before the turn of the century was treated as an occasion for great joy by all in the neighborhood. His parents received many visitors about the time that Teru gave birth, and one of these was a Buddhist nun (*bhikkuni* in Sanscrit), who came visiting from a nearby temple called Kumano Gongen. She informed the surprised parents that their firstborn child was in her words "a gift to the world," and was destined to do good works.

The family should accept that he was "not theirs," said the nun. Ryoichi's parents were devout believers and they no doubt took these oracular words to heart. The gods had enjoined upon them the task of bringing up an unusual child. So be it. The parents considered themselves doubly blessed. But being no-nonsense Japanese country folk they must also have considered that in a practical sense Ryoichi was theirs to bring up and give a start to in life. Apart from anything else, he was the eleventh head of the Sasakawa family line.

Tsurukichi, a candid father, in due course came up with a piece of advice of his own that may have had resonance for a rambunctious son who was destined to spend two three-year spells in prison, even if never convicted of a crime of any kind. The paternal wisdom was that "more important than respecting the law...[is] to follow your conscience." Thus, he urged the twenty-two-year-old Ryoichi to decide for himself for the rest of his life what was right. (Tsurukichi repeated these words on his deathbed, it is said.)³

An award for good conduct

I found two books written during Ryoichi's lifetime that contain a little information about his childhood. One was a light work by Yamaoka Sohachi; the other was a short study published in Britain.⁴ The former reads well but is overly dramatic; the latter is lively but contains errors. I discovered additional materials in the family archives.⁵

I was able to interview three people who had known Ryoichi early in life: Uoshima Kosaku, who attended Toyokawa primary school with Ryoichi, though Uoshima was five years his junior and they overlapped for only a year; Sasakawa's sister Yoshiko, also much younger than he; and Nagata Shina, a woman who was related to him by marriage and had known him in his twenties. These three portrayed him in colorful terms, though their memories were no doubt swayed by the sheer fact of his fame in later years. Probably they did not intentionally dramatize and romanticize his life, but most likely they saw his childhood through a golden prism. These three, judging by their ages, did not know Ryoichi when he entered school in 1906, only considerably later.

Nonetheless, they provided vivid descriptions of the ebullient young boy, as he was growing up. Nagata Shina portrayed the young Ryoichi as “an eccentric” and again as “a brave little fellow who feared nothing.” She stated:

He had no time for anyone admonishing him for using careless words. He was good at fights, and often took on older boys. He hated to lose or to be criticized. For example, he did not take to his female teacher. On days when she scolded him, he lay in wait for her after school with a baseball bat.⁶

He surely did not attack that teacher — the anecdote is told clearly in jest — but he did get up to tricks. Uoshima Kosaku said that he was constantly making trouble. However, there is conflicting evidence in this regard. At the end of his second year at his primary school he was given a prize for good conduct. We may conclude that he was a stout-hearted and daring young boy, and perhaps a sore loser — he even described himself as “the school bully” in a recollection of these times. But Ryoichi was not an unredeemable rebel and he conducted himself well after his first year at school.

Ryoichi in hot water

His first year at Toyokawa primary school was difficult:

I was born terribly tone deaf... I believe I was in my first year at the primary school. The music class was about to start, and I dreaded being pointed at to sing solo I thought of a strategy. I invited a couple of older boys to join me and we had a fine time in the hills behind the school and missed the music class. I got away with it the first time. The second and third times went well, too.

But my luck did not last. I had become overconfident. We were having great games when it started to rain, so we sheltered in the local Shinto shrine close by the main street and waited for the rest of our friends who, unlike us, had obediently attended class.

Carefully calculating the time, I rushed home, innocently announcing my arrival as if I had just come from a hard day at school.

My father greeted me with a stern face. Without a word, he took hold of my kimono collar, lifted me like a kitten, dumped me in the storehouse and locked the door from the outside. I felt a little guilty, of course, but at the same time I was sure my

secret was safe. In the light from a small window I opened on the second floor I found a box of cakes mother had set aside, and ate from it to my heart's content and soon fell asleep. I was awakened by my mother's voice calling me.

"Ryoichi, Ryoichi, apologize to your father."

I had done nothing wrong, I told myself, why should I apologize?

I did not even answer her.

Soon Father came into the storehouse. He twisted my arms, tied them behind me and attached the rope to a beam overhead. Still I could not bring myself to apologize and kept silent.

Father seemed taken aback but he wasn't finished. He told me to walk to the graveyard on the edge of the village and bring back something that he had put by the corner of the crematorium. To go there alone was supposed to be a test of my resolve, but I did as I was told.⁷

From the following recollection we can grasp the dynamics of the Sasakawa home, a shop where family life and business activity were closely linked. On grave matters such as his son's misconduct Ryoichi's father consulted his head clerk. Tsurukichi employed this person to share responsibility for managing both the home and the sake business. The clerk was therefore a third adult of consequence, along with Ryoichi's parents, to whom the boy was answerable when he had been disobedient:

Father spoke in a low voice with my mother and the head clerk of the shop, then turned to me and instructed me to fetch something he had left at the local Shinto shrine.

As a child I had never been afraid of dark streets and ghost stories. So off I set on this new adventure with a certain pride. But when I got to the shrine I suddenly felt as if I had had cold water poured all over me. I felt cold and scared. As I reached for the item that my father had left at the shrine I thought of the naughty things I had done earlier in the day. My knees began to shake.

I ran home and found Mother waiting for me.

"Ryoichi," she said, hugging me tightly.

"You must think that no one knows about the wicked thing you did today. The bad things you do behind the backs of others do get noticed. Go and apologize to your father."

I looked up at my mother and saw her eyes were welling with tears. I decided to change. I went to my father, knelt down for-

mally before him, and apologized for skipping classes.

“Ryoichi, do not ever tell a lie. Never do anything that you know is wrong,” my father told me.

Since then I have not once done anything against my conscience. I am full of thankfulness even today to my mother. She was the one who told me through her tears that “while you think no one has seen you do wrong, remember that heaven knows it and you know it, so never again tell a lie as you did today.”⁸

Classmate of Kawabata

Ryoichi was full of life. He was strong-willed and inclined to be mischievous, as we have seen. No doubt this made him popular. Early on, he showed an aptitude for making friends at school. One of these was Kawabata Yasunari, a classmate at Toyokawa primary school, who was to achieve national celebrity as a novelist.⁹ Sasakawa recalled:

[Kawabata] lived about three kilometers away from our home. We used to sit next to each other in primary school, but our academic performance was not on a par. My parents often told me to “do like the Kawabata boy,” meaning to study harder. He stood out a mile as the most excellent pupil and was considered a genius even then. By contrast, I was just the school bully and so I was often compared to him unfavorably.

Kawabata had lost his parents when he was very young and lived alone with his grandfather. Our two grandfathers liked to play *go* — [Japanese draughts], and I was often taken to the Kawabata home. While our grandfathers enjoyed a game of *go*, Yasunari would sit in the wooden corridor running round the house quietly reading a book. That was his way.

Once, after attending an autumn festival, I was walking with Kawabata back to his home. When the house came in sight, I was about to leave him to find my own way home when he burst out sobbing and begged me to stay with him. He was afraid of dark streets. I walked him all the way back. The literary master of the future was a sensitive child.

After finishing primary school, he continued his studies at Ibaragi Junior High in Osaka, now called Osaka Prefectural Ibaragi High School. From there he went to the First High School in Tokyo, and then to Tokyo University. After enrolling he lived very frugally in a rented house at Ueno Ikenohata until he had made a name for himself. When that happened, always short of time, he could hardly ever return to his home town. Of my own

accord, I looked after the Kawabata family grave for him.

After he became famous, he was too busy to return home at all. Eventually, he moved his family grave to Kamakura where he lived. By that time I had been paying respects to his ancestors for some fifty years — not that he ever asked me to.¹⁰

Ryoichi did not hesitate, if need be, to come to his friend's help in other senses, for example with money:

He needed help at times. At one point, when he had taken on the responsibility of chairing the Japan PEN Club and was having a difficult time raising money needed by the club I gave him what he needed.

My belief is that those who have money should contribute it to society; those who have brains should share their intelligence for the benefit of the rest of us; and those who are brawny should do the logical thing and lend us their strength.

Sad to say, Kawabata took his life in May 1972, gassing himself in a room of an apartment building at Hayama where he used to write. The rumor had it that the reason he did this was his failure to collect enough funds to organize a PEN international convention. Others said it was due to a failed romantic affair. As a friend of his from childhood, I think he was just fed up with life — he was too pure a soul.¹¹

Two years at a local temple

But to return to Sasakawa's educational career. He attended six years altogether at Toyokawa Primary School. Clearly, he was a success there and at the end of each year he received a certificate from the school, commending him for carrying out his responsibilities as head of the class.

His younger sister Yoshiko remembered: "Ryoichi was fond of small children. He took a lot of them to school every day. He liked the kids." She must have referred to the years he spent in the higher grades. It was now apparent that he was not just headstrong, but a born leader who looked after his juniors naturally.

After graduating from primary school Sasakawa studied for one year at a local agricultural institute that was affiliated with the higher grades of the primary school. At the same time, in a move we may assume his parents arranged, he undertook a course of strict training under a noted Buddhist teacher, Harada Osho, the chief priest of the nearby Shonenji temple.¹²

According to Yamaoka, he served for two years at Shonenji after graduating from the primary school in 1912 at the age of thirteen. Yamaoka relates that his daily duties at the Buddhist temple consisted of waking up very early every morning when it was still dark and mopping the long corridors of the temple with ice-cold water. Then it was time for prayer. We may imagine the young boy seated *zazen*-style on the wooden floor for long hours to nurture such good qualities as patience and perseverance through the practice of these austerities.¹³ His knowledge of the Chinese language and of Chinese studies, which enabled him to do calligraphy, must have been the fruit of his training in this period.

A curtailed education

Why was Sasakawa, who was born into a well-to-do family, not sent to a higher academic institution after his six years at primary school? There are two very different explanations given. One of these runs as follows. Tsurukichi, Ryoichi's father, is supposed to have consulted Sawada Nagataro, Ryoichi's headmaster at the Toyokawa Primary School, about his son's future. Such a step would have been very normal. Sawada is said to have responded:

The child has a strong sense of justice and if he pursues his studies much further there is a danger of him turning into a "red" [a communist]. He has too good a mind. It is better to send him out into the world and let him learn about life [rather than carry on with his formal schooling].¹⁴

Sasakawa confirmed this record of events. He stated:

I was due to sit for an entrance exam for the middle school, but the school head, who was afraid of my recklessness, advised my father that if I learned more there was no knowing how I would turn out. Better to keep me at home and to lead me in the ways of benevolence. As a result I had to forego further learning. After completing primary school, I was put in the care of a Buddhist temple in our village.¹⁵

The other theory as to why he did not go to a middle school has it that Sasakawa himself, against the passionate advice of his father, chose "life" over higher education. Ryoichi is supposed to have felt that he could resume his studies later but wanted to find out what the wide world had to offer rather than stay in school.¹⁶ He is on record as saying when talking to a group of children one day, "You don't have to cram

knowledge into your heads. I will teach you all you need to know about life.”¹⁷ Yamaoka maintained that this view is true to his character and is therefore credible. He also pointed out that the view that Sasakawa might turn “red” was nonsensical, as the Russian Revolution did not take place until 1917 and the decision for Ryoichi not to go on to a middle school was taken when he graduated from primary school in 1912.¹⁸

Whatever the reasons for the curtailment of his formal education, one may note that in general fewer years were devoted to education in Ryoichi’s time than today. Compulsory free education in the late Meiji years was limited to six years at primary school. Even then, after the basic four-year course not all pupils did the next two years. A far more limited number went on to middle school and beyond. Shunji, Ryoichi’s younger brother by two years, also did not go beyond the two senior years of the primary school. However, times changed. Their younger sister, Yoshiko, born twelve years after Ryoichi in 1911, went to Showa Girls High School, a private school in Sonezaki, Osaka, graduating in the early 1920s. By then, following his father’s death on 18 January 1922, Ryoichi had become the head of the family. Ryohei, the youngest brother, sixteen years Ryoichi’s junior, graduated from primary school in 1928 and went on to Kansai University. Surely, Ryoichi was not averse to higher learning, seeing that he paid to give Ryohei the chance (though he dropped out) at a time when higher education was on the rise in Japan. One other factor may have been relevant in Ryoichi’s case. In those days, there was a powerful tradition that the eldest sons of families succeeded their fathers, notably in sake brewing. The business was handed on from one generation to another with great formality, precisely as it had been in the case of the Sasakawas for 150 years. Lack of management continuity could destroy a going concern. Eldest sons might therefore leave school in order to go into the family business early in life.

Ryoichi runs away to fly

Not that Ryoichi allowed such considerations to stand in the way of a dream he had. While still a child, he developed a passion for flying. The Wright brothers had made their historic first flight in the United States on 17 December 1903. That was a little too early for Ryoichi to react to, as he was just four years old. But a few years later, at the age of — eight, according to Kurose, he made his own first attempted “flight.” He strapped a pair of *shoji* screens to his shoulders, went up onto the roof of his house, and jumped off. No doubt he crashed to the earth. But his passionate interest in flying remained, and in due course, totally disregarding his parents, he ran away from home to realize his heart’s desire.

It all started with a newspaper article. Ryoichi read in the paper about a Japanese pioneer pilot called Nishide Kiyoshi. The article said that he was returning to Japan from America with a plane, but he had one problem. He lacked the money to bring the aircraft through customs. Ryoichi leaped into action. He wrote to Nishide, offering help. He then brought the pilot to meet his parents and persuaded them to put up the money to get the aircraft through customs in Kobe. Ryoichi was just seventeen.

Not long after, without saying a word to his parents, Ryoichi packed his things in a box, and left home to join forces with Nishide. His mother, Teru, was philosophical: "Since he was born to serve the world and to serve people, gods won't take his life."

She was right. Ryoichi spent two years with Nishide and learned aeronautical engineering from him and also stunt flying. He thus became one of the first Japanese to do so, in days when planes had open cockpits, only the most crude navigation systems, and practically no support on the ground, and airstrips were few and far between. Those were pioneering days. God did in fact take the life of Nishide — who died when his plane crashed several years later.¹⁹

Conscription into the Imperial Army

As a fledgling pilot working with Nishide, Ryoichi kept in contact with his parents, and was responsive to their wishes as their source of finance. However, that was for only two years. Japan, while not a combatant in World War One (1914-1918), had a system of conscription, and Ryoichi was duly called up. In 1918 he passed his army medical and was inducted at the age of nineteen. The next year, his dream came true and he was assigned as a private (*nitobei*) to the Second Air Battalion, an Imperial Army unit based at Kagamigahara in Gifu Prefecture. His aircraft skills, it is said, had earned him his place; once there he studied with a will.

Some sixty-four notebooks and textbooks of Ryoichi's survive from those days, and are to be found among the Sasakawa family papers. These books bear witness to his studiousness. One may find his copious written comments in the margins of the textbooks as well as in his notebooks, from which we learn that he was most impressed by Samuelson's aero-engine and also a powerful 150-horsepower engine. He took meticulous notes and made diagrams of parts of the aircraft, as well as working on meteorological maps used by pilots.

We know that he studied well, judging by the certificates that piled up with his name on them. A year after he joined the army — 1920, the

year of his twenty-first birthday — he was presented with a graduation certificate in aeronautical engineering. Half a year later, he received a second certificate, for completing a course in the manufacture and handling of aircraft engines. Then in November 1921, he was commended for having the qualifications for higher rank and received a citation praising his conduct, diligence, and achievements in theoretical and practical engineering skills.

Officially, Sasakawa was now a lance corporal (*jotobei*), but as noted he was recognized as being qualified for higher rank. His star was rising. However, he was not destined for a military career. Late in 1921 he had a bad accident. In those days it was standard practice to start an aircraft engine by spinning the propeller by hand. The pilot sat in the cockpit and a mechanic spun the prop. For some reason, everything went wrong one day when Ryoichi was acting as the mechanic. The propeller hit him and smashed his right arm. Accounts say that the jealousy of a superior who was irked by Sasakawa's mastery of aircraft technology was a factor in the accident, but another factor and perhaps a more likely explanation, from what we read, may have been Ryoichi's overconfidence.²⁰

Tsurukichi passes away

Whatever the precise circumstances, this was a pivotal moment in his life. Ryoichi quit the army — setting aside, perforce, any plans he may have had for a career in the armed forces, and returned home. His broken arm required an operation. The surgery was successful but he ended up with his right arm shorter than the left, and for the rest of his life when the weather turned cold he suffered pain in that shoulder.

His return home came at a suddenly crucial juncture for the Sasakawa family. Very shortly after Ryohei's homecoming his father, Tsurukichi, died while still in his fifties. His death in January 1922 meant that the twenty-two-year-old Ryoichi became head of the family with full responsibility for the sake business and assorted assets. It was also up to him to find the resources to put his younger sister and youngest brother through school. He made a good show at it, from what we know. For a couple of years he devoted himself to family duties.

There is no doubt that he was a caring big brother. Locally, meanwhile, one thing led to another. Like his ancestors in Toyokawa he was drawn into politics. In April 1925, just before his twenty-sixth birthday, he was elected to the Toyokawa village assembly for a single four-year term. These duties did not detain him for very long, however. Later in life he was to remark that he had done everything in his first two years in

the post that a village assemblyman has to do. He did not seek reelection. Village politics was not for this young man.²¹

Ryoichi the investor

Ryoichi certainly had other options in mind. His father had left him considerable assets. There was the family home; there were farmlands; and there were financial assets — national bonds, securities, and deposits. Having inherited them all as the eldest son, he took the plunge in the mid 1920s and invested in the highly speculative rice exchange at Dojima in Osaka. In a short time he made a fortune. This success augured well. Thereafter he traded in stocks. The secret of his success in high-risk financial products was this:

To watch others and do the opposite of what they do. Most investors buy when shares rise. I do the opposite — I sell. I buy when prices are lowest and people shun them. I sell when others want my shares.²²

A contrarian in politics

In other words he was born a contrarian. He did not conform to prevailing trends. As in business, so in public life — and politics. Here, we may jump ahead fifteen years to Sasakawa's entry into national politics. He made this move at an extraordinary juncture for himself and for Japan. War had begun in December 1941 with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Four months later, with the nation by this time embroiled in a conflict spread over a huge part of East Asia and the Pacific, the Tojo government held general elections. These were timed for April 1942, when the war was still going well from a Japanese viewpoint. However, the authorities wanted to ensure that the legislature was docile.

Eager to boost the war effort, the military-led government decided on a policy of recommending and supporting candidates sympathetic to themselves. By contrast, those who were critical would not only not be "recommended candidates," they would have their election campaigns interfered with by the authorities through the disruption of their meetings, tearing down of their posters, and so on. By various strategies, the authorities filled parliament with yes-men. Out of 466 members elected to the Diet in April 1942, some 381 were "recommended" and only 85 were independent — one of them being Sasakawa Ryoichi.

He stood in the election, we should understand, because at that time the elected representatives of the nation were held in the lowest possible esteem. Parliamentary democracy was at a low ebb indeed. Sasakawa's instinct told him that here was an opportunity to be seized

and a job to be done. However, he stated at the time that he planned to resign if a golden age of parliamentary life ever returned.²³

This in fact was typical of him. Following the end of the war, the prestige of members of parliament shot up. Once again the Diet enjoyed supreme national status. True to his contrarian's instincts, Sasakawa bowed out of parliamentary life. Moreover, he declined to seek political office following his release from Sugamo Prison in December 1948, even though he could well have been reelected to the legislature had he wished. He went his own way.

Doing the opposite of what others did was, of course, no guarantee of success in itself, either in investment or in politics. But Sasakawa had an uncanny ability to see ahead. This was his own view of himself, whether as an investor or a politician, while at the same time he was given to great wariness and systematic caution. He said: "My projects are always realized, because I do not ignore reality and can see ten years down the road."²⁴

He was in fact cautious as a player in stock and commodity markets. He never used his capital for speculative investments. He had learned since his youth, he said, to "let one eye see through a telescope, and the other through a microscope."

His metaphorical way of speaking had a certain ring of literal truth in Ryoichi's case. His eyes were large and slightly protruding. It was his single most conspicuous feature, something that everyone who met him was bound to notice. Those eyes of his, we shall see, were to be remarked on in years to come — for example, during his time in Sugamo Prison after the war in 1946.

A man of property

Reverting here to the topic of Ryoichi's skills as an investor, his contrarian's strategy worked, as other investors in the market must have become rapidly aware. He became enormously rich at an early age and, wishing to spread his risks, quickly spread his investments far and wide. He put money into mining ventures, piling up his business appointments and job titles. He served as president or director of the following companies:

Kokusai Kogyo KK (International Mining Co.)

Aikoku Sangyo KK (Patriotic Industry Co.)

Sasakawa Kogyo-sho (Sasakawa Mine Works)

Morikawa Boring Keisen KK (Morikawa Boring Co.)

He made and kept fortunes, but Sasakawa was by no means satisfied by mere mundane success. Making money, he said, was only important to him because it gave him the means to offer his services to society. "*Sensei*," he was asked one day, many years later, "how is it that you are

always successful in every venture you embark upon? What is your secret?" He responded:

Most people who suffer losses do so because they are greedy. I have no greed. I only want funds to pay for my public activities. All the money I make I use for my compatriots and for society in general. The nature of my greed is quite different from that of others.

He added:

I watch my money to the last yen. I refrain from luxury. But I have spent lavishly for the country's sake. I have no qualms about suffering poverty for this good cause.²⁵

Not one to pamper his heirs

He was frank and direct as regards money, even at the risk of sounding brutal toward his three sons and heirs. When someone asked him in his later years about making a will, he responded:

A fortune is of no use to me once I die. I cannot take it with me or use it in any way. So what do I do? My offspring may misuse the fortune. If I give it to them they could be a nuisance to others and sully the family name. If they turn out to be complete block-heads they could be robbed of everything I leave them.

So, those cannot be true riches. Don't we all arrive in this world naked and leave it the same way? I plan to use all my money for society. Donations I make to others cannot be seized by stupid sons or even in progressive taxation by the government. My wealth shall be put to perpetual use for good causes. ... It makes no sense for me to leave behind worldly goods that will be cleansed from me just as my body is being prepared for the coffin.²⁶

As we shall see, his entire life was testimony to the truth of these words. He was in no sense hypocritical. Sasakawa's aloof attitude to money — he saw his life as if it was taking place on a stage on which he would appear for only one act, led him, paradoxically enough, to be swamped with worldly success.

Investing for the nation

Not that everything turned to gold in Sasakawa's hands throughout his lifetime — as, for example, during the years when Japan plunged into wars overseas in the 1930s and 1940s. His mining ventures were not as profitable in wartime as they could have been, the family records show. Sasakawa, however, persisted with unprofitable investments and did not pull out when the public interest was at stake.

“It is not in the interest of the nation for me to operate only profitable mines and terminate losing ones,” he stated, according to the Sasakawa family papers:

What is most needed today is metal to make bullets. A hundred yen is a gigantic sum of money, but money cannot be made into bullets. The country is not a loser if I use one hundred yen to excavate ten yen worth of metal. I am the only loser — and that's fine by me. My money will be transferred to the pockets of some of our fellow countrymen, while bullets get sent to the front line....

I wish our entrepreneurs would think as I do, and not always strive for their own selfish interests. They would do well to use some of their great profits in ventures that will be good for the country — even if at their own loss. What is needed most in Japan is a readiness to forego one's own interests for the sake of the country.²⁷

These two quotations come from very different periods in his long life — one from his old age; the other from a frenetic time in mid life when Japan was at war. His meaning in both cases is unambiguous, if also unconventional. In the second passage his thoughts run contrary to the free-market principles of the world today, according to which goods move freely across national borders. But the world had set aside free trade long before the advent of World War Two. Leading nations — notably the United States — had raised major tariff and import quota obstacles to trade at their borders after the collapse of Wall Street in 1929 and during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The free flow of goods was impeded as nations were switching to a wartime footing. Sasakawa's thoughts on economics and national strategic priorities then had a stern rationality.

We now turn to the 1930s, an appalling time in world history — and a tormenting decade for Sasakawa, who was to spend three years detained in prison.

II

1930-35

The PPP and its exceptional leader

As Japan entered the 1930s, Sasakawa wanted to do something for the nation. He called this working “in the service of society and the people.” What this boiled down to in practice, as a first move, was making himself into a publisher. He took over control of a tiny financially distressed company called National Defence Co. (*Kokubo Sha*), and made himself president. He also became the publisher of a monthly magazine called *National Defence (Kokubo)*. So far as I am aware, not a single copy of this magazine exists. It is therefore difficult to know its nature or for how long it was published. I assume that it was one of those magazines that advocated right-wing causes.²⁸

The Patriotic People’s Party

Publishing was a beginning. Sasakawa’s first major step into public life was to organize a fledgling political party called the Patriotic People’s Party (*Kokusui Taishu-to*), a group he and others founded on 10 March 1931 at a time of mounting international tension. Elements in the Japanese Kwantung Army stationed in Manchuria were preparing to seize control of all of Manchuria. On 18 September 1931 they provoked an outbreak of hostilities that became known as the “Manchurian Incident” and precipitated the “Fifteen-Year War” with China.²⁹

The Patriotic People’s Party (hereafter PPP), we know, was one of the many right-wing organizations to be created early on in the Showa Era 1930s to push for “national reform.” The platform of the PPP, at least on the surface, did not differ much from that of other right-wing parties founded around that time. Soon after its inauguration, with Sasakawa as its president, the party issued a warning to the Mitsui industrial group (*zaibatsu*) to desist from speculative purchases of the US dollar; next, the party took a position in favor of Japan’s forcible entry into Manchuria, the industrial heartland of northeastern China, and designs upon Mongolia; later on it came out in favor of the creation of Manchukuo, as Manchuria became known under Japanese rule. It demanded the “disciplining” of “intractable” China — code words for repression by force; and finally, in 1933, it called for Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations, while continuing to make criticisms of Japanese business groups — mainly the famous *zaibatsu* or “money cliques” of that era.

On the ideological front the party called for a “clear Japanese identity,” an advocacy for a structure of the state built around the emperor and criticized the “heretical” theory propagated by academic moderates that “the emperor is an organ of the state.”³⁰

On the international front, the party was hostile to Great Britain and positive toward Germany and Italy. Its most carefully considered policy plank concerned China. The party recognized the anticommunist regime of Wang Zhaoming (1883-1944), based in Nanjing, which was sympathetic to Japan and antagonistic toward Generalissimo Chiang Kaishek (1887-1975), the leader of the Republic of China, with its base in Chongjin. The party also favored an aggressive “southward” Japanese advance into Southeast Asia (at the expense of the ensconced Western colonial powers, Britain, France, and the Netherlands).

Today, these positions may smack of the stereotypes of those days, but Sasakawa, a businessman by inclination, appears not to have been greatly interested in the right-wing dogmas. His words and his deeds set him apart from other rightists. In later years, immediately after leaving the prison in Sugamo after World War Two, he drew up a rather elaborate classification of the right-wing groups of the 1930s. The following passage is long, but it may be worth quoting in full, to show how Sasakawa analyzed the Right and distinguished between himself and other nationalists.

A classification of right-wing groups

I classified rightists of the prewar period into four categories. The general public was inclined to lump them all together, but they are quite distinct.

First came the *ronin* — the “masterless samurai,” lone wolves for the most part.

Next came the *norito* — the “sacred sprig believers,” who leaned toward Shintoism and prayer.

Third, were the *boryoku* — the “violent group” members.

Finally, there were the *taishu* — the “people’s rights” believers, the popular right wing.³¹

Sasakawa, it should be clear, placed himself and his party, the PPP, squarely in the fourth class of right-wingers — those who espoused the public interest and who also, a crucial point, believed in parliamentary democracy as a system. This was a major distinction between the first three classes enumerated above, as compared with the fourth category, the *taishu*. The latter flirted with violence, as we shall see, but did not treat it as primary.

To take these classes of rightists, one by one.... The *ronin* dignified themselves with proud names but were one-man outfits. They bragged; they claimed to take upon their shoulders all the burdens of the nation, but they had zero political and social impact. Their real objective was to get some pocket money by knocking on the doors of the military and bureaucrats, politicians and capitalists. They had no ideals and no principles. They were charlatans, riding on the popular wave in favor of the right wing.

Next, the Shinto-inclined rightists [*norito*] were different from the first group. They were ideologues who espoused the “Record of Ancient Matters” (*Kojiki*) and the *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon Shoki*, the oldest official record of the imperial lineage together with myths and legends, a work dating to the seventh century Nara period). They considered these two tomes as the sole guide to proper conduct, whether in politics, the economy or culture. They believed unquestioningly in the unparalleled uniqueness of the Japanese polity; and they were quick to denounce traitors in their midst and hostile toward anyone who questioned on scientific grounds the authority of their two main books.” These people were fanatics who prided themselves on chanting Shinto prayers, while immersing themselves in freezing cold water in the course of their rituals of purification. These believers in purifying ablutions behaved as if they were possessed by the supernatural; they claimed to have the authority to provide a solid ideological foundation for the Imperial Rule Assistance Association [Taisei Yokusan-Kai], an association of members of parliament created in October 1940 by Konoe Fumimaro to buttress public support for the impending war with the West.³² These fanatics took the credit for creation of the much-touted “imperial way” [*kodo*] ideology, placing the emperor at the center of the universe, as the god-head.

Next, there were those who believed in *boryoku* — in threats of violence. They belonged, really, in the same category as the *norito*, the believers in Shinto ritual. They rejected parliamentary government outright, and also any kind of popular movement such as might take expression in a political party or a trade union. They wished to bring about what they called the Showa Ishin (Showa Restoration) — meaning the elevation of the Showa emperor as a symbol of their highest values, and they plotted to achieve their goal through violent means. They saw

themselves as spiritual heirs of the young Imperial Army and Imperial Navy officers who attempted to overthrow the government by coups d'état, one staged on 15 May 1932 and the other on 26 February 1936. They ran camps to train young people in the use of violence.

These three groups — the *ronin*, the *norito*, and the *boryoku* — had much in common. In practice, it was difficult to decide into which category to place a given individual. In general, they could all be termed “ultra-nationalist” [*cho-kokkashugisha*], to use a term which was current in the 1930s.³³

Sasakawa is saying here that the “three groups” identified and analyzed by him were “ultra-nationalists” and would stop at nothing to achieve their goals, i.e., they would commit violence if necessary. He is also affirming that his own category of right-wingers was averse to the ultimate sanctions of violence and murder:

The fourth group — the popular right wing [*taishu*] was totally different from the other three. They were as wide apart as the heavens are from the earth, or black from white. The “people’s right wing,” as I call it, marched under the banner of humanitarian idealism and believed in progressive political ideas. It embraced political realism and was committed to carrying out political reforms based on the collective will of the people. It respected parliamentary government, a big distinction from the first three groups of right-wingers, and it aimed at achieving its objectives through parliamentary processes. It emphasized the importance of lawful, popular government, and focused on organizing the masses.

It is wrong, from the start, therefore, to treat the party as a right-wing organization. It does not belong, as is generally suggested, with the three former groups or tendencies, as it bears no likeness to them. But if pressed, I would say that we could be called “popular right-wingers” or “law-abiding right-wingers,” as contrasted with the others who were not law-abiding. The Patriotic People’s Party that I headed as president — later known as the Patriotic Alliance (Kokusui Domei) — belonged, according to my classification, in the fourth category as popular right-wingers.³⁴

Strong-arm tactics of the PPP

All this is very intriguing, but Sasakawa’s classification and his definition of the PPP are not exactly correct. Some of the party’s members, it can-

not be denied, had a strong affinity with the *ronin*, the *norito*, and the *boryoku* right-wingers. Take the case of Fuji Yoshio, its senior executive under Sasakawa, who sometimes acted controversially in situations where the party president was not himself physically present to see what was going on. Fuji was a champion fighter of the classic right-wing type, who believed in settling matters by force.

He was known within the small PPP as its eighth *dan* fixer, eighth *dan* being the highest rank in kendo, karate and other martial arts. There are several recorded instances of Fuji openly resorting to physical action. In January 1933, some two years after Sasakawa took over the leadership of the PPP, Fuji led a group of fifteen members — most of the active membership — in a hunger strike; the men took up a position opposite the imperial palace in the center of Tokyo to protest the government's feeble handling of a case against Meiji Sugar Co., in which the company had been accused of tax evasion and had supposedly been let off too lightly. Two months later in March 1933, Fuji burst into the prime minister's official residence and apparently attempted seppuku there.³⁵ He sent a young member of the PPP to carry out the same action at the residence of the army minister. Buildings such as these two official residences were tightly guarded throughout the 1930s, and any plan to stage ceremonial suicides must have been almost certain to fail.

Nonetheless, these actions did occur. In due course, Fuji followed through with other shows of violence. Thus in 1935 he broke into the home of Ichiki Kitokuro, the president of the Privy Council (*suumitsuin*) and a constitutional scholar, waving his sword in the air and shouting imprecations.³⁶

Eventually, Fuji was arrested, tried, and sentenced to prison with hard labor. It is possible to make excuses or claim extenuating circumstances. Hunger strikes are nonviolent. Moreover, all those PPP members who participated in the hunger strike in front of the palace, it was said, had taken the precaution first of formally withdrawing from the PPP, so as not to embarrass Sasakawa or the party. Moreover, for someone to disembowel himself, though this did not in fact happen, would have been to commit violence against his own person, and not others. As for the forced entry into the home of Professor Ichiki, it might be maintained that to draw a sword was not the same as causing bodily harm — that that was not the intention, but rather “to frighten members of the Ichiki family and thereby to put pressure upon Minobe Tatsukichi, a member of the House of Peers up to 1935, from advocating his “organ of the state” theory and encourage those who opposed it.³⁷ In the final analysis, however, there is no denying that only a fine line existed between the *boryoku* rightists and Fuji Yoshio, judging by his behavior.³⁸

Sasakawa opposed to violence

At the time, the PPP would not refrain from using violence, so it was thought, if the situation called for it. The Justice Ministry classed the PPP then with such groups as Nakano Seigo's East Association (Toho-Kai), Hashimoto Kingoro's Great Japan Youth Party (Dai Nihon Seinen-To), and Akamatsu Katsumaro's Japan New Progressive Party (Dai Nihon Kakushin-To).³⁹ They were grouped together in the ministry's classification as "national socialism-oriented" (*Kokka Shakai-Shugi Kei*). The ministry noted that the PPP conducted public meetings in order to double its small membership. The party, it has been recorded, trained a group of its followers for direct physical action (*kyoryoku kodo-tai*) and was considered by the government in 1940 to be "not averse to taking direct action" if called for.⁴⁰ Sasakawa himself was, however, consistently negative toward the use of violence. Fuji Yoshio, while disposed to physical force, may well have restrained himself in the light of the strong opposition from the PPP party president, whom he respected.

It all boiled down to who was leader. Sasakawa was not only the party's nominal head, it was he who raised the funds the PPP needed to keep going. As a result, he believed that no party action could be taken without his approval. Individual party members might choose to act on their own account, but that was their affair. When it came to the party he was in charge, he asserted. When he and the other leaders of the PPP were arrested in 1935 and indicted on charges of blackmail, Sasakawa told the lower court: "Nearly every action of the party is taken at my discretion. Resolutions adopted by the general affairs committee are acted on only after I approve them as being consistent with my wishes."⁴¹ He may have intended to take some of the pressure off the party's officials and deflect it to himself, but there is no doubt that he believed what he said. Thus, Sasakawa's opposition to the use of physical force by his followers was a basic tenet of the PPP. In this sense, his classification of the party was correct.

III

1935-41

Science, technology, and aeronautics

Be that as it may, Sasakawa Ryoichi set himself apart from other right-wingers on several counts.⁴² First, he never depended on others financially.⁴³ In this regard, he was decidedly different from the *ronin*

rightists, as he referred to them. He was once asked whether a truly patriotic man should engage in business. He responded as follows:

Whether patriot or *ronin*, everyone has to have food, clothing and shelter. Services to the nation, too, cost money. In the past, patriots and *ronin* alike received money from government and from business concerns. The times have changed. There is no such thing as unconditional money. If we take money from the government we will be reduced to acting as bodyguards; likewise, if we take money from the *zaibatsu* we will become just their watchdogs.

That means death to our principles. It is not good for the country, and no good for the people either. We will be reduced from patriots to paupers. I would not for anything become a government bodyguard or a *zaibatsu* watchdog. But I cannot give up my struggle for patriotic reform because it is my life. I was in business even before I founded the Patriotic Alliance. I believe this is the right choice for a patriotic activist — to conduct business — and I am vain enough to think that I can represent my people in an honorable way.⁴⁴

Declines to join the government

Sasakawa, we know, kept his independence. He never accepted a government position. In fact, he is on record as having declined all such offers. When Koiso Kuniaki took over the reins of government from Tojo Hideki, he or his supporters reinstated the post of parliamentary secretary (*seimukan*), at all major ministries.⁴⁵ Members of the House of Representatives, the lower chamber in the bicameral system, vied for the post. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru, who knew Sasakawa, offered him the post of parliamentary secretary at the Foreign Ministry. He politely turned down the offer, saying that it would be his honor to continue to serve as a back-bencher (an independent). He was too proud, or perhaps one should say too shrewd and independent, to accept a post in government, even working with Shigemitsu whom he respected.

Sasakawa has often been compared with another well-known rightist with business interests of the period, Kodama Yoshio. Kodama belonged to Sasakawa's PPP from early on, but they differed in respect of their operations notably after World War Two and their three-year detention in Sugamo without being charged. Prior to that, during the war, Kodama built an apparatus to amass wealth on a grand scale by making the most of his opportunities in the employ (*shokutaku*) of several ministries.⁴⁶

Sasakawa worked very differently, as contemporary records dating from the 1930s make clear. He was much more in the public eye than Kodama. Kiyosawa Kiyoshi (1890-1945), a liberal essayist and journalist before the war, regarded Sasakawa as a *ronin* rightist, and had this to say in his diary for 1942-45:

Alas, Japan is today full of rightists and hoodlums. The streets of Tokyo are filled with flyers, announcing public speeches by Akao Bin, a rowdy anticommunist and member of parliament. The newspapers report in huge Gothic type headlines the comings and goings between Osaka and Tokyo of Sasakawa Ryoichi, the president of a party calling itself the Patriotic Alliance Party. These are the men who set the tone of the times.⁴⁷

Here is another extract from this diary:

Heard criticisms leveled at Toyama Mitsuru from people in his camp — rightists — that Tojo Hideki (1884-1948), the prime minister, was furnishing him with a considerable amount of money....⁴⁸ His third son, Hidezo, escaped conscription into the armed forces, as “a person with special skills.” Toyama himself had no grounds for going around presenting himself as a concerned patriot. The truth is he mainly spent his time buttering up the military. Alas, this is a world of ruffians and blackmailers. A man called Sasakawa Ryoichi, the boss of the Patriotic Alliance (Kokusui Domei), apparently is a man of property, worth tens of millions. Every rightist is rolling in money. That is why one cannot but have a war!⁴⁹

Is this justified? Kiyosawa was usually extremely sharp and to the point in what he wrote. But the reference here to Sasakawa looks like nothing more than passing on gossip, the talk of the town. The writing style is vulgar and lacks persuasive power. On the other hand, this is an extract from a diary. Kiyosawa may just have let his emotions get the better of him. Sasakawa himself was alert to the fact that he had become a butt of criticism. He noted in a short work he titled “A Commoner’s Memoir” (*Heimin Shinsho*), published in 1942 in typewritten form that he had become a target of volatile praise and criticism. He was prone to be misunderstood, especially by the so-called intellectuals (*interi*) — journalists and academics writing for the press, for example, usually left of center. The latter always chose to depict Sasakawa hand-in-glove with Kodama Yoshio, as the terrible twins of the Right. In fact, this was wrong. As noted, Kodama belonged to Sasakawa’s PPP (later the Patriotic Alliance) and he served for some time as the East Asia director of the PPP. The two men continued an uninterrupted friendship until the death of

Kodama in 1984. For these reasons, they were often considered to be as close as two peas in a pod. In fact, as stated, their behavior differed radically even before World War Two, and all the more so after the war.⁵⁰

Business first

For Sasakawa, business came first, and not politics. This can be seen from his behavior, going back to prewar days. He observed a simple principle, staying away from visiting acquaintances once they occupied government positions, and taking up with them again only after their departure from such posts.

This was quite deliberate on his part, as he explained, according to a note found in his papers:

I look for friends who point out my failings and comfort me when the going is rough, and I return the compliment. Friends who have a huge success in life don't need me; visitors pour in to see them, like ants converging on sweets. Then, when circumstances are reversed and they are in the depths of despair no one wants to see them. That is the time when I want to be a true friend. People who are in their prime are too busy. One cannot sit down with them and have a chat. However, when they have few visitors, that is when one can really talk. My principle, in this as in other matters, is to do the opposite of the norm.⁵¹

He went against the stream and was consistent in this regard, both before and after the war. He did not try to use people in power to promote his own interests.

Sasakawa built a fortune — several times in his life. He used this money for generous purposes and for causes close to his heart, keeping little or nothing for himself. In fact, he led an austere and frugal life beyond all imagining for a man of such immense wealth. People who lived promiscuously without working drove him to distraction. He was terribly critical of right-wingers who conducted themselves that way, the record shows. One day, a certain rightist of the *ronin* type showed up drunk at Sasakawa's Osaka office, having traveled down from Tokyo to see him, and demanded money.

Sasakawa was enraged, according to a note he left among his papers. He spoke to the visitor, a young man, as follows:

I do not waste a drop of water. I even stop and calculate when I am not in a hurry which is cheaper, whether to travel somewhere by train or to walk and wear out my shoes. I do not treat myself to extravagant meals. And you, young man, have the

money to buy yourself booze whenever you like it. I am not giving you a cent because it would be wrong for me to do so.⁵²

He kept on roaring:

If you have the money to spend on booze during the day, you should be the one making the donations to yours truly, who gives all his money to patriotic causes.⁵³

Sasakawa was a believer in self-help and independence of mind. He lived simply, and he expected others to do likewise.

Interest in science and technology

A second characteristic that set him apart from other rightists was his keen interest in science and technology. He was highly critical of those who put their “spirituality” before technology, ignoring the latter. To him that was simple arrogance and stupidity, yet far from uncommon. He was an eager pilot — a stunt flyer in his earliest years, as we have seen. He trained himself in aircraft maintenance. He really knew his stuff. He was also far ahead of his time in that he loved automobiles and drove the classic models or whatever came to hand. One major source on the topic of right-wingers in Japan in the 1930s — the *Grand History of the Rightists* — states that “Sasakawa was the only right-winger in those days who piloted his own plane and flew wherever he chose to go in the world. He left the country speechless.”⁵⁴ He was a special breed before the war, but there was no one in public life who rivaled him after the war either in respect of his passion for flight.

Naturally, he was not content with just flying himself. He wanted others to share his passion. Early in 1932, he organized a National Volunteer Flying Squad (Kokusui Giyu Hikotai), which he headed. The objective of this flying club was like all such organizations to teach people to fly, in this case civilians. The National Volunteer Flying Squad (hereafter NVFS) was officially a volunteer body. However, it had a serious underlying purpose. The intent was to furnish a supply of trained pilots who could be mobilized for action in a national emergency.

Sasakawa foresaw, in other words, that the age of the airplane had come. He had known this from his teens. This was not a new insight, but one he wished to share. At the time, the civil side of the aviation industry was in a slump in Japan, and he sensed that this was bad, not only for the future of the industry but for Japan’s national mission. In keeping with the times, he saw this mission as a duty to peacefully spread the authority of Japan’s emperor all over the world. At a time when there was an urgent need to strengthen national defense, especially air power. National defense — or, more exactly, the expansion of the military, led by the na-

tion's strength in the air — had to be mobilized as a top priority; and to promote civilian air services and keep them in top form was obviously desirable. The urgency of the situation may be seen from the wording of a prospectus put out for the NVFS. The prospectus stated:

In terms of performance, an aircraft is just that — there is no distinction between a civil plane and a military one. In an emergency, air strength needs to be mobilized, just as any other organ of the nation, and deployed as a front line of defense. It follows that if our civil air strength is weak relative to other powers our defense capability as a whole will be inadequate. Can the superior spirit of our people, outstanding as it may be, make up for inferior defense? Recent wars have shown quite clearly that notwithstanding our unparalleled spirituality and the great bravery of our fighting men we still have little chance in modern warfare [unless we are fully prepared in the air, on the ground and at sea].⁵⁵

What Sasakawa is saying here is fundamentally different from the line taken by the *norito* fundamentalists, who were believers in Shinto, pure and simple. The latter spoke of repelling B-29 bombers by using bamboo spears. They put their hopes in another kamikaze, a miraculous divine wind like the typhoon that saved Japan by smashing the fleet of the invading Mongols in the twelfth century. To Sasakawa, that was all nonsense. He was a self-proclaimed pro-German and pro-Italian Anglophobe, but he was reluctant to fight America up to the very last moment when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

Corresponding with the admiral of the fleet

He knew all too well that in all probability Japan stood no chance against the superior industrial, scientific, and technological strength of a formidable foe like the United States. His certainty on this score brought him into contact with men of like mind, notably Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the vice minister of the Imperial Navy and commander-in-chief of the Combined Fleet destined to attack Pearl Harbor. Letters written by Yamamoto to him are kept among the Sasakawa Papers.

Here are some key passages:

If there is war no amount of bragging will stop a single enemy bullet. That makes the mission of our fleet all the more grave. There is nothing for us to do but to apply ourselves assiduously to training, and do our best. (9 October 1940)

If war breaks out between Japan and the United States, my destination will not be Guam or the Philippines. Nor will it be Hawaii or San Francisco. It has to be the streets of the District of Columbia — Washington, D.C. We will have to seize the White House. Are our statesmen ready for this, I wonder? Do they have the resolve and the confidence? (24 January 1941)

How pitiful! There are these people who say that Chiang Kaishek cannot be defeated, because he is receiving a trickle of supplies from the Anglo-American forces sent overland through Burma. If we cannot put down Chiang Kaishek, how can we hope to defeat the Anglo-American forces in the field and subjugate East Asia under a new order? It is perfectly absurd.⁵⁶ We have to be coolheaded and think matters through. Just suppose: should the UK and US forces cross the oceans and mount a direct assault on us, will there be a single brave Sagami Taro (Hojo Tokimune, 1251-1284, a regent of the Kamakura Shogunate at the time of the attempted Mongolian invasions) in the whole of Showa's realm able to stand and resist the increasingly menacing enemy? (12 February 1941)

Primacy of aeronautics

Sasakawa, one may be sure, fully shared the beliefs confided to him by Admiral Yamamoto, probably Japan's most distinguished military officer of that period.⁵⁷ Certainly, Sasakawa, whether by design or force of circumstances, distanced himself from almost all other rightists in Japan and conducted himself unlike any of them. Thus, in keeping with his passion for aviation, he constructed an entire airfield, for training purposes, in 1934. The location was Nakakawachi County in Osaka. Sasakawa billed this as an "air defense field." As such, it was the first in the nation. To construct the airstrip and facilities, he raised funds from business people in Osaka and the surrounding Kansai region, and contributed money himself. Sasakawa took the view that the airfield should not be private property and donated it to the Imperial Army, on one condition: that his volunteer flying group, the NVFS, could be based there. That was agreed.

In August 1935 Sasakawa and many of his top lieutenants in the PPP were arrested without warning and charged with the blackmail of some of the most important private sector companies in Osaka. They were held in prison for three years while their trial dragged on, as we shall see later in this chapter. In 1941, when the Great Japan Aviation Association (GJAA) was formed to integrate all civil aviation activities in the

country, Sasakawa dissolved the NVFS, thinking that its mission was over, and donated all its facilities and aircraft to the GJAA.

This illustrates how Sasakawa thought as regards property. He gave unstintingly for the benefit of the public. He believed in big gestures.

One final note is in order on the history of the NVFS. Women were welcome to join the unit if they wished to learn to fly or to maintain aircraft. No other male leader in Japan treated women equally in that era. Sasakawa was the sole exception.

IV

1941-1945

On the side of the people

The third point that distinguished Sasakawa from other rightists was his unswerving dedication to the public interest, in the sense of the people's daily lives. Few other right-wingers in Japan ever entered parliament or had any respect for parliamentary institutions. Nor did they demonstrate much interest in the common people, let alone devote themselves to working on their behalf.

Just as Sasakawa was exceptional among rightists in the prewar days in that he had money, and just as he was quite unique when it came to mastering and applying modern technology, notably aviation, in the national interest, he was equally unusual in his curiosity about the basic issue of how to govern a nation. The Sasakawa papers include the following thoughts dating to prewar times:

The secret of good governance, I believe, is the ability to satisfy as many people as possible. For that, the basic requirement is to know what grudges people hold, and what hopes they entertain. The way to find this out is for politicians and people in public life to go to the people. I make it a point to frequent public baths and barber shops. I ask masseurs to come to me, because those who have lost their sight seem to me to have a healthy sixth sense. I even use fortunetellers, to let me study and understand what moves people twenty-four hours a day. To deal with grievances the people's representatives must not be obsessed with face-saving or with personal honor.⁵⁸

Sasakawa was the last person to care about "face-saving and personal honor." One of his first actions when he was elected to the House

of Representatives, the Lower House of Parliament, in 1942 was to disperse with the first-class free travel pass that came with his seat. Instead, he went second class. According to him, riding first class was like being in solitary confinement. One could not communicate with anyone. In the second-class coach, he could hear people's complaints and aspirations. That could be useful. The job of an elected representative of the people, he considered, was to address those complaints and to let people realize their hopes. The Sasakawa papers show that he applied similar principles to his PPP. To mark the tenth anniversary of the PPP in April 1941, he issued a statement to "Our One Hundred Million Brothers and Sisters" (Ichi Oku Kyodai), pledging that: "The Party will keep pushing forward as your representative to resolve all your complaints and grudges."

Sasakawa had the feelings of the people at heart. He showed this not only while he was serving in parliament, but afterwards when the war had ended and he no longer held a seat. In December 1945 he had entered Sugamo Prison in Tokyo as a Class A "war criminal suspect" (hereafter without quotation marks). Shortly after that, he became embroiled in a debate about the treatment of the remains of those killed in action overseas. Writing from prison, he submitted the following statement to an Allied Forces inspector, making a plea against discrimination between officers and lower ranks:

Our party, the Patriotic People's Party (PPP), makes a point of marking the return of the remains of those killed in action by sending welcome parties to the station. We carry a flag draped in black. However, the remains are treated according to a class system even then. The armed forces division concerned sends a high-ranking officer to be there when the remains are those of officers. But not when they are of members of lower ranks. Once deceased we are all the same as human beings. I was infuriated by the discrimination, which I considered wholly unreasonable. I made it my practice to be at the station when I was in Osaka, together with members of our party who were always there for the homecoming. I sent a protest to one army division responsible for this discriminatory practice. On another occasion, the remains of a certain civilian employee of the army arrived on a freight train. Someone on the station staff, knowing of our party's position on this matter, contacted us in advance.

The party made a solemn protest to the army minister. The media duly covered this protest, whereupon the infuriated army spokesman accused the PPP of being leftist through and through, from the president, that is myself, all the way down.

The army sent their military police to summon me for a reprimand. I stood my ground, and told them that I was only making a legitimate demand, and I had no bad conscience. I refused to bow.... These are the reasons why I and my party were labeled as “liberal.” I insist to this day that we are neither left nor right, but a patriotic group on the side of the people.⁵⁹

“On the side of the people”

Sasakawa’s notion of being always “on the side of the people” bears further examination, in the context of his wartime duties while serving in parliament. Here is an extract from a speech he made in the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives on 10 February 1943, about the time the war could be seen to have turned decisively against Japan on almost all fronts, and with mounting military casualties — an unusual time for a member to complain about the privations of working people. Still, in his animated style, he gave voice to the woes of ordinary Japanese:

A few days ago three men visited me from my home town and explained why they could not work as hard as they would like to. They were a farmer, a laborer and a low-wage earner. Let me tell you briefly what the farmer had to say. First, he had not enough fertilizer to increase production. Second, the viscose rayon clothing everyone was forced to wear instead of the traditional cotton was not strong enough for working in the fields. Third, the government had on two occasions forced farming households to donate rice they had set aside to last them until the next harvest, whereas they had been assured that they could depend on rations. What incentive is there for farmers to work under such conditions?

Fourth, on top of it all, the president of the Osaka Prefecture Food Corporation, a former governor of Mie Prefecture, receives a salary of fifty thousand yen — ten times what he earned as governor — while under the wage control ordinance the farmers have to work all night without sleep in the most productive rice paddies for three yen and forty sen a day. They are prepared to do their utmost to serve the country until we are victorious. They tell me that if they have to labor to produce cheap food to feed more people, they will endure every hardship — but not to pay fifty thousand yen to a public corporation president who comes to his office by car and sits there all day in his comfortable chair doing nothing. They don’t have the incen-

tive to work to pay such a man. I strongly believe that this has to change. We must think of the farmers and workers who sweat and toil in all weathers.⁶⁰

How to respond to such a cry of pain? Needless to say, the response was lame. Ishiguro Takeshige, the vice minister from the Agriculture and Forestry Ministry, took the floor. He not only failed to respond properly, but made things worse. "Sir, the remuneration of the public corporation president is twenty thousand yen." Sasakawa shot back:

All right, let's say twenty thousand yen, but that is still four times his salary as governor...and it is more than likely that he is receiving substantial secret funds [*kimitsu-bi*] under the table as well. Still, let us say he is getting twenty thousand yen and, according to what we hear from the vice minister, is suffering gravely in the course of his present duties. It would be scandalous if he received twenty thousand yen for idling away his time. It is only to be expected that he works. I would like you to ponder deeply and to have empathy for a farmer who toils in the paddy, with sweat on his brow in all kinds of weather.⁶¹

Sasakawa did not mince his words, so the family papers show, as on the topic of prison conditions, a subject on which Sasakawa had strong personal views. Following his experience of incarceration from 1935-1938 on charges that were eventually dismissed, he made a point of inspecting prisons wherever he went, at home or abroad. Asked one day by a journalist how he was able to see much on just a short visit to a country overseas, he answered:

The usual way would not take me far. I enter by the "front door" when I visit a country — I meet my hosts, usually heads of state or high officials, and observe the niceties — and I leave by the back door that they were not expecting to show me, that is to say, the prisons. This approach gives me a rough picture of a country.⁶²

Sasakawa reserved his harshest comments, however, for conditions in his own country. As a member of parliament, he took his opportunity to loose off a few rounds at government and the administration of prisons, based on his own experience of three years in confinement:

The Ministry of Justice handles the most important commodity, the human being. In this matter I can say with confidence that I am a professional with a bitter experience behind me. For this rea-

son, I always check on the prison policy of any country I visit, be it Germany or Italy, Mongolia, China, Korea or even Manchuria.

I make it a point to do so, and I judge a country on this basis.... One day I visited a Korean prison to comfort and encourage the inmates. We talked about the food. The warden explained that he as well as the director general of the Justice Ministry were under pressure for feeding the inmates "too well." Why should unproductive inmates eat better than ordinary Koreans, that was the question.⁶³

I met the [Japanese] governor general of Korea on behalf of the warden of that prison. Inmates suffer from psychological stress, I said. They are dropouts from society, really. Today's prisoners are not "unproductive," though. They work more than those outside, actually. I have visited prisons in Kyoto, Osaka and Kobe, and I found that those serving their sentences are contributing enormously to the war efforts.... I have seen them working for the country with my own eyes. People do not know this, and complain that those who are "not productive" should not be fed so much. This is wrong.

I make it a point to visit prisons all over the country, to encourage the inmates.... It is not that they are bad people. Their minds have been damaged. All that is needed is for them to change their mindsets. I go in and I talk to them. I say that at this time of grave national crisis they have to change their attitudes. Second, they should atone for their sins with full sincerity. The best way to do that is by their actions. I remind them that they should not degrade themselves by thinking that as ex-convicts they will always be criminals.

I urge them to change their souls and be models to those outside. I call them "dear citizens" to their faces. I let them know that I do not look down on them. I am convinced that they have increased their production by 20 to 30 percent compared to the prewar period. As they are contributing so much to the country I would like someone to calculate the number of hours they work as overtime or the amount of work they actually perform, so that their time in prison can be shortened by that amount.⁶⁴

So much for his attitude to "the most important commodity." Who can doubt his sincerity, in view of his actual words spoken in parliament in the middle of a war? No other member of parliament, it is safe to say, could have taken up the issue of prisons. He rose naturally to the challenge, and he learned to have empathy for those at the bottom of society from his own experience of prison.

Not without reason he called his party the Patriotic People's Party. He liked the name. It was perfectly natural for him to address his message to society on the tenth anniversary of the party to the "Dear hundred million brothers and sisters" of his country.

One day, on being thanked by someone he had helped out, he responded:

All the one hundred million children of the emperor are brothers and sisters, and it is only natural for a brother to help out another in need.... It is a human obligation and one's right to do so. I enjoy being on the helping side. When you succeed later, keep this in mind and help others...and serve society. You need not write me a long letter of appreciation at a time when goods and energy are wanting. Now, you are in the rut of misery. Put yourself to trouble on behalf of others once good fortune has come your way, and you will be the richer for it.⁶⁵

"No reason to oppose democracy"

The political changes propelled by the United States after the war left many in Japanese politics floundering. He "found no reason to oppose the democratization of Japan, which had come about as a result of accepting the Potsdam Declaration."⁶⁶ As stated earlier, he "had gone into politics fired by democratic principles to represent the interests of the people." Nonetheless, it was a crucial moment for Sasakawa, as for all Japanese. Many of the myriad right-wing groups in the country dissolved and disappeared. Sasakawa pressed on. His party — originally the Patriotic People's Party before the war, then the Patriotic Alliance (Kokusui Domei) during the war — changed its name again to the Japan Workers' Alliance (Nihon Kinrosha Domei). Sasakawa, however, did not participate in the Japan Workers' Alliance (JWA). He had made up his mind to be sent to prison, and there was a high possibility that he would be executed as a Class A war criminal suspect, or so he believed, going so far as to prepare a tomb for himself in the Kansai. However, he actively supported his old PPP comrades Fuji Yoshio and Yoshimatsu Masakatsu in leadership roles within the renamed party.

Professor Maruyama's criticism

In due course — years after the end of World War Two — Japanese historians analyzed the fate of the nation's many right-wing groups. Foremost among these scholars was Maruyama Masao of Tokyo University. His studies of postwar nationalism in Japan included essays gathered together in his *Collected Works*.⁶⁷

In one such essay he noted how Sasakawa and his colleagues re-named their wartime Patriotic Alliance as the Japan Workers' Alliance. Maruyama pointed to the JWA as an example of a right-wing organization that ostensibly changed its colors, but in fact simply took down one set of signboards and repainted them in democratic hues, while in fact retaining the same people and all the characteristics of the old party. Maruyama's point might have applied to many right-wing groups and to some members of the old PPP, who professed new democratic faith while clinging fast to their rightist ideals, though not to their former leader. Sasakawa had no need for repainting the signboard.

Back in the 1930s, when right-wing groups had sprung up like bamboo shoots after a shower, the PPP stood out due to its brilliant campaigns.⁶⁸ This had much to do with Sasakawa's able leadership, his power of action, his gift of self-expression, and his commitment to his people. He was a born leader who faced the post-1945 era head on.

V

His tenets

We now turn to Sasakawa's beliefs. They were the core of what defined the PPP. His basic tenet was his concept of "brothers and sisters" — the universality of humankind. He applied this not just to his countrymen and women but to all peoples of the world, regardless of ethnicity and across national borders.⁶⁹ In his vocabulary the word *kokusui* or "patriotic," as found in the name of his political group Kokusui Taishu-To (Patriotic People's Party), alluded to the beautiful old traditions of Japan and absolutely not to a chauvinistic ultra-nationalism of the type found in the 1930s.

For Sasakawa, the reign — the existence, not the rule — of the emperor was the foremost feature that constituted the "enviable tradition" of his country. Along with this went the values of filial piety and the love of parents for their children. Parents and children were all children of the emperor and formed "an inseparable unity." He liked to say that "the love between a mother and her child" created an inseparable bond, as was the case between Ryoichi and his own mother. The parents' protection of their children and the children's devotion were "the spirit of Japan." "Anyone who does not understand this is not worthy of being Japanese, nor a child of the emperor."⁷⁰

Today, his slogan "The World Is One Family. Human Beings Are All Brothers and Sisters" comes to mind. From his point of view this was a continuation of his prewar thinking, and not an abandonment of his

prewar position. So to nurture universalism, total freedom from racial prejudice, was the fourth characteristic of his PPP group.

Taiwan and Korea

Sasakawa applied his notion of universalism first to those neighbors in Asia whom Japan had colonized a century earlier. He saw the concept of “brotherhood” working in the cases of Taiwan, colonized in 1895, and Korea, annexed in 1910. Their peoples, according to him, had “thereby become Japanese — the children of the emperor.”⁷¹ He applied the same notion of “brotherhood” to those other neighbors in Asia whom white imperialists had colonized. His thinking was expressed in a manifesto that Sasakawa issued on behalf of the PPP on its tenth anniversary in early 1941. The party’s “avowed objective,” he said, was “to save our one billion brothers in Asia from untold suffering and misery.”⁷² He developed his thinking on this subject in remarks he made in the Imperial Diet in the thick of World War Two in 1943:

I speak as a frequent visitor to Korea and Manchuria. Friends from the Korean peninsula say that they want to become “true Japanese,” especially now. However, certain obstacles hamper them. They say that, while “true unity” is encouraged between Japanese and Koreans, still they are aware that their treatment is not equal. If we call them “children of the emperor,” they say, they want to be treated just like real Japanese. To begin with, there is no equal treatment even in such a simple matter as crossing the Korea Strait by boat between Pusan and Shimono-seki. Koreans, including those of high rank, are required to show their identity cards. But no Japanese, even a jobless tramp, is required to present a document of any kind.

Second, Koreans who finish school and pass the high-level civil service examination equivalent to the Class 1 examination for elite bureaucrats in Japan are not offered promotions to compare with those accorded their Japanese counterparts with inferior exam results to theirs. Third, let me mention a matter that applies to all Koreans living over there on the peninsula. A good Korean friend of mine who uses a Japanese name and speaks Japanese as well as any native, says that Koreans are not allowed to enter Japanese schools. My friend had expected his child to be treated as a Japanese, but when the time came for him to be enrolled the child was rejected. The child now realizes that he is different and begs his parents to explain to him why he cannot go to school with his friends.⁷³

In these remarks in parliament, made in wartime, Sasakawa stops short of showing sympathy for Korean nationalism or for Korea's wish for independence from Japan. His remarks reflect the times, and for that one has to make allowances. It was a time when full Korean independence from Japan still seemed out of the question. To become a Japanese national was the only way for Koreans to achieve equal treatment. However, it does not require great perspicacity to detect a vein of thinking — of sympathy for Koreans in the street — that few other members of parliament would have considered, let alone voiced in the Diet.

Once Korea obtained its independence, on 15 August 1945, Sasakawa turned sympathetic to the cause of Korean nationalism and became respectful of their independence as his homage to the tomb of An Dhung-gun (1879-1910, a Korean independence activist who was executed for murdering Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese prime minister and former governor-general of Korea). A cynic could say that he cut his cloth to the times. But it might be closer to the truth to say that he showed his universal respect for humanity when the time came in 1945. When Korea was Japan's colony he pushed for Koreans to be treated on the same footing as Japanese. Once the nation regained its independence it was only natural for him to show respect for Korean patriotism.

Lessons for a Chinese visitor

This attitude was clear even before the war as regards China, which was never a colony of Japan. Sasakawa tended to take an unambiguous stand when faced with something he did not like. When a visitor from China asked Sasakawa for an introduction to the Japanese military authorities, saying that he would like to work for Japan. Sasakawa brusquely turned him down, saying:

I expect any Japanese or Chinese — it makes no difference which — to be true to his country. As a Japanese I will work for Japan, and I would like to be of benefit to China.

You are Chinese, so you must first work for China, and then think of ways to be of use to Japan as well. That is the way to create goodwill and unity between the two peoples. You tell me that you want to work for Japan rather than for your own country. Japan does not need any Chinese who forgets his country like that. Therefore, I decline your request for an introduction."⁷⁴

Asked by the Chinese visitor for advice — the man was seemingly hard-pressed — Sasakawa responded that:

It is unreasonable to ask any Japanese to forget Japan and work for China. By the same token, it would not be right for a true Japanese to ask a Chinese person to forget his country and work for Japan. Nothing comes of such unreasonableness. If you want my friendship in the future, please observe the following six rules. One, be so kind as to point out what I and my country lack. Two, tell no lies. Three, be strict in your use of time. Four, dispense with formalities. Five, keep your promises. Six, please do not treat me to dinner.⁷⁵

Wang Zhaoming

Sasakawa spoke his mind. Materials found in *Sasakawa Papers* show that he made numerous trips to China during the war years, times of tremendous tension between the two countries, and in turn received visitors from China in his capacity as a Japanese member of parliament.

He was on friendly terms with Wang Zhaoming (1883-1944), a senior Chinese politician who had studied at Hosei University in Tokyo. Wang had worked with Sun Yatsen (1866-1925), the first president of the Republic of China, and later in life, when China was riven with conflict, served as a pro-Japanese leader based in Nanking.⁷⁶ A first meeting between Sasakawa and Wang took place in Shanghai — we do not know exactly when. The family papers show that Sasakawa spoke out bluntly in a manner indicating that he played a certain role in Sino-Japanese affairs although not in the government.

He told Wang:

I have pioneered to have your government recognized in Japan, so I am accountable to my people for whatever happens to your government. Let me tell you about myself. I always seek as friends those who are ready to point out my shortcomings and who stand by me in hard times. Therefore, I am kind to others. Up to now Japanese people who have visited Your Excellency must have brought you fine presents. I have brought you the gift of my soul, which I am now glad to bare. If you do not like it, still please accept what I say in the spirit of what I have just said.

The key to good government is to satisfy as many people as possible. For this, one must listen widely to the people's grievances as well as their hopes, and do all in one's power to help them realize their dreams.

I have visited your country a dozen times, and have asked those I have met in every walk of life for their candid views as to why Chinese people continue to support Chiang Kaishek, even

though he is responsible for repeated defeat in battle. I have inquired how popular support can be turned away from the Chiang regime in Chungking to the Wang government in Nanjing. I shall now report to you my findings.⁷⁷

What Sasakawa said then, we do not know. There is no official report. But he must have spoken sharply, to judge from his own notes. He recorded that “members of the [Wang] traveling party all turned pale with astonishment.”⁷⁸ A staunch nationalist himself, Sasakawa did not trust foreigners who had no love of their own country or government leaders who did not have the support of their citizens, even if they were well disposed toward Japan.

The issue was evidently one of trust.⁷⁹

The eight corners

Sasakawa’s transborder doctrine of brotherhood and sisterhood, it is clear, had something in common with the doctrine of “Hakko Ichi’u” (Eight Corners of the World under One Roof), which served as a slogan for Japan’s overseas adventurism in the 1930s.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Sasakawa’s postwar saying, “The World Is One Family. Human Beings Are All Brothers and Sisters” was derived from “Hakko Ichi’u,” according to Awaya Kentaro, a critic.⁸¹ Another noted slogan of the prewar era, “our one billion brothers in Asia,” has its foundation in the Pan-Asianism of the era and served as a powerful ideology used to legitimize Japan’s advance overseas. For Sasakawa, these slogans meant realizing world peace and liberating Asian peoples suffering under the yokes of the Western colonial powers, Britain, France, and the Netherlands. One could criticize him for hypocrisy for not arguing the case for the independence of Korea and Taiwan, if he was serious about liberating Asia. This is logically possible, but it was just too unrealistic a proposition at the time.

What is important in all this is that there was no essential difference between the Sasakawa who led the PPP before the Pacific War, and the one who touted the high-sounding cause of “The World Is One Family. Human Beings Are All Brothers and Sisters” after the war. This does not mean that he covertly remained a nationalist after 1945, but that his version of nationalism did not conflict with open internationalism from the beginning.

Watching the world

Sasakawa’s internationalism far transcended “Pan Asianism” long before war broke out in the Pacific in 1941. When Italy invaded Ethiopia in

1935 some members of his NVFS wanted to join an Ethiopian Air Force. "They felt righteous indignation that Italy, which regarded itself as one of the world's civilized powers, should bully a small, less-developed state, and were determined to back up Ethiopia without fear in the face of Mussolini's black shirt [brigades]." ⁸² While he was sympathetic to the feelings of his men, Sasakawa could not agree to them joining the Ethiopian forces to fight Italy under the prevailing conditions.

However, on 3 August 1935, he organized and chaired an Ethiopian evening in Osaka, and he invited those connected with Ethiopia and living in the Kansai region to attend. The meeting passed a resolution to establish a Japan-Ethiopia Association, in order "to crush the despotic ways of the white race and to fully assist Ethiopia." ⁸³

But some years after that Sasakawa, in common with Japanese officialdom, became a supporter of the Japan-Germany-Italy axis. He underlined his position in no uncertain way in late 1939 and early 1940 by flying to Europe in his plane, the *Yamato*, and paying a courtesy call on Benito Mussolini in Rome. ⁸⁴ This was far from being consistent. But by then Italy's control of Ethiopia was a *fait accompli*. The Japanese were in a dilemma: whether to build an anti-white alliance to oppose white colonialism, or tie up with Germany and Italy, the "late modernizers," and fight against the vested interests of the "early modernizers," meaning Britain, the United States, and France; or to succumb to the whims of the United States and other leading powers. This was a dilemma broadly shared among the Japanese at the time. And Sasakawa too was unable to solve this paradox. Given the international milieu, the nonwhite alliance was the worst option, as an "alliance of the weak," and as such it ran counter to Japan's national interests. To collaborate with the Anglo-Saxon powers was the safest choice, but this meant vindicating world domination by the whites and the vested interests of the advanced nations. The Axis Alliance provided a middle alternative not as weak as a nonwhite alliance, but it was nonetheless a weak alliance among the late modernizers, and represented a risk. The middle course provided a choice that could gain considerable support within the nation.

How had this come about? The Great Depression of the 1930s had triggered a rift between the advanced countries and the late modernizers, including Japan. As Japanese products became the targets of boycotts in the home and colonial markets of the major industrial nations, it became progressively harder to align with the Anglo-American side. This became a non-choice. It did not help that Asian countries were colonies under the domination of the Western powers — with the exception of the two Japanese possessions, Korea and Taiwan. In fact "solidarity" with these colonies ("Asian solidarity" was the slogan) had strong support in Japan. The Second World War had already begun in Europe and

it seems not altogether unreasonable, in order to advance the cause of Asian solidarity, for Sasakawa to have judged that it was good to establish ties with Germany. It did not escape him, of course, that Germany appeared to be faring well in the early stages of World War Two.⁸⁵

A constant traveler

Sasakawa was an inveterate traveler. He paid frequent visits to foreign countries long before the Pacific War. This was hardly strange for one who was curious about conditions outside Japan and who loved to fly. This may be seen as a fifth point that set Sasakawa apart from other rightists back in Japan.

As far as I know, his first trip overseas was in March 1932, immediately following the establishment of the Japan-sponsored republic of Manchukuo and half a year after the Manchurian Incident of 18 September 1931, when the Japanese military blew up a major railroad, triggering the start of fifteen years of conflict with China. With the permission of the military, Sasakawa led a group from his PPP to Manchukuo, taking with him as gifts some five hundred barrels of pickled vegetables and three hundred bottles of top quality sake from Nada. This was to “comfort” Japanese army officers on duty there, and to congratulate Pu Yi, the newly designated titular monarch of Manchukuo and the twelfth and last emperor of the Manchu Dynasty — the “last emperor” of China.

Sasakawa continued his journeys overseas. Just going by published newspaper articles, he made fifteen visits overseas between 1932 and the end of World War Two in 1945. This is an astounding record, considering that he spent three years in Osaka prison (1935-1938) during that span of time, and always had a hectic schedule. This was all the more impressive in view of the poor standard of civil aviation and the risks involved in flying during the last part of the Pacific War when the United States had command of the air.

Whenever possible, Sasakawa liked to pilot his own plane, *Yamato*. Perhaps the most remarkable of his flights was the one to Rome. He was now flying constantly despite the fact that Japanese civil aviation was still at an early stage of development and fraught with danger. In 1938 a Japanese plane had made the country's first round-the-world flight. His flight to Rome the next year was the second longest ever made by a Japanese pilot. Today, one flies to Europe nonstop in eleven to twelve hours, but at that time Europe was several days away and a risky and expensive undertaking. To accomplish this, Sasakawa started out from Haneda in Tokyo, with overnight stops in Taipei, Hanoi, Bangkok, Rangoon, Calcutta, Karachi, Baghdad and Rhodes, and additional fueling stops in Fukuoka, Guangzhou, Akyab, Jodpur, and Aleppo, before finally reaching Rome.

Flying to serve

Sasakawa liked to talk about his aviation thrills. In a 1942 interview, following his election to the House of Representatives in Tokyo, he is reported as saying:

I make it a point to travel abroad whenever time permits. The reason is indeed simple. If one aims to be a patriot, one cannot afford being a frog in the well, knowing nothing of the great ocean. In every way, I seek as much as possible to expand my stock of information. Armchair theories, half-baked ideas and secondhand knowledge from newspapers and magazines can be very harmful, and do no good at all. I feel that I must share with the people what I have seen abroad with my own eyes and what I have heard with my own ears. Since I flew my *Yamato* to Germany and Italy during the New Year holidays of 1939-40, I have continued to fly.

Last year I covered 150,000 kilometers in 380 hours, which translates as flying on average of at least an hour every day. I travel to bring news of Japan and what Japanese people are thinking, and to monitor international developments affecting our compatriots working abroad. I do my best to bring comfort to our brave fighting men, and at the same time to listen to their true voices, which I then communicate back to policy makers in Japan. In other words, I try to serve my one hundred million compatriots by listening to their grievances and by representing them.⁸⁶

Some of those close to him were alarmed by his practices. His brother Ryohei asked him not to fly, because planes crashed all the time. Sasakawa admonished his younger brother, saying that it was too late to make a fuss after an accident. It was like fetching a doctor after a funeral. It was vital, he said, to take precautions to avoid accidents. Because of crashes, people are careful, therefore one can feel quite safe, he maintained. One has to be most careful when there are no accidents.

Materials found in *Sasakawa Papers* show that he knew the excitement and the danger of flying when air travel was at an early stage, having trained as a pilot. He knew that performance improved day by day, but he also knew the dangers inherent in flying. As a result, he was bold, but he was careful.

One day he was flying back from Shanghai to Fukuoka when the weather turned foul. The plane dropped until it was barely clearing the angry waves. The passengers were beside themselves with fear. A sol-

emn-looking man with the air of a government official sitting next to Sasakawa asked him what he thought would become of them. Sasakawa replied that there was nothing to be done but to leave it to fate. Pilots want to live too and they do the very best they can. The passengers should trust their pilot to do everything possible. If the plane went down they would all share the same fate. There would be

a big splash, and that would be the end of us.

This is a time to cultivate your mind...it doesn't help to worry. In an hour we'll be in Fukuoka so use the time well for mental training. When one has learned to overcome the fear of death in a perilous situation like this, one can say he has achieved manhood. I used to be terrified of flying in the beginning, but not now. In the end, there is nothing more important than disciplining your mind.⁸⁷

VI

Jail and trials

Sasakawa experienced tremendous ups and downs throughout his life. Thus it was in the 1930s. Prior to the Pacific War his greatest ordeal came in August 1935 when he was arrested, together with a dozen executives and members of the PPP, and summarily confined in Osaka Prison for three years, pending trial and without bail. The charges were extremely grave for one in the public eye. He was alleged to have ordered party members to blackmail outstanding companies — Takashimaya, a leading department store, Osaka Railway and Hankyu Railway, two rail companies in the region, Iridismin Mining, Tokyo Life Insurance, and Godo Electric.

The case dragged on and on while the prosecutors took their time. Finally in December 1938 the court of first instance handed down a verdict: seven out of a total of seventeen defendants were found not guilty on the grounds of insufficient evidence. One of these was Sasakawa. Ten of the defendants were found guilty and were sentenced to penal servitude of eighteen months to one year.

Still, this was not an end of it. The prosecution appealed, and the Osaka appellate court reversed the verdict on Sasakawa as the leader of the PPP. He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison (altogether six hundred days on remand). Two PPP executives were given sixteen months of hard labor in prison, but were given credit for pretrial detention. Two others were found not guilty. Sasakawa and the PPP appealed on the day the verdict was handed down. The highest court (Daishin-in)

under the Meiji Constitution then reversed the original decision and sent the case back to the lower court.

These tangled and time-consuming legal proceedings finally came to an end on 9 August 1941 when the reconvened Osaka appeals court found all seventeen defendants not guilty.

A legal process that dragged on forever

It was a marathon case for Sasakawa who had never until then been in trouble with the law. Altogether, the legal process consumed a total of six years, from the day of the arrest to the final verdict excusing all the defendants. Not that the case was without its nonlegal side effects. The PPP suffered a massive setback as a result of its president and executives being held in custody for over three years, and then tied up for another three years of legal proceedings with no means of redress. It is no wonder that the party celebrated its tenth anniversary under the slogan, "The Tenth Anniversary of Adversity."

At that time, in the spring of 1941, the PPP executives had yet to be cleared of wrongdoing. It was a time of great uncertainty for the party and a period when party leader Sasakawa suffered, both physically and financially. An excerpt from the concluding statement by the prosecutor, of which a stenographic record is preserved in the Sasakawa family papers, attests to this. The prosecutor said: "It has taken a full two years (in fact, Sasakawa had served more than three years) to conclude the criminal investigation, so this turned into an unexpectedly long trial. I can imagine that it was an extremely trying time for the defendants."⁸⁸

Sasakawa was severely restricted in his freedom to raise funds for the party. This was at a time when he had to look after not only his own family, but the legal and household expenses of all the men arrested and held in prison. There are indications, judging from the way in which events unfolded, that the police, the pretrial investigators and the prosecutors deliberately prolonged the trial. If this is true, the prosecutor who sympathized with the accused in his summing up could have been a hypocrite.

To top it all, the prosecutors and the media deliberately spread negative information about Sasakawa. On 18 August 1935 the Osaka edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* splashed a headline that read: "President Sasakawa Decides on PPP Dissolution: Tells Prosecutors He Reflects on Past Conduct." The prosecutors were very likely the source of this groundless report that upset rank-and-file members.

In fact, a lot was going on behind the scenes, as indicated by Sasakawa in remarks he made to the presiding appellate judge some years later:

At the very beginning, when I was confined in prison, the prosecutor incited my co-defendants and witnesses to take sides against me, claiming that I had used my men to amass bank deposits in the amount of hundreds of thousands of yen as well as property worth tens of millions, and that I had not, even then, sent anything to support and encourage them.

[He continued, still addressing the judge:] Two of the members of the party believed this to be true, having been so informed, and they resolved to kill me in revenge, and that was not all. Certain witnesses, incensed with righteous indignation decided to denounce me.

The prosecutors had invented a total fiction. Sasakawa completed his statement to the appeals court, saying: From the day of my incarceration in August 1935 to the day of my release from prison in 1938 I have not only had things sent to the men directly under my orders, but I have taken care of their families to the best of my ability. I beg you to question them.⁸⁹

Acquittal after six years

The prosecutors in the lower court called originally for Sasakawa to be sentenced to six years of hard labor, and for sentences ranging from three years to ten months for the other sixteen defendants. At the end of it all, as we have seen, all seventeen executives of the party were acquitted. How is one to account for the wide gap between the prosecutors' initial demand for heavy sentences and the final complete acquittal? To judge by the statement made by the prosecutor to the appeals court, what counted most was a difference in perception of the real nature of the PPP as a party. According to the prosecutor's statement,

In the final analysis, I believe there was a drastic difference of perception regarding the PPP held on the one hand by the court of first instance, meaning the judges of this lowest court where the judicial process began, and on the other by the police, the prosecutors and the preliminary examiners. This is to say, while the original judgment had not clearly stated this, it could be deduced from reading the records and the decision that the court had deemed the PPP to be a patriotic organization professing nationalism. And it had seen the party conducting itself since its inception in numerous patriotic activities. It saw no grounds for criticism in that.

In fact, to see the PPP instead as an organized group of gangsters or to interpret individual actions as self-seeking publicity is

wrong. In contrast to the court it appears to me that the police, the prosecutors, and the preliminary investigators, while not entirely ignoring particular actions — acts done for the state — come across as going out of their way to find any peccadillo, even a small amount of self-advertisement. These differences, I believe, have resulted in a large discrepancy in the decisions, amounting to two-faced or conflicting perceptions of the PPP, as stated above.⁹⁰

The statement of the prosecution to the appellate court is an arbitrary one, signifying that judgment was made based not on evidence of concrete criminal actions but on a perception of the essential nature of the organization that is alleged to have created the incidents. This is almost confessing that the true purpose of the wholesale arrest of the PPP executives was to suppress the “dangerous” group.

According to the statement, the “essence” of the party was determined first by its principles and platform and second by actions taken by the party and its members. It raised an argument based on the dubiousness of the past records of the main members of the PPP. As to this second point, they were close to pressing mostly trumped-up charges.

To begin with, the prosecution avoided reference to Sasakawa’s personal records, saying that he was not president but just an advisor and not a central figure at the time of the founding of the party. This implied that the police and the prosecution could not find any fact that could resemble a criminal act on his part.

Hatakeyama Yoshio, who was the head of the executive council of the party (*bitto somu*) and a central figure at the time of the founding, was picked on as having a past record of blackmail, and having been found guilty by the Osaka District Court in August 1930 and sentenced to prison with hard labor. Likewise in November 1934, he was sentenced by the Osaka Ward Court to three years of hard labor, also for blackmail.

However, Hatakeyama was not a defendant in the case that involved Sasakawa. The 1930 judgment predated the founding of the PPP. The case that was concluded in 1934 had nothing to do with the PPP, as the prosecutor of the appeals court himself stated: “Needless to say, the PPP probably had no knowledge of this.” It was a strained interpretation to have used these episodes as grounds for arguing that the essential nature of the party was dangerous.

The prosecutor, in his statement, then proceeded to take up the case of Fuji Yoshio, another PPP leader who, again, was not a defendant in the case before the court. The prosecutor noted that Fuji had been sentenced by the Osaka District Court to prison with hard labor, having

been indicted for inflicting grievous bodily harm, interfering with official business, violence, and blackmail.

As in the case of Hatakeyama, Fuji's indictment had nothing to do with the entirely separate case of alleged blackmail before the court. But still the prosecutor claimed that these cases illuminated the essential characteristics of the PPP. That was far-fetched reasoning. The prosecutor cited two other members of the party, Takada Takashi and Itakura Yazaburo, noting that they had been indicted by the Osaka District Court in 1929 and sent to prison with hard labor for committing acts of violence, for blackmail, and for interfering in official business.

These cases too, like those of Fuji and Hatakeyama, arose prior to the creation of the PPP in 1931.

The prosecutor of the appeals courts also introduced into his statement a selective polling of twenty adults by the police, asking for their reactions to the not-guilty judgment handed down by the court of first instance. The prosecutors claimed in their statement that only three out of the twenty adults approved of the decision, while the other seventeen were critical of it. "You judges and prosecutors really don't know how society works, do you? Don't think that we are that stupid!" was cited as one reaction. In exchange, the counsel for the defense asked for the names of those who had been polled. The prosecutor rejected the request, however, saying that he did not wish to cause inconvenience to the people who were polled.

It is wrong, in the first place, to take public opinion into account in a judicial matter. Needless to say, the opinions of twenty unidentified people have no value as a popular opinion poll, either. As to this matter, Sasakawa himself noted, as found in a document stored among the family papers, that:

The police aimed to make us into social outcasts. They collected the views of those opposed to Sasakawa, and neatly presented them to the court. The prosecutor was embarrassed when asked to produce the names of those who had been questioned.⁹¹

Tough conditions in jail

The conditions inside Japanese prisons at that time were extremely severe. On this point Sasakawa noted:

We were sent to prison at the height of the summer. The first winter, lacking any heating in the cells, was indescribable in its severity... we could have frozen to death. In the hot weather, the little draught that came through a crack in the wall could hardly be felt, but in winter it turned into a biting wind.⁹²

In summer, the prisoners came under attack from lice, fleas, mosquitoes, and bedbugs. However, Sasakawa, the incurable optimist, used the experience to good effect, turning the hardships into mental training.

His friends asked him later how he had coped with the conditions. Kodama Yoshio, for example, who had himself had direct experience of living in prison, asked Sasakawa what he had learned from being inside. The latter responded positively as always:

Human beings can change, depending on their level of maturity. There are, of course, different ways to cultivate the mind. Zen meditation is one. Coming through a grave illness is another. Or surviving under fire in battle. Or being confined in prison. I was lucky, in fact. I was sick when I was sent to prison. I had the opportunity of a lifetime. No visitors were allowed, no alcohol, no smoking, and no sex. In my case, three years of life in prison proved to be more effective than hundreds of years of Zen. Co-habiting with fleas and bedbugs was no hardship, always assuming that I had no guilty conscience. Living under a strict prison regime, I was able to conquer all my illnesses.⁹³

He had suffered, he said, from scrofula, liver ailments, pleurisy, diabetic conditions, and gastro-intestinal ailments. On top of that, prior to prison, he had hankered after money, position, women, and alcohol, and he was overly sensitive to criticism by others. In prison he lost these disabilities. Once he could accept reality philosophically, the thunder on a stormy day sounded to him like heavenly music and earthquakes lost their power to frighten him. They just meant the earth was enjoying itself. After that, he thought of all his trials and tribulations as his sworn friends. Nothing, he found, no amount of thunder and lightning or severe earthquakes could shake his determination.

“Is there any better reward than this?” he asked. “Three years of imprisonment have made me what I am today,” he told Kodama. “In that sense, I am forever grateful to the police and the prosecutors.”⁹⁴

Whether one is in or out of jail, paradise is a place where one has perfect bliss. You must think that prisons are filthy, but it is not so. Prison is a pure and clean place where one’s freedom is restricted, and where one practices austerities, nonsmoking, and abstention from alcohol. Your bed and board are free, and so is your health care. You are served your meals on time, and you have people patrolling every five minutes to check if everything is all right. In conclusion, there is no better place than the cells to train your mind. If you have committed a crime, on the other

hand, it is hell, wherever you are. Only if one commits no evil, then one is in paradise, even in prison.⁹⁵

The praying mantis

Sasakawa may be assumed to have been speaking the literal truth to Kodama, as found in his papers. The most memorable experience from his time in prison was the friendship he developed with an unexpected partner, a praying mantis.

I bought some flowers while I was in prison. Along with the bouquet, as it happened, came a huge praying mantis. To while away my time while in solitary, and to study whether human love can be communicated, I decided to share my cell with him, as a partner in life. First I tried peeling a grape in the middle of a meal, offering it to him. But he just looked annoyed.

He was too cross to eat it. At every meal, I tried again to share a grape with him, but he rejected my gesture every time. One day, however, whether out of sheer hunger or because he at last accepted my gestures of affection, the time came when he consented to nibble at a whole grape I had peeled for him. In the end, he would come to me for a grape at every meal.

The cell was poorly ventilated, and it was boiling hot. So in the evening, he cooled himself by clutching onto the wire netting. At dawn, he would land on my head to say hello, and tease me with his whiskers to wake me up. He became a treasured member of my family. Thus, I confirmed the fact that human affection can be communicated to an insect. One day, it seemed to me that his time had come. Gradually, as I watched, his color changed and he took on the hue of dead grass. He seemed not to be able to see any more. He stopped moving about, and he even took no more water. I stroked the feelers at the tip of his tail and touched his leg, and he gently twitched.

It was close to the end. He continued to breathe quietly, and he took a whole day and a whole night to fade away. He died as a drop of dew falls from off a leaf. I carefully observed his way of dying, and I came to see that nature keeps a peaceful death in store for the humblest of creatures. By contrast, we human beings pride ourselves as the lords of creation, but our end is worse than that of a praying mantis. We die such unnatural, artificial deaths. I felt that we must put aside the notion that people live, basically, to fifty. That way, I became convinced that we can die as nature intended. This conviction cured me of all illness. I

never used medicine again, and the color returned to my white hair.

This story illustrates Sasakawa's eternal optimism, as well as his warm-heartedness and his scientific mind.⁹⁶

Learning the law in jail

Thanks to the prolonged trial, Sasakawa mastered ways in which to present himself in court. He learned the skills needed to fight a legal battle. One of his party members asked him about this, it seems. He wanted to know how Sasakawa came away from it without any conviction.⁹⁷ Sasakawa replied:

It may happen that a doctor will make a mistaken diagnosis. In the same way, a good man can be mistakenly perceived as a villain. I spent three years in prison on remand. I experienced two trials during the next three years when I was out on bail. And after six years I was finally found not guilty.

The secret is simple: one, I had in fact done no wrong; two, throughout the questioning and examination process by the prosecutors, in the preliminary hearings and in the first and second courts of instance, then the high court and finally the Osaka Court of Appeals, I stated nothing but the truth. Finally, I convinced them. I never pandered to the prosecutors or the preliminary investigators. I made no false presentations just to get out of prison, even if I wanted to. Three, I never played mean tricks or sought to get my fellow defendants indicted, nor did I try to conspire with them so that we did not contradict each other in giving evidence. As a result, the guiltless person that I am received a verdict of not guilty.⁹⁸

Another of his associates asked Sasakawa what one should do if one came under suspicion. Sasakawa responded:

Everyone wants to be released from prison as soon as possible. That is understandable. But the police and the prosecutors will not let you out until they have completed their investigation. And, just imagine you want to stay longer inside, they will not let you do so, once their investigation is over. So be composed and be patient. Always tell the truth under interrogation, and even if you are tortured or beaten.

Never seek to appease them. It is your right to speak truthfully. It is not an obligation. Look at it that way. Work with the

person who is examining you, to establish the truth. Heed what I say and the truth will come out. This remains the basic principle — to defend your rights and illuminate the truth.⁹⁹

Years later when World War Two had ended, Sasakawa volunteered to go to prison in Sugamo, as we shall see in the following chapter. He was motivated by a desire to speak out in defense of the emperor and in the interests of Japan at the Tokyo Trials. His successful experience in winning his earlier legal battle gave him confidence that he alone could do what he had in mind.

VII

1941-

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on 8 December 1941, Japanese politics evolved in a manner dictated by the government. The first elections held during wartime were the twenty-first elections for the House of Representatives, the Lower House of Parliament under the bicameral Japanese system, held in April 1942. These were extraordinary elections in that they were dominated by the ad hoc creation of an entity the government called the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (IRAA) (*Taisei Yokusankai*).¹⁰⁰

The IRAA was headed by the prime minister. It was set up basically to enhance support for the government through the election of a massive majority of members, all "recommended" by the IRAA, to support the war effort. The way it worked was that the IRAA designated "desirable candidates," and provided them with various means of support, including money.

On the other hand, the "non-recommended candidates," as they became known, meaning all those outside the scope of the IRAA, were officially regarded as undesirables from the government's point of view, which was to give utmost priority to the war. The campaign activities of "non-recommended candidates" were markedly restricted. All public meetings and election rallies were observed by the police, who could suspend such meetings at will. Posters were torn down as soon as they were put up.

Not that the system was totally foolproof. There were still eighty-five successful nonofficial candidates for the 466 seats that were open to contest, who had dared to campaign without backing from the government. This number is impressive on the high side in that the Japanese military were brilliantly successful in the early phases of the Pacific War, and to stand aloof from them invited violent repercussions.

Sasakawa, entering national politics for the first time, stood as a non-recommended candidate for the fifth electoral district in Osaka, the core constituency in the Kansai region that returned four members to the Lower House. He was elected with the second largest number of votes, attracting just one thousand votes fewer than the top candidate in the district, and fully ten thousand votes ahead of the next candidate.

Wartime member of parliament

Sasakawa decided to stand “because the prestige of an elected member of parliament was at its lowest” at the time, and he wanted to do something to bolster the legislature. Indeed, members were extremely restricted as to their actions. Once elected, in order to speak, everyone in parliament had to become a member of the Imperial Rule Assistance Political Association (IRAPA) whether they had stood as “recommended” candidates or not in the elections.

This IRAPA was the parliamentary arm of the umbrella organization. Sasakawa became a member of the group, having no choice in the matter, but for good measure he kept his PPP going. It was his way of expressing his resistance to total conformism. However, as the war went on and the situation deteriorated, he came under pressure and was obliged to change the party name to “Patriotic Alliance” (Kokusui Domei). “*To*” or “party” signified in Japanese a degree of independence — a special interest group, and not a general interest one — and “*taishu*” or “People’s” had a populist tinge that made the wartime authorities uncomfortable.

Sasakawa was far from content. He felt himself put in an awkward position. Asked by a magazine reporter at the time “what do you consider the hardest thing in recent times?” he responded:

I had intended to serve my country as a spokesman for my one hundred million brothers, as long as I live. But in a period of centralized control when the government decides everything, even the elected representatives of the people are controlled by the IRAPA. It pains me terribly that I cannot be useful, even one hundredth part of what I would like.¹⁰¹

He made his dissatisfaction known. Using his authority as a member of parliament Sasakawa called for the abolition of the system under which certain candidates were “recommended” by the authorities and others not. He called for the deletion of Article 7, Sections 2-4, of the Wartime Special Penal Code (Senji Keiji Tokubetsu Ho), a draconian law that greatly limited freedom of speech; and he urged especially strongly the abolition of an infamous “provisional law” (Genron Shuppan Shukai

Kessya nado... Rinji Tori Shimariho) giving the authorities powers to control the rights of speech, publication, assembly, and association. His chosen forum was the Diet and there he gave his views regarding the system of “recommended” candidates in his blunt way, as he did, for example on 6 February 1943 when he addressed the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives. The war was starting to go very badly it had become much more difficult to criticize the government:

At present, the people are all rallying in support of the Tojo government. We do not receive stipends from the State, but we are resigned to living under strict government control, and prepared to sacrifice ourselves, if need be, at a time of national crisis. Every single one of us goes along with this. In the last election, however, the government constantly talked of the need to resolve strife within the country and the need to enhance a law-abiding spirit. Our people are law-abiding. What good reason do you have to divide the emperor’s children into foes and friends by making such rigid distinctions between those members of parliament who were recommended and those of us who were not?

I am not raising the issue just because I was not recommended by the government. A kind word from the prime minister to me — I received such assurances from his secretary, Mr. Akamatsu — is all that it takes for me to forget the matter. But let me say this. Elected members of parliament are elected. There is no difference between those who are “recommended” by the government and those who are not. I happen to know one member of parliament who is much embarrassed because he was recommended and people in his constituency now label him as the representative of the police — indeed, as a man who was recommended by the police, would you believe it. I beg you to ponder this.¹⁰²

Not an MP to keep quiet

Sasakawa did not let matters rest there. He was outspoken on other crucial subjects of that era in parliament, notably on the whole question of freedom of speech. He criticized the Wartime Special Penal Code and he attacked the provisional law just mentioned, that controlled speech, publication, assembly, and association — in roughly that order. He did so on the original grounds that suppression of the freedom of speech would impede the war effort.

Furthermore, he supported a formal proposal for deletion or abolition of the two laws in question; this was jointly submitted by a handful of members of parliament including Sasakawa. The proposal stated in part:

It is the essence of the national polity [*kokutai*] to allow free expression of opinion and uphold high public morale. In this spirit, to place trust in the loyalty of the people, respecting the basic principles of the constitution, and to be open-hearted and respectful and encourage honest discourse is of utmost importance.¹⁰³

In other words, the proposal argued that recognizing freedom of speech in its various forms was far more effective than disallowing open exchanges of opinion between people when it came to carrying on a war. That was because it heightened loyalty and the will to fight. Needless to say, such assertions were unacceptable to the government of the day.

Sasakawa found himself at an impasse. Discouraged by the lack of scope for action in parliament, he shifted his focus to extra-parliamentary activities. He organized local town meetings, and he went on trips overseas. These were important activities for a man who considered that the role of a parliamentarian was to represent the will of the people. He made public what he thought, as best he could. Soon after his election in 1942 he wrote an article for the Osaka edition of the *Asahi Shimbun* about his aspirations as a member of parliament and criticizing the new system of “election by recommendation.”

An elected representative of the people must know more of the world than just the two cities of Tokyo and Osaka along with his home and the parliament building.... Mito Mitsukuni¹⁰⁴ was a great leader, because he had a profound knowledge of society. Government must make as many people happy as possible. Elected parliamentarians must go forth from the Diet building in Tokyo and see the world. This holds particularly true when our world as Japanese has expanded greatly to include Manchuria, Mongolia, China, French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), Thailand, Malaya, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies. As soon as this parliamentary session is over, I intend to fly to Manchuria.¹⁰⁵

An itinerant parliamentarian

True to his word, Sasakawa embarked on his foreign travels, though Japan was at war. Indeed, according to the minutes of the House of Representatives, Sasakawa did not speak in parliament after its eighty-first session closed in 1942. He stuck to his independent line. When asked by the IRAPA to serve on its board and to oversee the lives of the people, he declined, saying that he was unable to discharge such duties as he would be kept busy on the mainland in China, and in Southeast Asia.¹⁰⁶

The press of the time gives some hints as to his movements. From what I could glean from the newspapers, Sasakawa toured Manchuria's strategic border areas with the Soviet Union in October 1943. He visited northern and central China in November that year. In the following year he again went to China. While there, he kept an appointment with Wang Zhaoming, the head of the provisional government in Nanjing. In April 1944, he made yet another trip to China. In July, he was in Korea. With the war approaching its end, he still went on foreign trips. He was in China in April and May 1945. This was at a time when Japan had lost its supremacy in the air and overseas travel had become ever more dangerous as each month passed.

Visiting the jails

Sasakawa left almost no records about this dramatic period in his life, and the papers yield little. As for his activities within Japan, we know that he made frequent public speeches and that he was particularly interested in visiting prisons.

A single notebook exists dating to 1945. This is kept by his eldest son, Katsumasa. It is a small official notebook issued by the House of Representatives. Based on the entries in this notebook, we know that Sasakawa made visits to several prisons around the time of New Year's Day 1945. He was at Osaka Prison on 2 January, then at Kyoto on the following day, then at Nara on the fourth, at Himeji the next day, back in Osaka the seventh and Wakayama the day after that. He took presents and spoke with the inmates in the prisons in each city.

He was extraordinarily thorough in preparing his visits. Due to lack of communication, a planned call on the prison in Kobe on 6 January could not be arranged. On 8 March he spoke at Shizuoka Prison. His empathy for people in jail was very real, and to judge by these records Sasakawa put his heart into every visit. He did more. To cheer up those on the home front he gathered professional entertainers, who were at a loose ends at this low ebb in the nation's fortunes, and he established and headed the Japan Entertainment Company (Nihon Geino-Sha). He was not always present but someone close to him usually was. Sasa-

kawa's faithful "companion for life," Shizue, was a member of the company and played the *biwa*, a four-stringed Japanese lute, and recited Chinese poetry.

A losing war

By early 1945, it was clear to informed parties, if not to the general public, that Japan was fighting a losing war. Early in this last year of the war Sasakawa was in frequent contact with Shigemitsu Mamoru, a distinguished diplomat and statesman, who served as foreign minister in the Koiso cabinet.

Shigemitsu resigned along with the rest of the cabinet in April 1945 and was succeeded by Togo Shigenori. However, with the installation of the Higashikuni government after the war ended, Shigemitsu was back in his old job as foreign minister. By this time Sasakawa was among his confidants.

According to entries in his 1945 diary, he and Shigemitsu met on forty-three occasions between January and September. Allowing for the fact that Sasakawa spent half a month in China between April and May 1945, he and Shigemitsu met frequently. In March they met fourteen times. They must have met on average every other day. On the night before the emperor broadcast Japan's surrender to the Allies on 15 August, the two were in the coastal city of Atami.

They also had a base in the capital. According to Shizue's recollection, Sasakawa had secured a Western-style home in Iikura, Tokyo, so that Shigemitsu, who had lost a leg, would have a comfortable place of his own in the event that his house was destroyed in the Allied bombing, which had by that time flattened 90 percent of the city. Sasakawa preferred a Japanese-style house, but he made this effort on behalf of Shigemitsu.¹⁰⁷

Sasakawa had a bird's-eye view of the evolution of Japanese affairs at this time, but he was also a participant in events. As one who was close to Shigemitsu he must have had advance warning of the historic defeat that Japan was about to suffer. It is almost certain that Sasakawa knew ahead of time of the decision that the emperor should accept the Potsdam Declaration made by the Allies in late July 1945 calling for Japan's unconditional surrender. Yasuoka Masahiro, who was asked to go over the emperor's statement, did so apparently at Sasakawa's office in Ginza.

15 August 1945

Sasakawa has left a record of his state of mind at the astounding time of the surrender:

Although I expected the war to end in our defeat I put in my best efforts up to the very end as a fighting citizen. I can comfort myself at least on this score. I knew that there was nothing more that I could do now that the situation had come to this pass. I took heart, however, in reckoning to myself that I should foresee, as clearly as possible, all the events that would follow and do the best I could. The fifteenth of August duly came, and I found myself carrying out my plan.¹⁰⁸

Sasakawa's calm is impressive. It is unlikely that Sasakawa is dissembling in his words above or just being wise after the event. He had decided, by that time, to make himself a defendant in the forthcoming war trial, and to do his best to put Japan's case before the court and defend the emperor from any suggestion of responsibility for the war.

Once it was clear that the Japanese government was about to accept the Potsdam Declaration, Sasakawa immediately began putting his affairs in order. On 14 August, on the eve of Japan's surrender, he decided to dissolve the Patriotic Alliance. He also dissolved his Japan Entertainment Company in the same year.

His main decision was to withdraw from parliament. On 7 September 1945, immediately after the end of the eighty-eighth extraordinary session of parliament, he tendered his resignation to Shimada Toshio, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, saying that this was "to assume my responsibility for approving the military expenditure [budget] and numerous wartime laws." The Speaker declined to accept his resignation and told Sasakawa that the resignation of a member required a resolution of the whole House. This did not satisfy Sasakawa. On 5 October he appealed to his parliamentary colleagues to resign en masse.

A call for resignation

A copy of his letter of appeal to his fellow parliamentarians is among the Sasakawa family papers. It reads as follows:

Gentlemen, fifty days have already passed since 15 August. Whereas the prospects for our defeated land are terribly severe, nothing has been done to prepare for the future as regards state policy. The bureaucrats among us have reorganized the National Youth Corporation (Zenkoku Seishonen-dan) and the Workers' Association for National Service (Romu Hokoku-Kai) but this looks like window-dressing and little more.¹⁰⁹

In coping with the many issues that must inevitably be addressed at this point, and while taking into account the whole matter of relations between our country and the victorious pow-

ers, nothing less than a bloodless revolution can save our country from further decline. I fear that if we do nothing the situation will evolve contrary to our hopes. There can be a gradual hardening against us of public opinion among the Allied Powers. We would miss our opportunity to arouse the courage of the people, overcome all the hardships ahead, and build a new nation. Japan needs to start anew, as a peaceful state, and to earn the trust of the world. To do that the first consideration must be to replace our wartime leaders. The military no longer exists.¹¹⁰

Sasakawa then came to his proposal. Those responsible for Japan's first defeat and surrender in history must draw the obvious conclusion. They must pack up their bags and go.

In his words (*Ed.*: underlined in the original text):

At this point our senior statesmen, the heads of our *zaibatsu* business groups and our bureaucrats must take responsibility. In other words, it is indispensable that our elder statesmen all return their honors and ranks and withdraw to their homes; the *zaibatsu* chiefs must resign from their position, and sever all ties with public life; as to the top-ranking bureaucrats, all those who rank above section chief [*kacho*] in the central government ministries, and all those above the rank of department chief [*bucho*] in prefectural governments should tender their resignations without delay.¹¹¹

He continued with these sharp words, scolding his parliamentary colleagues by implication and probably aware that they might not take any notice:

Sad to say, it is a deplorable fact that these people have not the slightest remorse, however. I conclude that if we, the elected representatives of the people resign en mass first, then the others will surely follow our example. As you gentlemen will be aware, I have spoken up as a non-recommended representative in the House on a number of issues, drawing a line between right and wrong. I have studied ways to tender my resignation at the end of this extraordinary session, and I have learned that this requires the approval of the House. It seemed ungentlemanly to steal a march on my colleagues and to resign, and so I have reluctantly remained where I am.

My view is that the only way is for all of us, regardless of background, to resign together. If the House of Representatives acts thus, then the House of Peers will do likewise. Hopefully, this

will pave the way for a nationwide “Showa Revolution” (Showa Ishin). With this short letter, I respectfully urge my wise colleagues to support my humble proposal.¹¹²

Sasakawa’s appeal did not fall totally on deaf ears. Eighteen members of the House of Representatives responded to his call for a mass resignation, but the rest sat on their hands.¹¹³

The party changes its name again

At this crucial time, from Sasakawa’s point of view, the question of war responsibility, the process of democratization, and the realization of a Showa Revolution were all one and the same. “Showa Revolution” had been chanted as a slogan all the time by the right wing in the early part of the Showa Era when there was a great deal of state control and a stifling atmosphere. To Sasakawa, “Revolution” (*Ishin*) meant “reform” — democratization and abolition of class distinctions.

Actually, Sasakawa felt the same way before and after the war. In that respect, he had not changed his views.

As I have all along stood for the principles of democratic government, I see no reason to oppose a complete democratization of Japan, to be carried out by accepting the Potsdam Declaration in good faith.¹¹⁴

Here, a brief word is in order on the PPP and what became of it and its members at the end of the war. As already noted, they reorganized themselves as the Japan Workers’ Alliance. Sasakawa supported what they were doing, but he refrained from joining them, as he had made up his mind to be incarcerated in Sugamo Prison along with General Tojo Hideki and other war leaders, as also mentioned earlier.¹¹⁵ In fact, the Occupation authorities put pressure on the newly renamed group; its two main leaders, Fuji Yoshio and Yoshimatsu Masakatsu, were purged along with thousands of other figures from many walks of life. Under the new rules, they could hold no official post of any kind. All political activities were suspended. These moves came as a great shock, as may well be imagined. Yoshimatsu wrote to Sasakawa in prison, to sum up the situation outside:

It’s all over. Running for political office is banned, and all political activities have been prohibited. We are just so many living corpses. We say to each other, first things first, we should be in some kind of business, whether this is out of character for us or not, and make some money.¹¹⁶

Three months later Yoshimatsu wrote: "We are feeling gloomy over the future prospects of Japan. But perhaps those of us who were purged are no longer qualified to have views on the country or our people."¹¹⁷

By midsummer the situation was no better. Yoshimatsu wrote a pathetic note: "The Communist Party is destroying the country. Having been purged, however, all we can do is to watch with our arms folded. I am sorry."¹¹⁸

A prisoner in high spirits

Sasakawa, by contrast, was cheerful, for all that he was in prison facing a possible death sentence. He was in high spirits, day after day. He wrote to his downhearted friends outside, offering them constant encouragement, as we shall see in the next chapter. Just when Yoshimatsu was writing to him about "living corpses" in January 1946, Sasakawa was noting hopefully and positively in his prison diary: "Citizens of a defeated country, such as ours today, have the grave responsibility of doing their utmost to establish peace."¹¹⁹

These were no idle words. In fact, while in Sugamo, he drew up a "Permanent Peace Plan," intended to save humankind, and mailed a copy of this proposal to President Harry Truman in Washington.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, Sasakawa wrote back to Yoshimatsu chiding him for his pessimism:

There is no law or regulation that says a defeated country must unquestioningly obey its conqueror. We should resolutely put forward what is reasonable and just. Whether the victors will listen to us or not is their problem. Silence on the part of the defeated will stimulate arrogance and disdain on the side of the victors, and justice will perish. Defense of justice is the first obligation of every man. Anyone who fails in this duty is without worth or honor.¹²¹

How to run a business

Sasakawa encouraged his comrades, who had now been prohibited from engaging in politics, to go on the offensive. Knowing how impractical and unqualified they were for the world of business he wrote them offering guidance on the basics of trade.

In business, success or failure depends on the seller, the buyer, and the employees. Therefore, make your customers happy and be sure to satisfy your employees. You are sure to fail if you forget that this calls for three-way coexistence.

Total cooperation is what counts. Business has its ups and downs, so take care not to spend wastefully when you are making a profit, because if you fail to control spending at that time, you will instantly go under when you suffer a setback.

Engrave it on your mind to save. Suppose you sold some item and gained a profit of 50 percent, but the price doubled the next day. You would have lost for selling a day early. A company only survives because it saves when the going is good and is prepared for bad times.

Do not forget this. Nothing can succeed if you do things absent-mindedly. Business has to be done at the risk of your life. I earnestly wish that you put your lives on the line and work together.¹²²

He summed up: “Start by saving on expenses, then share your profit with your client, and then, and then only, make money. I ask you to practice what I preach.”¹²³

The leaders of the former PPP applied themselves to doing business as best they might. However, they lacked Sasakawa’s touch, his knowledge, and his nerve. They operated on *samurai* lines — putting honor and personal relations before profit — and they were not successful. Years of painful endeavor followed during which they whittled away Sasakawa’s remaining Tokyo real estate assets.

Fuji Yoshio wrote to Sasakawa on 15 October 1948, just before the latter was released, to report on the lackluster results of the group. Fuji mentioned that one of their comrades, lacking funds, “was barely able to pay the salaries of his staff.” Another colleague was “getting into trouble for failure to pay his tax bill last year.” A third person was “in great distress, along with his family and his friends and everyone in his circle.” Sasakawa was the businessman. His men were lost without him.¹²⁴

The PPP colleagues stay together

But still the old members of the party stuck together, struggling under the tough conditions of postwar Japan. Food was lacking and famine threatened at every turn. Much of the population was homeless, as the cities had been burned to the ground by Allied bombing. Employment opportunities were few or nonexistent, as most offices and factories throughout Tokyo had been destroyed. The black markets prevailed on many a sidestreet. All the prominent right-wing groups had collapsed and fallen apart under the combined pressure of the purges and the economic distress, as Fuji Yoshio reported to Sasakawa on 18 May 1946, naming several well-known leaders from the 1930s:

Yoshida Masuzo from Osaka, an orthodox rightist from the Great Japan Production Party (Dai-Nihon Seisan-To) and the Black Dragon Society (Kokuryukai); Akao Bin of Tokyo, president of the Great Japan Imperial Way Association (Dai Nihon Kodokai); Sasai Kazuaki of the New Japan Patriotic Alliance (Shin Nihon Kokumin Domei); the Japan Progressive Party (Nihon Kakushin To), among others, have all failed, and are no longer in sight.

Our party is the only one that remains in place, while others have transformed themselves. I am all the more in awe of your personal qualities and your love of humankind.¹²⁵

Yoshimatsu wrote to Sasakawa on 25 August 1946: “We are struggling to do business, unfamiliar as it is.” Sasakawa could do little for his men from inside Sugamo. There, momentous issues faced him — matters that had nothing to do with business, but a great deal to do with the future of his country as he saw it.

Notes

1. See Kurose Shojiro, *Sasakawa Ryoichi Den Yonotame Hitonotameni* [Sasakawa Ryoichi, a Biography: For the World, For Mankind] (Tokyo: Chichishuppansha, 2001), 17. This work ranks as a full biography, researched and written by a veteran businessman in Kyushu.

2. Ibid., 17, 19.

3. Ibid., 20.

4. Yamaoka Sohachi, *Hatenko Ningen Ryoichi Sasakawa* [Sasakawa Ryoichi: One of a kind] (Tokyo: Yuhosha, 1978), and Paula Daventry, ed., *Sasakawa: The Warrior for Peace, the Global Philanthropist*, 2d ed. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1987).

5. Known as *Sasakawa Papers* (Sasakawa Ryoichi Kankei Bunsho), they are now kept at the Nippon Foundation. There are no page references. Date unknown. Hereafter cited as Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

6. Ibid.

7. Sasakawa Ryoichi, “Watashi no Teigen: Nikutai Nenrei 77 sai, Seishin Nenrei Jiyu Jizai” [My proposal: Biological age 77; Spiritual age, free], *Zenkoku Motaboto Kyosokai Rengokai Kaiho* [Bulletin of the Federation of All-Japan Motorboat Racing Associations], Fukuoka, 1 September 1976. (Hereafter “The Bulletin.”)

8. Ibid.

9. Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) achieved prominence after World War Two, in 1968, as the author of the novels *Yukiguni* [Snow country] and *Izu no Odoriko* [The Izu dancer], and other works. He was the first Japanese to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Stockholm judges preferred Kawabata, the older candidate, over Mishima Yukio.

10. Sasakawa Ryoichi, *Jinrui Mina Kyodai* [Human beings are all brothers and sisters] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1985), 162-63.

11. Ibid. Sasakawa, never one to deliberately spread word of his private acts of generosity, was not known by the Japanese public to be close to Kawabata, a revered figure.

12. Priest Harada was famous locally because he had been called on to recite Chinese poetry to the Emperor Meiji at the age of eight and was considered a child prodigy. See Kurose, *Sasakawa Ryoichi*.

13. Yamaoka, *Hatenko Ningen*, 48.

14. Ibid., 76.

15. Nihon Gin Ken Shibu Shinkokai [The Japan Recitation, Dancing, and Fencing Association], *Sasakawa Ryoichi Kaicho to Zaidan 25 Nen no Eiko no Kiseki* [Chairman Sasakawa Ryoichi and twenty-five years of the glorious history of our association] (Tokyo: Nihon Gin Ken Shibu Shinkokai, 1993), 5.

16. Yamaoka, *Hatenko Ningen*, 76.

17. Sasakawa Yohei, *Chie Aru Mono wa Chie de Tsumazuku: Doro wo Kabutte koso* [A little knowledge can ruin a man: Be prepared to take the blame] (Tokyo: Crest, 1996), 17.

18. This refutation by Yamaoka itself appears doubtful. Socialist ideas appeared in Japan long before 1914 and were treated by the authorities with horror. Japan's first Social Democratic Party, announced in 1900, was banned the day it was born. Socialism met fierce opposition, as seen in the case of Kotoku Shusui (1871-1911), who was executed for treason.

19. Kurose, *Sasakawa Ryoichi*, 91. All of the above passage relating how Ryoichi ran away comes from Kurose.

20. Ibid. See also Daventry, *Sasakawa*.

21. Kurose, *Sasakawa Ryoichi*, 100.

22. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Not much has been published in the West on the subject of the many small right-wing nationalist groups that appeared in Japan in the 1930s — as international relations deteriorated around the world and Japan's "Fifteen-Year War" with China commenced. The late Professor Ivan Morris's seminal work *Nationalism and the Right Wing in Japan* ranks as a rare scholarly attempt to explore the ramifications of the Right as it evolved during the 1930s and Japan veered toward a collision with the United States and Britain. Morris, a professor of Japanese studies at Columbia University, found that Japan's right wing was divided into scores of small — often very small — groups, sometimes with surprising names, such as the Japan Hobgoblin Party. Sasakawa's Patriotic People's Party (PPP) was one of these small groups. He distinguished himself as its leader by his specialty in aero engineering and aviation.

29. Historians consider that the “Manchurian Incident” began in 1931 and culminated in 1933 in the conquest by Japanese forces of the entire region of Manchuria. The intention of this lunge for control of the northern Chinese province was to enhance Japanese military security in the region, parts of which had been ceded to Japan by treaty, and to secure economic self-sufficiency for Japan. But in the words of historian Mark R. Peattie — (see the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*) this action “instead propelled the nation along a perilous new path of foreign confrontation” with China and the United States, and led to Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations in March 1933.

The Japanese conquest of Manchuria was seen as a major act of aggression. In a surge of criticism, US public opinion mobilized rapidly in support of China and hostility toward Japan. From this point, relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers in particular deteriorated at a rapid pace, leading to war in 1941. The “Manchurian Incident” — a Japanese euphemism that has entered the English language — was a turning point in modern history and helped to poison Japan’s international relations. The generally accepted view is that the “Incident” was driven by middle-ranking officers in the Japanese Kwantung Army stationed in Manchuria, and in particular by Col. Ishiwara Kanji (1889-1949) and Col. Itagaki Seishiro (1885-1946); they and others who sympathized with their cause were able to bring about a shift in the initially very reluctant high command in Tokyo and thereby influence the whole direction of the nation still at that time under civilian control. Much that these army officers did was originally concealed from their superiors in Tokyo, and was entirely unknown to the public in Japan until very much later, by which time it was too late to turn the clock back. How much Sasakawa Ryoichi knew of these events at the time is open to question. Like most ordinary Japanese, he must initially have been kept in the dark.

Nonetheless, he and his party supported the creation of Manchukuo, a puppet state that replaced Manchuria in 1932, and in general adopted the right-wing Japanese positions.

30. This theory was formulated by Minobe Tatsukichi, a professor of Tokyo University, and denied implicitly the right-wing nationalist claim that the emperor was divine.

31. Sasakawa Ryoichi, *Sasakawa Ryoichi no Mita Sugamo no Hyojo* [Expressions of Sugamo, as seen by Sasakawa Ryoichi: Secret records of a “war criminal suspect”] (Osaka: Bunkajinshobo, 1947), 20-23.

32. Prince Konoe was twice prime minister in the run-up to the Pacific War. He served in that post until the autumn of 1941; he handed over the reins of power that autumn of 1941, giving way to General Tojo Hideki, who thereby became Japan’s leader in the Pacific War.

33. Sasakawa Ryoichi, *Sasakawa Ryoichi no Mita Sugamo no Hyojo*, 20-23.

34. Ibid.

35. The colloquial term in English is “hara-kiri.”

36. Ichiki Kitokuro (1867-1944) was a professor of great distinction who served at the end of his career as chairman of the Privy Council. Earlier,

while a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, he was responsible for promoting the theory of “the emperor as an organ of the state,” the implication being that the emperor was not a deity. As a young man, he worked under Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922), a further mark of distinction, given the latter’s eminence as a war leader and shaper of early twentieth-century Japan.

37. Ichiki and Minobe were both professors at Tokyo Imperial University. Neither was harmed by right-wingers, although both were singled out for criticism by the extremists and for many years must have felt their lives were in danger. The above direct quotation dates to 7 July 1935, and is found in the judgment handed down by the Tokyo District Criminal Court, Section 9. See Arahara Bokusui, *Dai Uyoku Shi* [Great history of the right wing] (Tokyo: Dai Nihon Kokumin To [Great Japan National Party], 1966), 218. The date of publication of this rare document is sometime after 1961.

38. Sasakawa associated with some rough characters, some with criminal records, as was to emerge in court — see later in this chapter for an account of his three-year detention, (1935-38).

39. Shihosho Keijikyoku [Justice Ministry Criminal Bureau], *Showa 15 Nen ni Okeru “Kokkashugi” Undojosei no Gaiyo* [1940 Outline of Nationalist Movements] (Tokyo: Government Publication, December 1940).

40. Yui Masaomi, ed., *Kokkashugi Undo* [Nationalistic movements], vol. 6 of *Shiryō Nihon Gendai Shi* [Documentary material, contemporary history of Japan] (Tokyo: Otsuki Shoten, 1981).

41. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*. See the Prosecutor’s Conclusion at an Appeal Hearing (*Koso Shin ni Okeru Kenji Ronkoku*).

42. The PPP, which may have had no more than a few score active members, was one of hundreds of ultra-nationalist organizations called into existence by the exigencies of a terrible age.

43. We may note, however, the accusation made by Kodama Yoshio, while testifying secretly to the US prosecutors in Sugamo Prison in 1947, that Sasakawa had confided to a lawyer that he had received one hundred thousand yen from the Japanese military, a huge sum. Note also Sasakawa’s indignant rebuttal of a charge by a Japanese general, also detained inside Sugamo, that he had taken a bribe from the army.

44. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*. The PPP had changed its name to Patriotic Alliance (Kokusui Domei) by the time these remarks were made. This dates the comments to the wartime period. The party changed its name at the outset of the war under pressure from the authorities, who disliked its use of the words “people” and “party,” seeing them as connoting communism.

45. Koiso Kuniaki (1880-1950) was an army general who entered politics, served as minister of the colonies and governor of Korea, and took over as prime minister from Tojo Hideki in 1944. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal as a Class A war criminal.

46. Kodama Yoshio (1911-1984) represented the Imperial Navy in Shanghai during the Pacific War. He made his reputation behind the scenes as a “fixer” par excellence, with ties to the underworld and with friends in high places in the Japanese war machine. After his release from Sugamo Prison in 1948, the US au-

thorities used him in a last vain struggle to halt the advance of communism in China.

47. Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku Nikki: 1942-1945* [The dark diary: 1942-1945], ed. Yamamoto Yoshihiko (Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 1990), 11.

48. Toyama Mitsuru (1855-1944), a white-bearded, patriarchal figure, head of the legendary Kokuryukai (known in the West as the Black Dragon Society), was considered the grand old man of right-wing ideologists. Older than Sasakawa by forty-four years, Toyama was credited with having played a pivotal intellectual role in swinging Japan to the Right in the early twentieth century. His prestige at the time this diary was written placed him far above younger activists and fixers, such as Sasakawa and Kodama.

49. Kiyosawa, *Ankoku Nikki*, 19. The implication here is that Sasakawa amassed his fortune by acting as a “ruffian and blackmailer.” Kiyosawa does not mention here the fact that Sasakawa and his people had just been acquitted at the end of a six-year judicial process, which began with their arrest in 1935 and detention for three years on charges of blackmail.

50. Sasakawa stayed away from politics when both men were freed from Sugamo Prison in 1948, while Kodama — a bullet-headed man with a shaven scalp, and by repute the big boss of the underworld — plunged into backroom politics, as seen in his fraught relationship with Tanaka Kakuei, prime minister from 1972-74, a principal figure in the 1970s Lockheed scandal.

51. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Arahara, *Dai Uyoku Shi*, 345.

55. Sasakawa Ryoichi, ed., “Kokusui Giyu Hikotai: Enkaku to Taiki” [National Volunteer Flying Squad: Its history and regulations], in Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*, 10.

56. Chiang Kaishek (1887-1976), Chinese leader and statesman, who took refuge eventually in Taiwan in 1948 to escape the communist revolution on the mainland. At the time referred to in this letter, he based himself in southern China as the nation’s main military leader, allied with the United States and Britain as his strong supporters. The latter were sending him urgently needed supplies across the Burma-China border.

57. It is not known how the two men came into contact and developed trust, apart from their common interest in technology and in aeronautics.

58. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

59. Sasakawa Ryoichi, “Bunsho Bango 6 Kokusui Taishu-to no Ryaku-reki” [Brief history of the Patriotic People’s Party, document number 6], in Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

60. Shugiin [House of Representatives], *Shugiin Yosan Iinkai Dai-ichi Bunka Kai Giroku* [First Subcommittee of the Budget Committee] (Tokyo: Government Publication, 9 February 1943).

61. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*. See Zenkoku Motaboto Kyososekosha Kyogikai [Japan Motorboat Racing Operators’ Council], ed., *Motaboto Kyosoho*

Kokkai Gijiroku [Motor-boat racing law Parliamentary minutes] (Zenkoku Motaboto Kyososekosha Kyogikai, 1979).

62. Ibid.

63. Shugiin, *Shugiin Yosan Iinkai Dai-ichi Bunka Kai Giroku*. The force of this Diet interpellation lies in the fact that Sasakawa spoke up in behalf of Koreans. Here was Sasakawa taking an openly sympathetic position in the middle of the war when Korea was still under Japanese rule.

64. Ibid.

65. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*.

66. Sasakawa, *Ryoichi Sasakawa no Mita Sugamo no Hyojo*. The declaration, formulated by the Allied Powers — chiefly the United States and the Soviet Union — in Potsdam, Germany, in late July 1945, called for an *unconditional* surrender. Japan's acceptance of the declaration was announced by the emperor in a radio speech on 15 August 1945, and led to the Occupation of Japan, which lasted from later that year until 1952.

67. Maruyama Masao, *Sengo Nihon no Nashonarizumu no Ippanteki Kosatsu* [Nationalism and the right wing in Japan: A study of postwar trends], vol. 6 of *Maruyama Masao Shu* [The collected works of Maruyama Masao] (Tokyo: Iwanamishoten, 1995), 100.

68. Arahara, *Dai Uyoku Shi*, 345.

69. Compare his TV commercial slogan of the 1970s: "The World Is One Family. Human Beings Are All Brothers and Sisters."

70. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*. Sasakawa believed that a mother's love for her child is universal, which it probably is. So apart from the emperor, things Japanese (*Nihon shugi*) had a common thread throughout the world.

71. Military force was in fact used to impose Japanese rule.

72. Meaning the yoke imposed by white colonialists — Britain, France, and the Netherlands — in colonizing much of China and most of Southeast Asia — Indochina, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia — and India.

73. Shugiin [House of Representatives], *Shugiin Yosan Iinkai Dai-yon Bunka Kai Giroku* [Second Subcommittee of the Budget Committee] (Tokyo: Government Publication, 10 February 1943).

74. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*.

75. Ibid.

76. From about 1940, during the latter part of Japan's fifteen-year war with China (1931-45), Wang ruled a region around Nanking with Japanese civilian and military backing. Meanwhile General Chiang Kaishek, basing himself in Chungking, firmed up his ties with the United States, rallying support for his cause in a struggle for power with Japan and also with Chinese communist forces under Mao Zedong, who was, however, still then not a strong military position.

77. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*.

78. Ibid.

79. Wang died while receiving medical treatment in Nagoya in 1944.

80. The saying "Hakko Ichi'u" is often supposed by non-Japanese to have been conjured up by the Japanese military of the modern period. In fact it

has a long history, dating back to the eight-century *Nibonshoki*, one of six Japanese national histories, published in thirty volumes, which date to CE 720.

81. Awaya Kentaro, "Tokyo Saiban eno Michi" [The road to the Tokyo trials], *Asahi Journal*, 5 April 1985.

82. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

83. Ibid.

84. Sasakawa was photographed wearing a formal kimono, standing with Mussolini.

85. Sasakawa abandoned a plan he had made for a call on Hitler to follow on his January 1940 call on Mussolini.

86. Eigasekaisha, *Eiga no Tomo* [Friends of the film] (Tokyo: Eigasekaisha, 1942).

87. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Under Japanese procedures, it is rare for prosecutors to fail to secure a conviction once a person has been indicted.

98. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

99. Ibid.

100. This body was created by Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro (1891-1945) in October 1940. In effect all political parties were disbanded and the newly created IRAA was in charge.

101. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

102. Shugiin (House of Representatives), *Shugiin Yosan Iinkai Giroku* (The Budget Committee) (Tokyo: Government Publication, 6 February 1943).

103. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

104. Mito (Tokugawa) Mitsukuni (1628-1700), was a promoter of Confucianism and its precepts in the Edo Era, best known for his compilation of *The Great History of Japan*.

105. *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 May 1943.

106. This was as reported in the *Asahi Shimbun* on 14 May 1943.

107. Shigemitsu had lost his right leg in a bomb attack by a Korean patriot in Shanghai in 1932, and he could not sit on a tatami floor.

108. Sasakawa, *Sasakawa Ryoichi no Mita Sugamo no Hyojo*, 18-19.

109. These were nationwide organizations.

110. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsho*.

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. Sasakawa, *Sasakawa Ryoichi no Mita Sugamo no Hyojo*, 62.

114. Ibid., 23.
115. Not that things went smoothly for his colleagues of the old PPP.
116. Yoshimatsu Masakatsu, letter to Sasakawa Ryoichi, 18 January 1946.
117. Yoshimatsu Masakatsu, letter to Sasakawa Ryoichi, 28 April 1946.
118. Yoshimatsu Masakatsu, letter to Sasakawa Ryoichi, 12 June 1946.
119. Sasakawa Ryoichi, *Sugamo Nikki* [Sugamo diary] (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1997), 84.
120. Ibid., 117.
121. Ibid., 439.
122. Ibid., 434.
123. Ibid., 445.
124. Sasakawa, *Kankei Bunsbo*.
125. Ibid.