

Customers, corruption aid organized crime

(Continued from page 9A)

crime in America to be a home-grown variety, indigenous to American soil, rather than a foreign transplant.

We have long known that organized crime and the corrupt political structures of many major American cities enjoy a relationship in which success in one is heavily dependent on the right connections in the other.

In this crucial relationship, the criminal is permitted to produce and provide those illicit goods and services which our morals publicly condemn but which our mores privately demand—gambling stolen but cheap goods, illegal alcohol, sex and drugs.

In return, the criminal must pay tribute to the political establishment.

Social history testifies to how gangsters and racketeers paid heavily into the coffers of political machines in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

THE PERSONS most willing to take the risks involved in organized criminal activity are, and have traditionally been, those who feel blocked from legitimate access to wealth and respectability. More often than not, these persons have been members of minority groups who settle in the slums of our cities.

Ghetto dwellers and their children have found organized crime an open route to escaping poverty and powerlessness. The successful gangster,

like the successful politician, has become a neighborhood model. In addition, proving it is possible to achieve rapid and dramatic success in spite of the police and a variety of oppressors.

At the turn of the century, the Irish were one such minority group. They were quick to band together to form street gangs with colorful names like "The Bowery Boys" and "O'Connell's Guards," and they soon came to dominate organized crime and big city politics.

Once they achieved political power (due at least partly to connections and payoffs surrounding illicit activities), their access to legitimate opportunities increased.

Eventually the Irish won respectability in construction, trucking, public utilities and on the waterfront, and no longer needed to become involved in organized crime.

THE AFTERMATH of World War I ushered in the era of Prohibition and speculation in the money markets and real estate—arenas for power and profit over which Jewish and eventually Italian gangs fought for control.

From the 1930s on, Italians moved into positions of power in both organized crime and politics.

More have since gained access to legitimate means of acquiring riches and respectability, but the cycle continues as blacks and Hispanics seek to rise, like the phoenix, out of the ashes of inner-city ghettos.

CORRUPTION in both government and private business also contributes to the livelihood of organized crime.

There is considerable evidence of police indifference to, and even collusion in, organized criminal activities. The police are usually the only visible representatives of the power structure at the street level where graft and corruption are most obvious.

However, price-gauging by merchants, profits from dilapidated housing for absentee landlords, kickbacks to contractors, bribes to inspectors and the ever-increasing evidence of corruption in the judiciary, city hall and the federal government are equally obvious to the people on the street of the inner city.

If organized crime is indeed an integral part of American economic, social and political life, it becomes easier to understand why law enforcement agencies have met with little apparent success in their efforts to control organized crime.

The principal and direct responsibility for its prevention rests with the "total" community—private as well as governmental sectors.

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Frank Costello (left) was a New York crime boss and alleged gambling czar in the late 1940s and early '50s. Sam Giancana (right) was Chicago crime boss from the mid-'50s to mid-'60s.

Prof. Pitts comments: Trust over terror

By JESSE PITTS
Oakland University
Organized crime provides "immoral services" and goods and services which many people want though middle-class morality says they should not.

Such are drugs, prostitution, pornography, gambling, loans at usurious rates of interest for purposes legitimate and illegitimate. During Prohibition, it was the demand for liquor which required the development of an underground industry which could guarantee regular and substantial deliveries to a large and permanent clientele.

That requires a large scale, reliable and complex organization to produce the illegal goods and services, and it cannot use the state to enforce its contracts and insure the delivery of huge sums of money. There are no receipts in the world of organized crime, no more than in spying.

There has to be a large measure of trust between the operators, and bargaining that the capacity to wield drastic punishment. But, trust is much more necessary than terror, which explains why ethnic and kinship ties are salient in organized crime.

FURTHERMORE, it is impossible to operate complex illegal organizations without securing the cooperation of some members of the police, the judiciary and the legal profession.

"Some think organized crime is inherent to capitalist 'America.' The fact is, it exists in every European nation I know of, including Soviet Russia, where organized crime specializes more in the black market of regular consumer goods.

IN MY OPINION, the scope of organized crime in America is due to the following factors, besides the existence of the largest and richest market on earth:

(1) The comparative openness of our society—the great social mobility—permits the existence of a substantial fringe of disinterested lawyers who still act as "mouthpieces" for organized crime rather than as officers of the court.

In most European countries, law-

yers have a bourgeois origin—i.e., they come from backgrounds where the marginal utility of prestige is greater than the marginal utility of money (their families already have a good chunk of the latter). We have more lawyers on the make, precisely because the law is a much more open profession here than in Europe.

2. The openness of our society is also reflected in the lack of a highly professional civil service, such as exists in Germany or France, where it is much more immune to bribery but also more condescending, more rigid and more aloof from the people.

City machines, based on ethnic or racial voting blocks, are also the result of a comparatively freer society, which grants easily citizenship rights, even to "illegals."

European countries are more likely to use foreign laborers and squeeze or kick them out when they do not need them any more.

It is quite true that organized crime has been one of the avenues of upward mobility for those whose ethnic groups who could wrest some political power from the ballot box and sell it back to their cousins who were involved in the rackets.

The problem for blacks, now that they have secured some political power, is that the city rackets are not as good any more. It remains to be seen whether federal programs can be made into rackets. Urban renewal and PL 243 have probably been more profitable to white slum landlords and real estate dealers than they have been beneficial to the poor for which they were intended.

3) The formalism of American justice, the guarantees it offers the accused, especially the "convict" criminal backed by a clever mouthpiece, are unequal anywhere else in the world.

It took the U.S. Department of Justice, prodded by an angry Robert Kennedy, who six years later put Jimmy Hoffa behind bars. At that rate, the successful prosecution of 5,000 "Mafiosi" would bankrupt the U.S. Treasury.

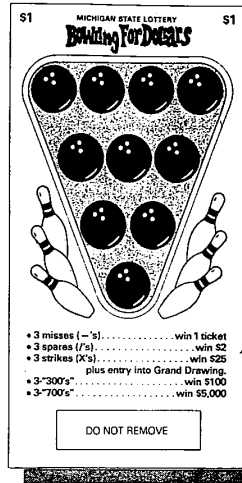
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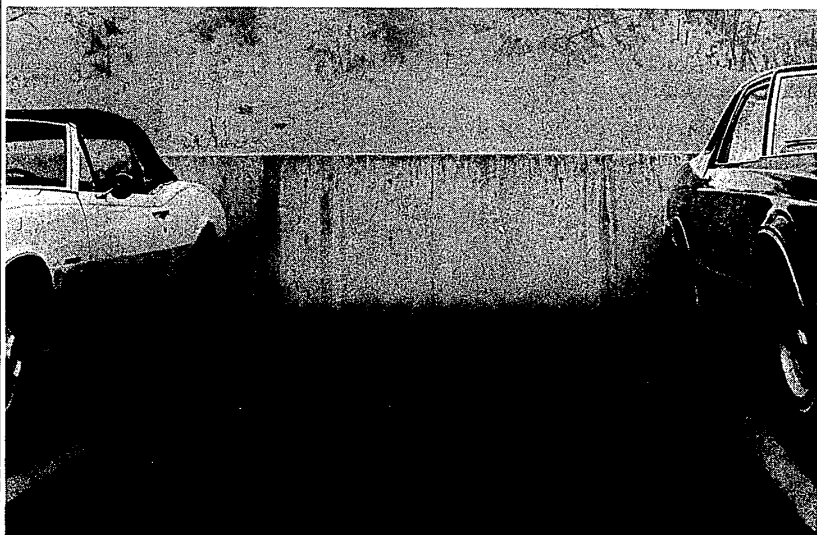
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