Organized crime has a market

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third in a series of 15 articles exploring "Crime and Justice in America." The articles are the text for an Oakland University ourse taught by Prof. Jesse Pitts in the Birmingham Center for Continuing Education.

By FRANCIS A.J. IANNI
Fear of having one's home burglarized, or of being mugged or held at
gunpoint for one's waltet, has left few
persons indifferent to the "crime probiem" in America.

But how many of us who waited in
line to see "Godfather Part II" lost
any sleep that hight worrying about
organized criminal activity in American cities?

Organized crime has become such an integral part of the politics and eco-nomics of urban life that most Ameri-cans do not consider it a personal problem.

cans do not consider it a personai problem. Although a number of illegal activities are defined by law enforcement officials as products of organized crime—drug pedding, gambling, pro-slitution, extortion, and loan sharking—large segments of the public regard some of these crimes as minor vivces. That but no one except perhaps the tax collector. Over the years, organized crime—viveed by many as the special domain of Italian imruigrants—has thrived on public demands for its services and on widespread corruption. It has virtually become an "American way of life."

AS EARLY AS the last decade of the AS EARLY AS the last decade of the 19th century, when 11 reputed
"Maflosi" accused of assassinating the city's police chief were lynched by a New Orleans mob, it was alleged that Italians brought organized crime with them to America. Eight years after the New Orleans lynchings, a Harris Poll indicated that a majority of Americane. af decision



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tion engaged in organized crime in this country which is called the Mafia."

A number of governmental investigatory bodies have held similar views. In 1951 Sen. Estes Kefauver's senate crime committee concluded 'there is a nationwide crime syndicate known as the Mafia (whose) leaders are usually found in control of the most lucrative rackets in their cities." President Lyndon Jhhason's 1965 Task Force on Organized Crime similarly concluded. "There is a nationwide alliance of at least 24 lightly knit Mafia 'Families' which control organized crime in the United States, whose members' are Italians and Sicilansor of Italian or Sicilian descent." According to the task force, these 'families,' linked by agreements and obeying a nine-member commission, cuttrol most of the illegal gambling and loan sharking operations in the United States, as well as narcocitis importation.

The task force also found that the

importation.

The task force also found that the Mafia had infiltrated legitimate businesses and labor unions and had made liaisons that gave them power over officials at all levels of government.

A SMALL BUT growing number of law enforcement officials, journalists and social scientists who have been studying organized crime interpret these same facts quite differently. They see organized crime as an integral part of the American social and economic system, involving 11

the lawless bands of the James Brothers, the Youngers and the Daltons ter-morized the western frontier.

Then in the late 18th century, the robber barons —the Eastern indus-trial glants—transformed that frontier into financial empires.

It was not, however, until the 20th century that the growth of the modern city that organized crime, as we know it today, developed.

THE ORGANIZED crime that now thrives in American cities is rooted in the social and economic history of urban life.

Urban history documents how the growth of the American city resulted in complex but demonstrable relationships among minorities, politicians and organized crime. It is this network of relationships that reasels correctived for features that the superiority of the companies of the



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segments of the American public who demand goods and services which are defined as illegal. 21 organized groups of criminals who are willing to take the risks involved in supplying them and 31 the corrupt public officials who protect such individuals for their own mofit or gain.



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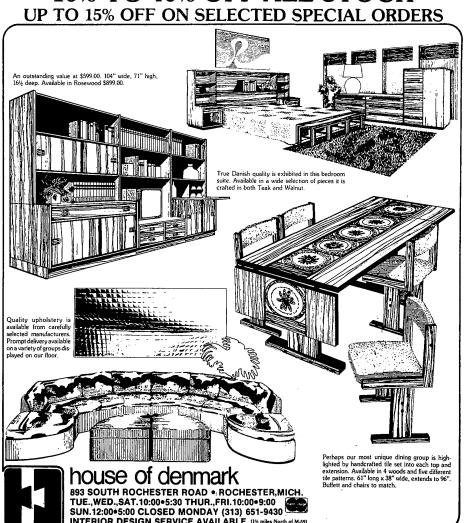


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