

## The syndicate

Dear Editor:

In your issue of November 17-26, Leslie Waller presents the tantalizing thesis that Richard Nixon is really a front man for the Syndicate.

If true, such a thesis raises certain other equally tantalizing possibilities — especially in light of the fact that but for the assassinations of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, and the near-assassination of George Wallace, Nixon's rise from oblivion to national power would have been next to impossible.

In the case of John Kennedy, an attractive, charismatic President relatively immune to attacks from the burgeoning New Left, was replaced by an unattractive, uncharismatic President against whom

the New Left found it far easier to mobilize. Indeed, the existence — or appearance — of a credible threat from the political Left was indispensable to a recouping of the Nixon political fortunes. For, only in a climate of general national paranoia about the Left (so prevalent in Nixon's earlier successes in the late 40's and early 50's) could a Nixon candidacy hope to be viable. But for such a climate to be brought into being the White House would have to be occupied by someone other than John Kennedy.

The case of Martin Luther King was simpler. King's death would serve as a trigger for fresh outbreaks of violence in the black ghettos which, in turn, would serve to fuel both the latent racism and paranoia of Middle America which would then be translated into votes for Nixon.

The case of Robert Kennedy was simpler still. In 1968, he was the only declared candidate capable of defeating Nixon in November.

Finally, there is the case of George Wallace. It is the very essence of simplicity. As a third-party candidate commanding the support of an estimated 20% of the electorate, he would have taken enough votes from Nixon to seriously jeopardize his chances for re-election in 1972.

If one accepts the Waller thesis, therefore, one cannot help but wonder whether the aforementioned assassinations and near-assassination were merely the work of 'lonely nuts' acting out their own schizoid fantasies — or whether they were 'contracts' put out by the Syndicate to pave the way for the Second Coming of its favorite Godson?

# HOODS IN POLITICS

(Editor's Note: In the Free Press of November 17, 1972, Leslie Walker, author of the best selling book, *The Swiss Connection*, speculates that Nixon is the first United States President under the control of organized crime. The article published below, like the similar one in the current issue of *Sundance* magazine, definitely does not draw the conclusion that Nixon himself has engaged in criminal activities, but does present some disturbing and grim facts which indicate that the President indeed does socialize and do business with members of the world's largest association of criminals. If this is true, it is not far fetched to ask, as does a letter writer on Page 4, Part Two of this issue, whether Nixon "has been made an offer that he could not refuse," as in the motion picture *The Godfather*.

The following article is part of a much larger research project on the U.S. electoral system done by the North American Congress on Latin America and printed here by permission of NACLA, Box 226, Berkeley, California 94701. Names of the individual researchers may be found at the end of the article on Page 6.)

## A NACLA RESEARCH PROJECT

Amid all the talk of scandal and corruption surrounding the Nixon Administration, there has been a strange silence concerning one very important group associated with Richard Nixon. For just as the great corporations like Boeing, ITT and the big grain dealers have demonstrated how effectively they are able to use friends in high places, there is another enormous conglomerate in this country that has clearly demonstrated its influence in the highest spheres of government. That conglomerate, with an annual income of over \$20 billion, is called the National Crime Syndicate.

Organized Crime is a peculiar form of capitalist organization, faced with certain restrictions to which its "legitimate" counterparts on Wall Street and in board rooms around the world are not subject. It cannot lobby in its own name and public contact with politicians is discouraged. Communication with the government must be extremely discreet; no White House luncheons or conferences are open to the press. Instead, relations are carried out through a series of intermediaries — businessmen operating in that gray sphere between legitimacy and illegitimacy and masked by a veil of legal corporate structures.

Crime is an industry with its own particular form of development. Every year hundreds of millions of dollars accumulate from illegal operations — gambling, the sale of narcotics, stolen securities and other goods. Every year — obeying an iron law of capital — these funds must be invested to assure expansion. One of Organized Crime's most urgent needs today is a system of fronts — corporations and people — through whom enormous sums of illegitimate money can pass into the socially acceptable process of exploitation. The continued growth of organized crime has depended on the formation of an elaborate banking structure designed to "launder" illegal money and the creation of corporations into which this cleansed cash can be funneled.

During Prohibition days the Mob, or what was to become Organized Crime, accumulated a vast amount of wealth. As working people were hit by the Depression and the upper class blithely enjoyed the excitement of the speakeasies and wore themselves out dancing the Charleston, a new breed of men grew up. This period has been called the gestation stage of Organized Crime. During the crash the old run runners were among the only people who had ready cash. They had not put their money in banks nor had they invested in the stock market. They had plenty of liquid capital and continued to make more every day. As a small indication of their resources, they had built up a war chest of \$27 million which would provide a base for new activities when Prohibition came to an end.

The Mob took advantage of the situation and began to expand quickly, moving into new areas of the country — California, Florida, Texas — and buying up real estate and small companies. This expansion took the form of increased activities in already profitable spheres such as gambling, prostitution and drug traffic, and a highly organized move into new geographic areas as well as non-monopolized sectors of the economy. It was a perfect time for the move; both businessmen and politicians were hungry for cash, and the enriched Mob was more than willing to buy its way into the mainstream of American economic and political life.

It was during the late thirties and forties that Organized Crime was able to forge an organic link with growing groups of regional capitalists. These groups were largely centered around the non-monopolized sectors of the economy and were based for the most part in service industries, such as restaurants and tourism. Unable or unwilling to attract Wall Street financing for their economic growth, they turned instead to the National Crime Syndicate. It was a courtship of convenience and a marriage of profit.

While regional gambling centers in the Midwest and South were extremely profitable it was the moves into California, Florida and the Southwest which were to become the real economic bases for Organized Crime. These areas were relatively undeveloped in the 1940's, had the tourist attractions of sun and surf, and were close enough to the U.S. borders to facilitate the importation of narcotics. Moreover, all these areas could provide an ample supply of ambitious politicians who would be in need of additional funds.

## Nixon Makes his Connection

The man who orchestrated this transformation of Organized Crime into a nationwide conglomerate is Meyer Lansky, the chairman of the board of the National Crime Syndicate. The extent of Lansky's power has been well documented by Hank Messick in *Lansky*. What has not been fully understood is the relationship Lansky and a number of his close associates held to Richard Nixon's career.

Nixon and Organized Crime first converge publicly during Nixon's 1946 anti-communist campaign for the House. The aspiring young Californian's campaign manager was Murray Chotiner. While certain lawyers necessarily associate with

people suspected of criminal activity, Chotiner has specialized in defending Organized Crime figures, with no less than 267 such cases to his credit.

The secret of his success was revealed briefly in 1956, in the case of Marco Regineilli, described by Philadelphia police as a Mob leader in the South Jersey-Philadelphia area. In 1955 a deportation order was filed against Regineilli. Somehow, all the way from Philadelphia, he reached Chotiner in Los Angeles to ask him to defend him. Murray consulted with the then Assistant Attorney General (now Secretary of State), William P. Rogers, and managed to get the order rescinded. Obviously Regineilli had been correct in seeking Chotiner's help despite the fact that he had three other lawyers working for him at the same time. Many other clients came cross-country seeking the services of Murray Chotiner. He certainly appeared to be the right man to get things accomplished. Twenty-six years later, Chotiner still plays an important role in Nixon's political apparatus, though he has dropped out of public view.

As organized crime expanded its base of operations into new regions of the country, it found plenty of ambitious but under-financed politicians to put on its payroll in return for protection for its illegal activity. In 1940, the same year Nixon became police prosecutor in Whittier, California, murder charges against leading Mob figure Bugsy Siegal were suddenly dropped by the District Attorney in neighboring Los Angeles. It was later revealed that the DA had received a \$30,000 campaign contribution from Siegal. Years later another California Mob personality, Mickey Cohen, boasted he had contributed thousands of dollars to the early Nixon campaigns. Despite the fact that this proclamation was printed in numerous newspapers across the country, the libel suit was never brought.

passing day. The vast pool of cash created from the hotels and casinos accelerated the need for a corporate structure which could act as a legal front for the money and facilitated the distribution of funds. Las Vegas was also the launching ground for the close relationship between certain Teamster Union leaders and the Syndicate. By 1960 over \$50 million in Teamster pension funds would be invested in Mob-controlled hotels and casinos.

## From the Florida boom

But most important of all, Las Vegas provided the cash base for the international expansion of the Mob during the 1950's and 1960's. This additional economic power would also encourage its further penetration of the government and the U.S. political apparatus. Thus the post-war boom was the second major development stage for Organized Crime; the profits of Prohibition days look like nothing compared to what was made in the ensuing decades.

Southern Florida has virtually become the headquarters of Organized Crime and of the National Crime Syndicate network that dominates its international operations. Meyer Lansky, one of the first to get into the Florida market, set up



Las Vegas and liquor — Hoover's Friends

The same pattern of Organized Crime and politicians was also evident in the liquor and entertainment industries in California, as well as the hotel, gambling and construction industries in Nevada. One of the Mob's favorite construction contractors for its lavish hotels and gambling casinos in Las Vegas was a company owned by Del Webb, one of J. Edgar Hoover's closest friends for many years. Another friend of Hoover's was Lewis Rosenstiel, a one-time bootlegger who, after Prohibition, entered the legitimate liquor industry with the incorporation of Schenley Distilleries. Still maintaining his close contact with numerous mobsters, Rosenstiel built Schenley into one of the major liquor companies. In the years to come both Thomas Dewey, once Governor of New York, and Republican presidential candidate, and Louis Nichols, Hoover's assistant and Nixon's advisor on law and order, would go on the Schenley payroll. In 1955, he showed his gratitude by contributing \$1 million worth of Schenley stock to finance the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation.

Although these contacts with national political figures were essential to the smooth operation of the National Crime Syndicate, it was also important to cultivate state and local contacts. This became particularly important in Las Vegas where local officials issued casino gambling certificates and also obligingly overlooked the police records of most of the people who owned and operated hotels. Here, too, the Syndicate was successful: Cliff Jones, the ex-Lieutenant Governor of Nevada, would eventually become a business partner and front man of the Mob.

The building of an empire in Las Vegas was one of the enormous successes of Organized Crime. During the late 1940's and early 1950's one hotel after another appeared on the strip, and profits from the casinos multiplied with each

operations in the early 1940's by opening the plush Colonial Inn. From there, he controlled illegal gambling throughout Dade County, Florida. At the same time, he began buying up land along highway 1A, the scenic coast road. The entire area was soon known as Lanskyville — and still is. The hotels and condominiums which today line the roads northward from Miami were almost all built with funds generated from the profits of Prohibition days.

Florida is still crucial. Real estate, probably one of its most important industries, is a perfect front for Mob money, landing itself to hidden interests through long strings of mortgages and trusts. Florida's proximity to the Caribbean enables couriers to transfer profits from overseas operations to a complex of Mob-owned and -operated banks in the Miami area.

Florida tourism is another field which has yielded enormous profits. According to a 1966 report from a member of the Sheriff's Office of Dade County, the Syndicate had 87 corporate structures in operation and controlled 45 hotels and cocktail lounges. The profits from bookmaking, lotteries, prostitution and abortions alone were \$50 million a year. This structure has been protected over the past 40 years by one of the most corrupt local political systems in all the United States. The Syndicate has successfully bought the Florida government by providing the largest campaign contributions.

## ... To a Colonial Playground in Cuba

The first major international operation which Organized Crime undertook was its foray into Cuba. As in the case of any other large economic interest group, such a move increased its influence on the foreign policy of the United States. Nowhere can the convergence of the interests of Organized Crime, the CIA and the business establishment be

(please turn to page 4)

# Meyer Lansky & Bebe Rebozo (Nixon's closest friend)

seen more clearly than in the case of Cuba, which for so long served as a U.S. colony. Richard Nixon also took a special interest in Cuba. As Vice President in 1959, he was one of the originators of the Bay of Pigs invasion plan and pushed the hardest for its completion under Kennedy.

All the way back in 1937, Lansky opened his first Cuban operation, a casino in the Hotel Nacional. That same year he leased Havana's race track from the National City Bank of New York. But no major investment was made at this point; Cuba remained merely a promise for the future for Organized Crime. To his credit, Lansky had the foresight to understand that Cuba could be a perfect base for Mob operations. It was a poor and underdeveloped country, its politicians were in need of extra money and Batista, in particular, was more than willing to make an alliance with the Syndicate. There was already an economic infrastructure of U.S. capital penetration, dating back to the beginning of the century. The main crop of the region, sugar, was largely owned by U.S. companies. U.S. corporations also controlled the telephone and electric systems. While close enough to the United States to become a convenient tourist spot, it could also serve as a legal sanctuary outside U.S. jurisdiction.

**Lansky's Diplomatic Career — FDR and After**  
Lansky's relationship to Batista became so close that when President Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to convince the Cuban dictator not to run in the 1944 election, Lansky was chosen as the U.S. intermediary. Batista's methods as a dictator were already well known and the United States couldn't risk a rebellion on the island at that point in the war.

Another person associated with the Cuban counter-revolutionary movement is Bebe Rebozo, a U.S. citizen of Cuban parentage and probably Nixon's closest friend. He is described as "the only person Nixon really trusts." Several months before the invasion, Bebe and his friend Burke Hedges, who had been the Cuban Ambassador to Brazil under Batista, set up a small Miami company called Washrite Inc., which operated a laundromat. The details of the company's operations are not available but Washrite dissolved shortly after the invasion and Hedges moved to Puerto Rico. It is possible this corporate shell was used as a CIA conduit for invasion funds.

### Batista, Lansky and the Invasion Investment

This is not the only example of Rebozo's involvement with members of the gusano community. In 1968, he opened a large shopping center, the Centro Comercial Cubano, which catered to the Cuban population in Miami. Financing for the center came from the U.S. Small Business Administration, which guaranteed rents on all the stores for 25 years, and from Rockefeller's Equitable Trust Company. To select merchants for the storefronts, Bebe hired Edgardo Buttarl, who in 1968 had headed Cubans for Nixon nationally. Buttarl set to work immediately and soon filled the Centro with many veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion (Buttarl himself is renowned for his contributions to that effort). As the final touch Bebe hired the Polizzi Construction Co. to construct the Centro. Al Polizzi, the head of the company, used to be the head of the Mayfield Road Gang in Cleveland. A Lansky associate, he moved down to Florida when the territory opened up to the Mob.

### Mary Carter's Many Friends

In 1966, Groves entered into a joint venture with the Mary Carter Paint Co. to operate a gambling casino on nearby Paradise Island. The Mary Carter Paint Co. was also filled with Nixon cronies, including stockholder Tom Dewey (who nominated Nixon for Vice President in 1952), Richard Piatell, another major stockholder who contributed \$17,500 to Nixon's 1968 campaign, and company President James Crosby. (His brother Peter was arrested on a charge of possession of stolen securities; according to testimony before the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Peter "has operated in all phases of stock fraud and has used stolen securities many times as underlying collateral.")

The FBI once turned up at Bebe Rebozo's Key Biscayne Bank to question him about \$300,000 worth of stolen IBM stock that had passed through his bank without being reported. Bebe claimed that he had attempted to verify the stock's legitimacy by calling two people — James Crosby, president of the Mary Carter Paint Co., and Donald Nixon, brother of the President. Bebe did not say just why these two men should have any special knowledge of stolen stocks.

The man who was in charge of Nixon's security during the 1968 campaign, James Golden, was also employed by Mary Carter. Golden had long been a personal friend of the President. He had headed up security for Nixon on his trips to Asia, Latin America and Russia. (On the latter occasion, he must have overlooked Frank Vitale, one of the biggest bootleggers on the West Coast, who accompanied Nixon to Moscow.)

In 1967, Richard Nixon was a guest of honor at the grand opening of the hotel and casino on Paradise Island. Shortly afterward, Mary Carter changed its name to Resorts International. A credit agreement of \$5.5 million was arranged with Chase Manhattan Bank, which also became the transfer agent for Class A and B common stock. Chase also held the mortgage on the Island Hotel Co., Ltd., a Resorts subsidiary operating the hotel.

Another Resorts backer was Investors Overseas Services (IOS), a Geneva-based financial empire which has been accused of concealing the true identity of its investors to protect Mob figures. The use of Swiss bank accounts was another topic Morgenthau was investigating when Nixon had him removed. The investigation did not continue. During the summer of 1968, Nixon took a cruise on Resorts' yacht and the same boat was once again placed at his disposal during the Republican Convention.

From all indications, the real guiding force behind Mary Carter Paint Co. and Resorts International is Meyer Lansky. Previous to the Bahamas deal, Mary Carter had been involved with Al Mainik, one of the Lansky's attorneys. The people brought in to manage the Paradise Island hotel and casino were all Lansky associates with records dating back to the 1920's and 1930's. For instance, the casino was put under the supervision of Ed Cellini, who had worked for Lansky over many years in other gambling operations.

One of Resorts' biggest coups was its acquisition of a large block of Pan American Airways stock. According to the Wall Street Journal (Feb. 12, 1969), Resorts International agreed to buy 1.5 million shares of Pan Am from an unidentified seller. In addition, it had made a deal with Gulf and Western Industries for two separate purchases of 900,000 shares each. This would have given Resorts a total of 9.7 percent of the outstanding shares of Pan Am stock — a controlling interest. The seller was later identified as Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan Bank. In the testimony before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, we find that Meyer Lansky "was involved in the attempted purchase of the Pan American Airlines, which was blocked by the government. One of his corporations was involved in that. He is a very sophisticated operator." Pan Am is controlled by First National City Bank of New York which is a rival of the Rockefeller Group.

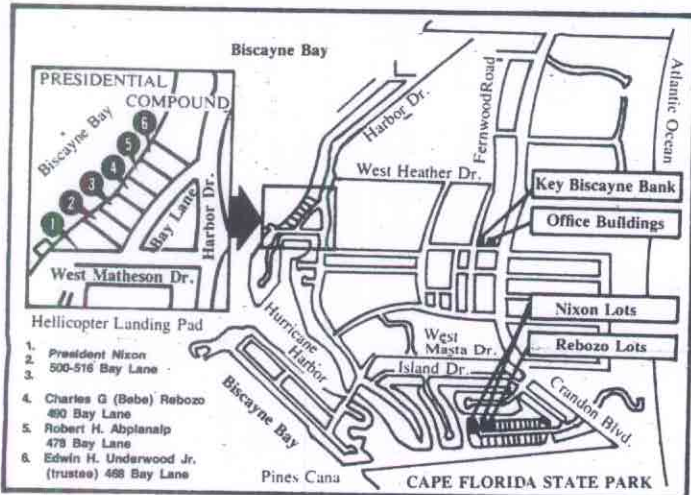
### Rebozo and Smathers Wheel and Deal

Ever since Richard Nixon first turned up in Florida in 1952, he has grown increasingly close to a small network of people around former Senator George Smathers and Bebe Rebozo. The relationship has been solidified in financial as well as personal matters. In October 1971 a team of investigative reporters from *Newsday* documented some of the connections between organized crime and the Smathers-Rebozo crowd. The report also uncovered a number of governmental decisions related to defense contracts. Small Business Administration loans and state park land that resulted in millions of dollars in windfall profits for corporations associated with Smathers and Rebozo. Perhaps the least of these favors was the presence of Richard Nixon at promotional activities of the Cape Florida Development Co.

Nixon has tried hard to keep his own name out of the various deals made between the government and private Florida interest groups. Therefore, it is truly remarkable that in the two cases in which he has publicly acknowledged a personal financial stake — Fisher's Island Corp. and Cape Florida Development Co. — he was doing business with Organized Crime. The history of Cape Florida Development Co. in particular involves assorted Lansky front men as well as Frank Smathers, brother of ex-U.S. Senator from Florida and Nixon confidant George Smathers. A careful study of this corporation and its history gives us real insight into the investments and business operations associated with the President. It also provides a look at the complexity and breadth of Organized Crime's influence and sophistication.

On January 16, 1946, the property which includes land now owned by Cape Florida Development was transferred to the Biscayne Beach Corp. in which Wallace Groves held the controlling interest.<sup>2</sup> In 1958 a real estate company called Desser & Garfield purchased the land for \$13 million. Four of the eight directors of this company were at one time or another also directors of the Bank of Miami banks — the Miami National Bank and the Bank of Miami Beach.

In 1959 the company, now called Lefcourt Realty, came under the control of Samuel Friedland, who, with his brother George, is a principal in the Food Fair supermarket chain. This company also entered into a joint venture with Major Realty Co. of Florida in which George Smathers, Max Orlovitz and Ben Siegelbaum all have investments. Siegelbaum is known as a courier for the Lansky organization.



Lansky accomplished his mission and Grau San Martin was elected President of Cuba. Batista temporarily retired to Daytona Beach, Florida.

By 1947, the times were already changing and Cuba once again began to assume an important role in the international scheme of Organized Crime. Lucky Luciano, who wanted to be closer to his home base in the United States, had left Italy (where he had been deported a few years earlier by New York Governor Thomas Dewey) and ensconced himself in a Havana penthouse suite. The post-war boom and the money already pouring in from Las Vegas made it clear that the time was ripe to begin building another empire in Cuba.

The first important step was to insure the return of Batista. There had been elections again in 1948 and Carlos Prío Socarras had won. Lansky flew over to Cuba to talk with the new President and discuss the possibilities for Batista's re-entry. Prío finally agreed to the dictator's return on the condition that he be allowed to finish out his term of office. Both men shook hands and Lansky flew off to have \$250,000 deposited in a Swiss bank account for the outgoing Cuban President.

But Batista became impatient. On March 1, 1952, he initiated a coup d'état and took over the government. Lansky and Batista lost no time in working out profitable deals for themselves and by the mid 1950's Havana was booming for the Mob. It had taken over most of the hotels and had built several new ones. Many of the trusted lieutenants from Las Vegas were brought down to run the show, including Cliff Jones, the ex-Lieutenant Governor of Nevada. As his own prize Lansky built the Riviera Hotel at the cost of \$14 million. His title, according to the official papers, was "manager" of the kitchen.

**Batista-Lansky, Inc. & The Invasion Investment**  
On New Year's Eve, 1958, the party ended. At Camp Columbia, where an electronic map had charted the movement of rebel troops and illuminated the positions still held by the dictatorship, all the lights went out. Castro had won. At 2:30 a.m. Batista arrived at the camp and quickly boarded a chartered plane to fly to the Dominican Republic for refuge. Lansky, in Cuba on that memorable night, also boarded a plane and headed across the Caribbean for the shores of his home base, Florida. He was still not ready to give up on Cuba, however.

A number of Lansky people participated in the counter-revolutionary Bay of Pigs invasion. John Roselli, a notorious Mob figure, was hired by the CIA to find someone to assassinate Prime Minister Fidel Castro the night before the invasion. The plan failed but Roselli renewed his efforts several times over the years. Joe Rivers, another faithful Lansky man, was waiting in the Bahamas on the eve of the invasion to return to the island and re-establish Mob operations. Word never came, so Rivers returned to Florida.

### Finding Jobs for Exiles

The influx of gusanos into Miami following the defeat of the counter-revolutionary attempt provided fresh material for Organized Crime. Many Cuban exiles were integrated into the numbers rackets and prostitution, but their greatest value to the Mob was in the realm of the narcotics trade. Santo Trafficante, Jr., the Mob's narcotics czar, recruited many gusanos into his organization. With their help, the drug flow into the United States was rerouted from Marseilles, France (where police pressure had made operations more difficult), through Latin America, primarily Paraguay. This route is still one of the main conduits for the importation of drugs into the United States. Within the past several months a number of narcotics rings have been broken up which are based on the Paraguay-Miami axis, all involving elements of the Miami gusano community.

### Mobbing the Bahamas

The loss of Cuba, while important for Organized Crime, only served to hasten its expansion into new enterprises and new territories. The primary base was once again the Caribbean and the prime mover was once again Meyer Lansky. The target became the Grand Bahamas.

In 1955 Wallace Groves, a Canadian "businessman" who had served time in a U.S. jail for fraudulent dealings, came up with \$378,000 to buy half the island of Grand Bahama. He then established the Grand Bahama Port Authority to develop the land. To dredge the harbors he hired Daniel K. Ludwig's firm, National Bulk Carriers, which is represented by Richard Nixon's New York law firm Mudge, Rose, Guthrie and Alexander. Nixon also brought in a friend, Charles Allen, for a piece of the action. His investment bank, Allen & Co., bought a 25 percent interest in the Bahamian Port Authority. Allen went on to become president of Papalco, a strong supporter of Nixon since the days he worked as the company's lawyer.

In 1960 Groves took in a partner named Lou Chesler. According to the sworn testimony of Edward Wuenche before the Permanent Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, Chesler personally delivered stolen securities to him in the Bahamas. Chesler was also known for his role in the field of land development. He had formed the General Development Corp. in Florida and turned it into the largest real estate operation in the state. Part of that success was due to his partner, Frank Mackle, also a friend of Nixon. Perhaps the most important factor was the presence in the company of Max Orlovitz and Trigger Mike Coppola, well-known Lansky cronies. Orlovitz was later convicted in October 1968 for willfully violating stock registration laws by Robert Morgenthau, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York. Shortly thereafter Nixon had Morgenthau removed from office.

# The Syndicate makes a land killing in Florida

The company began building in 1964 when Vance Foster joined the board of directors. Foster is named in the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations as having been involved in stolen securities in New York City in 1967 and 1968. One month after Foster arrived at Lefcourt Realty, the company changed its name to World Wide Realty and Investing Co. Shortly after that he was joined on the board by a director of another Lansky bank, Alan Kornblum. In early 1965, World Wide Realty purchased a piece of Cape Florida land for which the Miami Beach First National Bank acted as trustee. The value of Key Biscayne land, a part of the larger Cape Florida area, soared suddenly in late 1965, thanks to legislation introduced by Florida Senator Robert Haverfield to turn part of the land into a state park. Shortly thereafter, Cape Florida Development Co., from which Richard Nixon bought his Key Biscayne property, was incorporated.

## Pensions Save Mob From Early Retirement

In the following months Cape Florida Development proceeded to buy over \$1 million worth of Key Biscayne land from World Wide Realty at a considerable profit to World Wide. Just at that point World Wide had overcome a serious financial crisis by securing a \$5 million loan from the Teamster Union's pension fund. The men who manage the Teamster fund have made several loans to other Mob fronts through the years, including Lanky's Miami banks, which perhaps throws some light on Nixon's uncharacteristic burst of generosity last year in releasing Teamster Union president Jimmy Hoffa from prison.

It seems World Wide Realty's close connections with Organized Crime and Meyer Lansky, in particular, were too apparent. Another corporation, Cape Florida Development Co., had to be constructed by the same interests to buy the land from World Wide when it became obvious that real estate values would jump.



Among the principals in Cape Florida Development were Senator Haverfield, Bebe Rebozo and Donald Berg, Berg, who became president of the new company, had been involved in the Florida area for several years. He is a friend of Lou Chesler who, like Rebozo, has been implicated in stolen stock deals but never prosecuted. Berg is the owner of the Jamaica Inn on Key Biscayne which was frequented by Richard Nixon until Secret Service reports about its connections to the Mob forced the President to find a more suitable restaurant.

The final touch needed to make a real killing on the land was effective promotion. Here Richard Nixon was able to play a crucial role. In February 1967, Nixon visited Florida to attend the wedding of Florida Governor Claude Kirk. Berg asked Rebozo, his friend and partner in Cape Florida Development, to have Nixon visit the company's offices and pose for a picture. Nixon was more than willing. The next day a smiling picture of Berg and Nixon appeared in several Florida newspapers and the Cape Florida Development Co. was off to a good start. In return for this favor Nixon got the land for his Key Biscayne vacation home.

It should be noted that the mortgage on one of Nixon's Cape Florida lots was transferred in 1968 to the City National Bank of Miami. This bank is suspected of being used for the deposit of illegal "skim" money from casinos in the Bahamas. One of the bank's directors is Max Orovitz, Lansky's old friend who was convicted of stock fraud in New York.

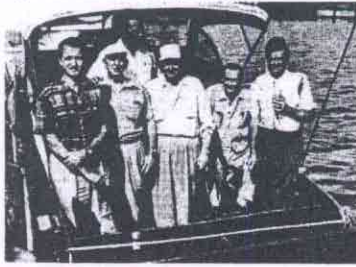
One other Florida corporation, the Major Realty Co., links organized crime together with current national political figures, providing legitimacy and protection for the former and payoffs for the latter. What distinguishes Major Realty is that one of its big stockholders and directors, George Smathers, is a former U.S. Senator and a good friend of the President. The company is considered by law enforcement agencies as the primary Meyer Lansky real estate front in Florida.

One year after its founding in 1959, Major Realty valued its holdings at \$25 million worth of Florida land, making it the third largest real estate company in the state. Today, George Smathers, one of its largest stockholders, owns nearly \$1 million worth of Major Realty stock and sits on the board of directors. The president and chairman of the board was George Friedland, who was mentioned previously as the head of Food Fair, Inc. and a suspected Lansky associate. One of the original stockholders was the ubiquitous Max Orovitz.

The law firm which first assembled the tracts of land for Major Realty was Levy, Plisco, and Zalla of West Palm Beach, Florida. J.A. Plisco, one of the partners in the firm, is married to LaVonne Bloom, the daughter of Yiddie Bloom. Yiddie is a long-time member of the Minneapolis Syndicate and is allied with Meyer Lansky. According to law enforcement sources, his daughter is an active member of his organization.

During the years 1960-66, Major Realty made a series of land sales at large discounts which, according to corporate

officials, were necessitated by a cash shortage. Many of the buyers have been identified, however, as Lansky associates. The lawyer in several cases was Gerson Blatt, who purchased over 450 acres from the company for his own portfolio. Blatt has been identified in testimony before the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations as an associate of Meyer Lansky. He also shares a law office with Ben Siegelbaum, identified in numerous sources as one of Lansky's main couriers for illegal money.



Rebozo enjoys being a host. Above, aboard an earlier Coccolobo, his guests for a late '50's trip were the then Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (seated), and, from left, U.S. Senators George Smathers, Richard Russell, Earle Clements and Stuart Symington.

In early 1957, Roy Talmo became a director of Major Realty and arranged for a \$3 million loan from the First American Bank of Palm Beach, of which he is president. Talmo has been called before several grand juries in Florida to explain several peculiarities about his bank, and is suspected by law enforcement authorities of having ties to organized crime.

## Hail! Hail! The gang's all here

**MOSES ANNENBERG:** founder of the Nationwide News Service, a wire service which catered to bookies. At its height, the Service was making \$20 million over a three year period with operations in 223 cities. Annenberg was finally convicted of tax evasion and sentenced to three years in jail. His son, WALTER ANNENBERG, was once indicted with his father for sending obscene literature through the mail. Walter was president of Triangle Publications, publisher of the *Philadelphia Enquirer*, *Seymour*, *TV Guide*, etc. He was appointed Ambassador to England by Richard Nixon.

**DONALD BERG:** one of the founders and president of the Cape Florida Development Company, in which Bebe Rebozo has an investment. This is the company from which Richard Nixon bought two lots of Florida land. Berg has also been a close personal friend and occasional business associate of Lou Chesler, a Lansky front man. Berg has several investments in the Key Biscayne area. One is the Jamaica Inn where Nixon used to eat until the Secret Service did a background check on some of Berg's associates and informed the President that Berg was too obviously connected to organized crime figures.

**WILLIE BLOFF:** one of the key men in the mob's movie studio extortion racket. He and John Roselli were in charge of both organizing the movie extras and shaking down the studios. It was an extremely lucrative racket. Bluff was finally indicted for the role which he played and served some time in jail. After being released he moved to Arizona and became a good friend of conservative Senator Barry Goldwater. When Willie was eventually killed by the mob for talking too much, Goldwater attended the funeral.



Senator Barry Goldwater, as he spoke to reporters at a Pittsburgh press conference on November 15, 1963. Goldwater is shown denying a report that he had close affiliations with one Willie Bluff. (See above)

**DINO CELLINI:** an old Lansky associate. He has worked his way up in the mob over a long period of time. His specialty is overseeing gambling operations. After working in several gambling joints in the United States, he was sent down to manage things for Lansky in Cuba. As one of the mainstays of the Organization in Havana, he remained after the Revolution to check out the developments and as a result was briefly jailed by the Revolutionary government. From Cuba, Dino went on to the Lucayan Beach Hotel on Grand Bahama, until he was forced to leave there by the Bahamian Government. His next stop in his international gambling career was London, where he opened a school to train casino dealers for the Mob's Caribbean enterprises. Mr. Cellini was last reported organizing gambling junkets to the Colony Club in Lisbon, Portugal.

**ED CELLINI:** Dino's brother has enjoyed a very similar career. After a stint at local U.S. gambling spots, Ed went to Havana for a time and then wound up in the Bahamas as a manager of the Lucayan Beach Hotel. When Lansky moved his operation over to Paradise Island, Ed went along and became the casino manager for Resorts International, the company with which Richard Nixon enjoys a cozy relationship.

## Amazing Surge in Land Values After Election

The paths of Major Realty and Richard Nixon cross under the most dubious circumstances. In 1962, Nixon began buying shares in another Florida real estate development called Fisher's Island, Inc. Over the next six years Nixon bought 185,891 shares of the company at one dollar each, a price from which the stock has never deviated — with one exception. After his 1968 election, Nixon decided to sell this stock; his asking price was three dollars a share. After some customary haggling, the corporation decided on two dollars per share, but the question was where to find the cash to make payment. At precisely this moment, Major Realty announced a joint venture with a group called Condev to develop land in the Orlando area while Condev purchased Fisher's Island for development. The man who presented the Condev proposal to Fisher's Island was William Rebozo, Bebe's nephew. Condev proceeded to deposit \$350,000 with Fisher's Island, Inc. in return for an option to purchase its land. Unfortunately for Condev, the deal fell through and the deposit was forfeited. Fortunately for Richard Nixon, however, the forfeited deposit nearly matched the \$371,782 needed by Fisher Island, Inc. to pay Nixon for his stock.

The *Newsday* report sums up the deal with extraordinary discretion: "Since Fisher's Island, Inc. had never more than taken cash in its bank account, Condev's sudden decision to put up \$350,000," and Major Realty's timely intervention in the case, "just at the time when the corporation decided to pay the President two dollars a share, was opportune."

## Would You Buy Anything From This Man?

What is significant about these facts is not the specific details of each deal but rather the patterns of association, of payoffs and protection, that they suggest. These are in actuality but a few examples of the connections which exist between Richard Nixon's close friends and Organized Crime, not to mention the network that links Organized Crime to "legitimate business." The fact that emerges in bold relief is that the President of the United States is virtually surrounded by men who are closely linked with the National Crime Syndicate.

**LOU CHESLER:** "Uncle Lou" to his friends, he has been around the Florida and Caribbean scene for many years. Born in Canada, Lou first entered the Caribbean when he became a partner of Wallace Groves in the Grand Bahamian Development Co. His role was to attract legitimate capital. He was on the planning of the Lucayan Beach Hotel Casino which took place in Max Orovitz's Florida office with Meyer Lansky present. Lou had gained his reputation as a dealmaker through his involvement with the General Development Corporation which he founded with Frank Mackie (a friend of Nixon), Max Orovitz and Trigger Mike Coppola. The company was soon the largest real estate outfit in all of Florida. Other companies in which Uncle Lou had investments were Seven Arts (which could also boast of having Washington lawyer Max Rabb, one of Eisenhower's top advisors, as a director) and Universal Controls. More recently Chesler has been accused of dealing in stolen securities, one of the Mob's most lucrative current operations. He has also become involved in a number of deals with Donald Berg, the president of Cape Florida Development. Chesler was a contributor to Nixon's 1968 campaign.

**MICKEY COHEN:** took over control of the Syndicate in California after the death of Bugsy Siegel. From this position he maintained a close relationship with Happy Meltzer who was eventually convicted of running a multimillion dollar drug ring. Cohen was heavily implicated in the slaying of two associates. Both murders took place in Cohen's store with no one else present. Despite rather convincing evidence of his guilt, Cohen was never charged with murder. According to Burt Turkus, the former assistant New York City D.A., the Los Angeles police were told by the sheriff's office to lay off Cohen's bookie joints. When Mickey was finally convicted of tax evasion, the judge sentenced him to the lightest possible term. Mickey has boasted several times about his donations to Nixon's early California campaigns: no libel suit has ever been brought against him.

**TRIGGER MIKE COPPOLA:** he died in 1968. He served as a well known lieutenant of the Vito Genovese family. Trigger Mike first rose to fame when he drove the get-away car after the assassination of old Mafia Don Joe Masseria, whose death ushered in the era of the Americanization of the Mafia. He was for many years the boss of the numbers racket in East Harlem, before moving down to Florida. One of his major investments in the Florida area was in the General Development Company, with Frank Mackie and Max Orovitz.

**MEYER LANSKY:** one of the most important figures in Organized Crime for the past 40 years. He was instrumental in bringing about the birth of the National Crime Syndicate, which operates on a national level, incorporates various ethnic groups and utilizes the principles of "good" business as opposed to the old Mafia rituals. He is a businessman *par excellence*. It was Lansky who orchestrated the Mob's move into Cuba after establishing a close relationship with the dictator, Batista. After the loss of Cuba, it was he who began the further internationalization of Organized Crime and set up the banking structure which facilitated the smooth running of the organization. Today Lansky is still involved in almost every aspect of the Syndicate's operations: he is still one of the most powerful men in Las Vegas; he maintains control of the banking network and most important, he has pioneered the Mob's move into "legitimate" business. The tentacles of the Mob network in real estate, restaurants, hotels and resorts, the construction industry, the liquor industry and entertainment are by now both extensive and very deep. At the moment, Lansky has been deported from Israel, where he has been living, to avoid prosecution in the United States. The United States government, however, has never attempted to extradite him, just as it made no attempt in the past 40 years to bring serious charges against him.

(please turn to page 6)

# A who's who of organized crime

(continued from page 5)

**LUCKY LUCIANO:** one of the younger generation Mafioso who in the 1930's took control of the Mafia from the older "Moustache Petes". Luciano served for many years as the head of the U.S. Mafia, acting as its liaison with the National Crime Syndicate. He was finally convicted in the mid-1940's by New York Prosecutor Thomas Dewey and sent to prison. His release was obtained a few years later as a result of an intricate government plan called Operation Underworld. Luciano, from prison, helped organize New York City dock workers to prevent sabotage of cargoes during World War Two. For his role in this plan, developed through the combined efforts of Meyer Lansky and U.S. Naval Intelligence, Dewey pardoned Luciano and had him released to Italy. From Italy, Luciano was able to control the narcotics traffic, whose major source of supply was the Middle East. Until his death 10 years ago, Luciano remained one of the most important men in the Mafia.

**MAX OROVITZ:** has been used for many years as one of Meyer Lansky's respectable front men. He was a crucial figure in the Grand Bahamian Development Co., helping to map out plans for the casino and eventually becoming an officer of the company. He was an original investor in the General Development Corporation and in Major Realty Co., in which George Smathers holds a large interest and is a director. In 1968, he was convicted in New York following prosecution by U.S. Attorney Morgenthau for willfully violating stock registration laws — shortly before Nixon had Morgenthau removed. Today he is still a director of the City National Bank of Miami which once held the mortgage on Nixon's Key Biscayne property. He is also a major investor in Israel.

**AL POLIZZI:** "Big Al", as he is known to his friends, was one of the founders of the Mayfield Road Gang in Cleveland during the Prohibition days. When Repeal came, he helped Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano set up the Molaska Corp. to serve as a legal front for the distribution of illegal liquor. According to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, he is still one of the most influential figures in the underground world. In the 1940's, he moved his base of operations down to Florida and began investing in real estate. One of the companies used for his investments was the Polkin Corp. ("Polkin" was an acronym for Polizzi and John "King" Angersola, another mob figure who was made a partner in this company.) Many of his deals concentrated on the Coral Gables area where Bebe Rebozo also got his start. The two men certainly knew each other; in 1965 when Bebe was trying to get rezoning for some land he owned in the area, Polizzi was one of the small number of people who signed a petition favoring Rebozo's request. Polizzi is the owner of the Gold Key Island which is part of the same chain in which Bebe has investments. And finally, Polizzi's construction company was awarded a \$800,000 contract to build Rebozo's shopping center, the Centro Comercial Cubano.

**MARCO REGINELLI:** a famous client of Murray Chotiner, Nixon's long-time political advisor. Known as the most important gangster in the Philadelphia-South Jersey area, Reginelli was convicted at least six times during his checkered career. In 1955 he was questioned in connection with the death of a key witness willing to testify against him in a prior case which had led to his conviction under the Mann Act. When the U.S. government began deportation proceedings against him, a gang war was touched off in the area as various Mob members struggled to gain control of his rackets. At this point Reginelli traveled across the country to obtain Murray Chotiner's services and get a reversal of the deportation order. Chotiner consulted with several Justice Department officials and with then Assistant Attorney General William Rogers. Shortly thereafter the ruling was reversed and Reginelli was permitted to remain in the country.

**JOHN ROSELLI:** his career is one of the best examples of the multi-faceted connections which the Mob has made over the years. Beginning as a bootlegger in Chicago, he was closely associated with Longie Zwillman and Al Capone. After Repeal, he left Chicago and moved to California where he specialized in racketeering. He was eventually indicted for his role in the movie extortion racket and spent time in prison. He then moved on to Las Vegas. In 1960 he interrupted his gambling and rackets career briefly to work with the CIA on attempts to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro. Roselli's job was to find someone to assassinate Castro. Several unsuccessful attempts were made, one on the eve of the Bay of Pigs invasion. According to Hank Messick in *John Edgar Hoover*, "Roselli himself personally delivered several of the assassination teams to the shore of Cuba... Roselli, on behalf of the crime syndicate" paid most of the expenses of the mission other than those of the two CIA operatives assigned to work with him. In recent years Roselli has returned to California and struck up a close relationship with Frank Sinatra, now the head of Entertainers for Nixon. Sinatra sponsored him for membership in the exclusive Friar's Club but Roselli was forced to withdraw after being indicted for fixing gambling in the Club.

**LEWIS ROSENSTIEL:** well known for his connections to the Mob and the right wing. For decades the owner of Schenley Distilleries, one of the largest liquor concerns in the country, Rosenstiel was first able to enter the legitimate liquor industry after the Palmer raids in the 1920's broke the power of the German brewers. The Schenley distribution network was based on the Syndicate's Prohibition structure. Some of Lansky's closest associates became the main distributors of the liquor across the country. At the same time Rosenstiel was maintaining close relations with the Mob, he began building contacts in the political world. He befriended Thomas Dewey, who received large campaign contributions from him, as did many other politicians of the period. But Rosenstiel's most useful contact was none other than J. Edgar Hoover, the all-American crime fighter. This friendship proved to be most profitable when the Justice Department threatened to bring an anti-trust action against the liquor industry. Another close friend in the FBI was Louis B. Nichols, Hoover's assistant. Nichols helped Schenley lobby for changes in the liquor laws after Rosenstiel mistakenly gambled on the coming of the third world war, just before the outbreak of the Korean conflict. On this prediction Rosen-

stiel had stockpiled a large supply of liquor. If the law had not been changed, Schenley would have had to pay millions of dollars of taxes on excess liquor in its warehouses. The right-wing China Lobby lost its bid for an escalation of the Korean War — but Schenley was still able to maintain its profits. Nichols eventually went on to become an officer of the corporation. In 1965, as Rosenstiel's wife was testifying about his close association with Meyer Lansky in a divorce action, he contributed \$1 million worth of Schenley stock to begin the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation.

**BUGSY SIEGEL:** one of the earliest members of the National Crime Syndicate. During the Prohibition days, he and Meyer Lansky organized the Bugs and Meyer Mob to protect shipments of bootlegged liquor. They soon formed an alliance with Lucky Luciano and following the Americanization of the Mafia, merged with him to form the National Crime Syndicate. Siegel was put in charge of California and was responsible for coordinating the narcotics trade, book-making operations, the movie rackets and political contacts. He worked closely with Mickey Cohen, who was later to boast of contributions to Richard Nixon. The idea for the Mob's move into Las Vegas originated with Siegel. After consulting with the Mob's National Council he began construction of the Flamingo Hotel which paved the way for an entire complex of luxury-hotel casinos. In the process of building the hotel, he formed a close friendship with Del Webb, owner of the construction company erecting the edifice. Webb was also a close friend of J. Edgar Hoover. The hotel began to run into trouble as building costs soared and soon Siegel and the Syndicate were involved in a dispute over how much money to sink into Bugsy's project. Siegel had also become too independent and was refusing to listen to orders. A meeting of the National Crime Syndicate was called to discuss the problem. On the evening of June 20, 1947, the dispute came to an end when Siegel was shot nine times as he lounged in the Beverly Hills home of his girl friend, Virginia Hill. But the idea for Las Vegas lived on to become one of the most important ventures for the Syndicate.



Meyer Lansky

**BEN SIEGELBAUM:** a long time associate of Meyer Lansky's, he was one of the people used by the Mob to establish contact with Bobby Baker, Lyndon B. Johnson's protégé. He owned stock in Baker's Serv-U Corp. with Ed Torres and Ed Levinson, the two other Lansky associates. Bremer introduced Siegelbaum to John Gates of Intercontinental Hotel Corp., a subsidiary of Pan American Airways. The Lansky group was anxious to land casino concessions for Intercontinental's hotels in the Caribbean and Latin America. Siegelbaum was also one of the key people used by the Mob for the illegal movement of funds across borders. For many years he acted as a "bagman" or courier for the Mob. He went on to become one of the official owners of the Exchange and Investment Bank of Switzerland, known as a "laundromat" for Lansky's money. More recently, Siegelbaum has played a prominent role in the reinvestment of already laundered money in Florida real estate. For example, he invested \$100,000 in Major Realty, the company in which George Smathers is a director.

**SANTO TRAFFICANTE, JR.:** today probably the most important man in the international narcotics traffic. From his father he inherited the northern Florida area and a close relationship with the pre-revolutionary Cuban government. Trafficante, Sr., was one of the most important Mafia men in Florida for many years. During the 1950's the Trafficante family had a dispute with Lansky over control of the lucrative Cuban territory. Lansky won. But the Trafficantes went on to become the most important family in the drug trade. Recently, Trafficante, Jr., made an extensive trip to Southeast Asia — now the major narcotics source for the United States.

## Methodology and Bibliography

A great deal has been written in recent years on the Mafia and Organized Crime. Much of the material has tended to either romanticize or sensationalize the subject and much of it has focused for the most part on the Mafia rather than the National Crime Syndicate, which in reality is the more important of the two and itself includes the Mafia. The two most important books giving a clear conception of the National Crime Syndicate are *Lansky and John Edgar Hoover*, both by Hank Messick. Many books do not contain indexes which make them difficult to use for reference work; all of Messick's books are indexed, but they do not include corporations, which is a real failing.

The other basic source is hearings done by U.S. Congressional committees. Senator Kaufman's hearings in the 1950's produced a large valuable body of material which is still useful today for reference work and investigations. Senator McClellan's Permanent Subcommittee on In-

vestigations has more recently held hearings on Organized Crime, but they have concentrated primarily on lower level people involved in thefts, etc. and not the more important figures or structure of Organized Crime.

The study of Organized Crime largely centers on the evolution of small and medium size capitalist groupings, based primarily in the California, Florida, Texas and New York areas. The standard sources used for studies of multinational corporations and the ruling elite, such as Standard and Poor's and *Who's Who in America*, do not contain much information on regional corporations or middle size capitalists. There are really few organized sources for this information and so one must rely heavily on interviews, local newspaper morgues and local government records.

The closest thing to this type of research is done by local investigative reporters. They know what sources are accessible, contain what information, and can possibly give you access to their own papers' files on the subject. It is also essential to gain thorough understanding of the local financial structure and the major industries of the region. Specifically, Organized Crime has close contact with the tourist, liquor, real estate and construction industries.

Another important source for investigating smaller companies is U.S. Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) reports. Because the middle level capitalists are at the stage the larger capitalists were at in the 1920's, they are involved in stock manipulations, false annual reports, the use of shell or dummy corporations and the like. If the SEC has brought charges against them, this information and more is available in SEC literature or regional libraries.

To continue to exist and grow Organized Crime must have protection — this is where politicians and government officials come in. Just as big business is in constant need of favors from the government, so is Organized Crime. The most obvious, of course, is non-prosecution of its important members, but there are others. Since Organized Crime is involved in many businesses and industries, favorable laws and regulations are always helpful. To begin to decipher the political connections there are several things which one can look at: lists of campaign contributors, fund raisers, the doling out of government contracts and concessions (who was responsible and who benefited), the awarding of Small Business Administration loans. The lawyers used in various deals are often the key link between Organized Crime and "legitimate business" or the government.

What we are searching for is the intermediaries or fronts used by the Mob. The methodology for doing this is to build outward from the reliable information found in the books listed below. From these sources it is possible to glean a rather large list of known Mob people and corporations. This list is what must be expanded on; extended both through the people and the corporations. If you have the name of a person whom you suspect of Organized Crime activities, try to collect some information on every corporation with which they are connected; then investigate all the people who are involved in each of those corporations. The process applies in reverse if you start with a corporation. It is tedious work but it is the only way by which to unmask the front companies and people used by Organized Crime. Each lead must be followed through completely to the end.

The following is a list of core material, that serves as a reference source for further work. Names and corporations mentioned in these books are by now firmly connected to the Mob; you can work outward from these sources. More investigation will link the names mentioned here with more legitimate areas of business and politics. Good luck.

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