BOOK REVIEW


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In the last five years, a renewed interest in the subject of organized crime has been observed in both academia and the American public. Several new books have hit the market, "Miami Vice" and "Crime Story" still mystify viewers on Friday night television, new sagas of the Corleone family were unveiled, and even "Dragnet" reappeared embracing law enforcement's unending, sometimes comical, fight against "evil." Amidst this rather romantic background, Rudolph Giuliani seriously continued his assault on New York mobsters, the President unleashed millions of dollars on drug interdiction and eradication, and Howard Abadinsky offered yet another analysis of this type of criminal activity.

Indeed, for persons interested, there seems to be no end to the social and professional lure associated with the topic of organized crime. There is even a new society devoted to research on OC entitled the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime. By the way, the Secretariat is located at Saint Xavier College, along with Howard Abadinsky.

Abadinsky's major contribution rested on a thorough understanding of the historical development of ethnic-oriented (mainly Italian and Irish American) "families" and their subsequent development into organized criminal cartels. Interesting as it may be, the litany of names, dates, and events became somewhat tedious, especially for students who want a general understanding of organized crime in dimensions not found in the traditional Italian Mafia. However, to Abadinsky's credit, it was in this area that his extensive research on the Genovese Family and other Italian crime families in New York really came through.

Even though Abadinsky attempted to address other distinct groups having all or most of the attributes
of organized crime as defined in his book, he simply
did not give the same detail or time to outlaw-motor-
cycle gangs, Black criminal gangs, Latin-American
families, oriental triads, or other independent white
criminal gangs that he did to the Italian crime
families. In fact, there were some very glaring
omissions. There was very little analysis or even
discussion of the Chinese crime gangs and their
subsequent ties to Far East triads and tongs. The
Latin-American crime families were mentioned only
casually and important linkages between prison groups
and outlaw-motorcycle gangs were glossed over.
Further, there was no mention of recent insurgent
right-wing groups which exhibit all of the
characteristics of organized criminal cartels as
defined by Abadinsky—nonideological, hierarchical,
limited membership, perpetuitous, organized through
specialization or division of labor, monopolistic,
and governed by rules and regulations.

What Abadinsky did offer, besides an excellent
(yet rather mundane) historical review of Italian and
Irish OC in America, was two models of criminal
hierarchies which attempted to explain how criminal
organizations were structured and how they function.
In the first model, the patron-client model, Abadinsky
sketched the Italian-American crime "family" as a
patrimonial, social system organized by action,
cultural values, and rigid control. In contrast to
the patron-client networks of the Italian-American
crime "families" was the bureaucratic model exhibited
by outlaw motorcycle gangs and various independent
criminal cartels. These groups were characterized by
complicated monopolistic and bureaucratic organiza-
tional structures.

While both of these models are somewhat
descriptive of organized crime cartels in America,
Abadinsky's analysis and "Continuum of Organized
Crime Models" is problematic. However, they do serve
as good teaching examples in the classroom, from
which the instructor should diverge to more detailed
information and other content. By the way, most of
the material on outlaw-motorcycle gangs is dated and
appears frequently in many law enforcement
intelligence bulletins or circulars.

One chapter in the book (Chapter 6) offered a
good overview of mainstream theoretical constructs of
organized crime. However, as in other areas, there