BOOK REVIEW


ROBERT W. TAYLOR
The University of Texas at Tyler

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-motorcycle 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 organizational 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