

YIDS IN THE HOOD

(Continued from pg. 79) cartels and funnel nuclear elements to the highest bidders. Essentially all of the aid America has sent to prop up Russia's ailing society has disappeared through Mafia meddling and it was this siphoning which led, in 1998, directly to the collapse of the country's economy altogether. It is said that Russia itself is nothing more than a country owned by organized crime, a reality unprecedented in history.

Moreover, the Russian Mob is known for its brutality. They murder journalists, they kidnap mothers, they hack off limbs of enemies and they'll kill off entire families just to make a point. They're very different from the gangsters of the '30s and '40s who had rules of conduct and an expected level-headedness in their bloody dealings. Even the current Italian Mafia considers Russian tactics to be highly intense and their lifestyle too flashy. However, this doesn't stop them from doing business with them.

Meanwhile, it's Israel that may have been hit hardest. Years ago, the tiny country adopted the Law of Return, stating that any Jew returning to their ancestor's native land could immediately get citizenship. In spite of their total lack of religious upbringing and in many cases, self-hating Jewishness, practically every Russian gangster has an Israeli passport and lives there part-time. Even the non-Jewish ones have managed to bribe their way into citizenship. Israeli law does not allow for the extradition of its citizens, nor does it allow for background checks of large sums of money placed into its banks. The Russians apparently wield considerable influence through campaign donations made to such notable heads of state as former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Knesset member Natan Sharansky. Many consider the Russian Mob to be a bigger threat to Israel's stability than the Arabs.

Unfortunately, the United States Government seems to have sat on its hands throughout the building of this hegemony. It wasn't until the '90s that the various law enforcement agencies began taking Russian organized crime seriously, and now they're all playing a Bad News Bears-style game of catching up. No one really knows exactly how much influence the Russians wield. What they do know is that organizations such as the Red Mafiya are highly digitized, ubiquitous, ruthless and are here to stay.

This is not history. This is an on-going story. ●

THE COMMISSION

(Continued from pg.59) No questions were asked, nothing was traceable. They were efficient, paid handsomely, and accounted for more than 300 murders from 1931 to 1940. When the killing machine was dismantled by a rat informant.

Although the Commission was "national," its power only flexed itself on the East Coast even though it was more respected throughout the rest of the country. As time wore on representatives from crime families in Chicago, Buffalo and Detroit, were present at Commission gatherings, but the decisions made at most of those meetings only affected the East. The development of gambling in Las Vegas, heroin importation via Europe, prostitution, kickbacks, graft, hijacking of goods, and scads of other crimes at all levels of American society can be traced directly to the Commission.

As a result of the Banana War and the Gallo-Profaci conflict (coupled with the Commission's failure to inflict strict rules to halt this inter-family warfare), and the jailing of all the heads of the Five Families in the mid-1980s to late-1990s, the Commission has become less powerful as a ruling body than as a counsel for decision-making. The influx of other ethnic groups (namely, the Russians, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, Latin Americans and the Mexican Mafia, La Eme) into all aspects of organized crime—as well as the computerization of records and technological advances in surveillance—all make it harder to make a living, or a killing, nowadays. The Commission is now in the position of the Mustache Petes. Their way is the old way, and soon it might hit the highway.

Luciano, Lansky, and their compatriots had a vision of America; they saw the vast country as something that was waiting to be taken—a dollar bill at the end of a fishing line, a pie left on a windowsill. They were bullies from the playground with business on the brain. While the rest of the kids swung from the monkey bars, these guys planted the seeds for their big-money monkey business. A straight chalk-line can be drawn from charging their playmates for protection to making America their corporate playground. By the time the whistle was blown to announce the end of recess, it was the Commission that forever changed the landscape of America and made capitalism seem something more like a dare than an opportunity. When opportunity knocked, they knocked him over and took it for themselves. Now, the next knock on the Commission's door just might end up being the hand of Fate. ●

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