

Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America

James Fentress

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EMINENT GANGSTERS

IMMIGRANTS AND THE BIRTH
OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN AMERICA



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James Fentress : Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Fascinating historical narrative on organized crime in America By MAM/AKLM My reading on the subject of organized crime had so far been fragmentary. I was therefore delighted to

have been introduced to James Fentress's book on Organized Crime in America. This is the first book that I have read that chronicles the evolution of organized crime in America during the early part of the 20th century. It provides us with a detailed and coherent narrative of organized crime in the context of a large wave of immigrants from Europe that arrived on the American shores between 1890 and 1930. James Fentress takes us on this journey through organized crime in New York, Chicago, LA and New Orleans. He introduces us to the principal characters; their organizational skills in expanding their crime empires; the ruthless elimination of their competitors; and, their attempts to stay one step ahead of the law. His narrative on this part of American History is compelling and well worth reading. I found the Chapter on Prohibition particularly fascinating. First, it provided me with a coherent history of the Prohibition era, and second, the current debate on the "war on drugs" is eerily reminiscent of the Prohibition era. This book should be on the policy makers reading list. This book is marvellous historical narrative, and a must for anyone interested in American History. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Carefully Researched, Engaging, and Well Written! By Hummingbird Professor, social historian, and mafia expert James Fentress delights once again with *Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America*, which follows his well-received 2000 release, *Rebels and Mafiosi: Death in a Sicilian Landscape*. Fentress's passion for mafia history shines through in the astounding detail and precision of his writing. The book is peppered with entertaining stories of the early gangsters, from New York City's "Five Points Juniors" gang (where Al Capone got his start) and the infamous Charlie "Lucky" Luciano to Johnnie Torrio's reign in Chicago during Prohibition, and so much more. Fentress's writing style flows brilliantly throughout the pages, engaging the reader as a novel would, and making the book difficult to put down despite its impressive length (485 pages). Those interested in mafia and crime history will be particularly well rewarded with this informational read, though the writing is strong enough to appeal to a general audience as well. The author's discussion here of the intimate connection between the story of organized crime and the essential immigrant experience in America is astute and inspired. All in all, this is a painstakingly researched, finely crafted, thorough exploration of the roots of our nation's organized crime movement and its most prominent figures. Fentress makes an invaluable contribution to the field with this work, which should be read, enjoyed, and utilized at both an academic and general interest level for years to come. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. For anyone who would like to learn more about the mafia gangs than check this book out. By Cheryl Koch When I first saw this book, I thought it looked like an interesting read. I don't know much about the mafia gangs or where they came from. I just know that I have found them interesting and wanted to learn more about them. Mr. Fentress does not just tell readers what they may already know about the mafia gangs but really digs deep beyond the gangs and arms readers with the birth of the mafia gangs. I thought Mr. Fentress did a very good job of detailing how the gangs were formed. He started out with explaining that they were just immigrants who were looking to come to America for a better life. A complaint I have with this book is that while I found the references that Mr. Fentress would refer to as sources at different points in this book, my preference is that I would have liked the foot notes or references to be inserted at the bottom of the pages versus at the back of the book. I just know in the past when I have read some books with foot notes that it is much easier to correspond the foot note when it is on the same page. Of course this does not take anything away from the book, it is just my preference. I learned more than I ever thought I would about the birth of the mafia gangs by reading this book and I thought this book was well organized. For anyone who would like to learn more about the mafia gangs than check this book out. *Eminent Gangsters: Immigrants and the Birth of Organized Crime in America* would also make a nice gift for someone.

'This American system of ours,' observed Al Capone, 'call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you like, gives to each and every one of us a great opportunity if we can only seize it with both hands and make the most of it.' Capone spoke as a member of a generation who, seizing the opportunities offered by the Eighteenth Amendment of the US Constitution, which prohibited the manufacture, transport, or sale of alcoholic beverages, enriched himself and laid the basis for modern organized crime in America. Yet if the story of the eminent gangsters is not the orthodox, rags-to-riches American success story, neither can it be dismissed as merely a crime story, a morality play where evil doers are brought to justice by the forces of law and order. Their story, rather, is a central and significant chapter in the social and economic history of modern America.

About the Author James Fentress studied at Princeton and Oxford universities. He taught political philosophy at the University of London. The author of *Rebels and Mafiosi*, a history of the foundation of the mafia in Sicily, Fentress has written and lectured extensively on the mafia and organized crime. He has three children and currently lives in Rome.