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Book review: the army and the crowd in mid-Georgian England. by Tony Hayter

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The Army and the Crowd in Mid-Georgian England. by Tony Hayter

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settling disputes, and funneling payoffs to the right officials. Not only did the family explicitly discourage violence, it prohibited participation in activities considered to be too risky, for example, narcotics, kidnapping, and counterfeiting. The critical question we are not able to answer from Anderson's data is how typical the rather benign Benguerra family is of other organized criminal groups, and the fact that the real name and location of the family are concealed makes it extremely difficult to arrive at an independent judgment.

Anderson devotes considerable space in this short book to an analysis of the Benguerra family's legitimate business interests, and it is here that the limitations of her data become most apparent. She makes an effort to test five hypotheses about the reasons the family made legitimate investments by analyzing the types of investments, but often her data are not up to the task. Her analysis could have been greatly clarified by direct interviews with just two or three willing informants. (The five hypotheses are, in descending order of empirical support: establishing a tax cover for illegal income, providing a front for illegal business, serving family members, diversification, and profit.)

The only chapter of the book that does not deal with organized crime is in one respect its most important, for it provides significant new evidence in the debate about the structure of the Cosa Nostra. On one side in the debate, Cressey has argued that the Cosa Nostra is a formal organization with a clearly defined hierarchical role structure, while Francis Ianni (*A Family Business* [New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1972]), on the other, holds it to be a traditional social system based upon personal relationships and without formal roles that continue beyond the participation of given individuals. The first chapter of Anderson's book reproduces numerous passages from the transcripts of the FBI's electronic surveillance of the office of Samuel Rizzo de Cavalcante, the boss of a Cosa Nostra family. The transcripts clearly show that the high commission which directs the overall organization, and the de Cavalcante family, contain formal continuing organizational roles very much as described in Cressey's work.

Despite the limitations of her data, Anderson's work is clearly a most valuable contribution to the study of organized crime and one that must be read by anyone seriously interested in this field.

The Army and the Crowd in Mid-Georgian England. By Tony Hayter. Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979. Pp. x+239. \$22.50.

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For a long time, the 18th century had the reputation of being a peaceful interlude in British history. It came between the dramatic and widely

known political and religious struggles of the 17th century and the social dislocations and insurrections that accompanied industrialization in the 19th century. During the 1960s this reputation began to change. The prevalence of food riots, resistance to conscription, and, in the later years, riots on behalf of church and king gained increasing attention from historians. In particular, the “new” social history, concerned to look at events “from below” and not always from the perspective of kings and generals, contained several arguments that the 18th-century mob was not only more frequently in action than had been thought, but was also more organized and self-conscious. The most influential of such arguments were offered by E. P. Thompson. Tony Hayter’s Ph.D. thesis, here published in what appears to be a minimally changed form, represents an attempt to look once again from above at these insurrections newly discovered from below.

In *The Army and the Crowd in Mid-Georgian England*, Hayter pays little attention to Thompson’s work; indeed he does not cite any works of Thompson and his associates from the middle and late 17th century, not even those specifically addressed to problems of the rule of law (e.g., E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters* [London: Allen Lane, 1975] or D. Hay, P. Linebaugh, and E. P. Thompson, eds., *Albion’s Fatal Tree* [London: Allen Lane, 1975] to cite only the most obvious). This book is emphatically not a work of social history. Its author dubs it “a study in administrative history” (p. ix), which is a fair enough assessment. Most of Hayter’s attention is focused on the activities and problems of heads of the British War Office, between the 1750s and 1780s, as they were compelled to deal with popular protest at home. He offers some comments on the matter of tactics employed by troops in actual contact with crowds and makes preliminary statements regarding the “law of riot,” the role of magistrates, the nature of the home army, and the character of the 18th-century mob. The bulk of the book, though, is a competent but very narrow study of relations between the War Office and local magistrates and military commanders.

Hayter draws on a thorough reading of primary sources but ignores the secondary sources and theoretical arguments which might have made his book more interesting. He offers sympathy to incumbents of the anomalous and ill-defined position of secretary of war, especially to Viscount Barrington, but tells us too little for us to understand the politics and constitutional debates which trapped the secretaries, let alone the larger social issues which kept the military recurrently deployed, usually despite its own distaste, against the English populace. There are really only 160 or so pages of text in this book, the rest being occupied with lists of which Horse Grenadier Guards were in what parish when, and with a surprising number of blank pages for a book printed in our new age of austerity. In an earlier age, austerity might have dictated that a work of such narrow scope and such a descriptive nature would remain an unpublished thesis, to be consulted in libraries by specialists. It offers enough information to have made the specialists’ efforts worthwhile.