

## BOOK REVIEWS

Stephen Sloan, *Simulating Terrorism*

University of Oklahoma Press

Norman, Oklahoma, 1981

“I felt some fear when I was handcuffed and the bag was placed over my head. I did not know what was going to happen or how far ‘these people’ would really go”. These were the reactions of a former hostage, recorded not after a real incident but after a simulation, one which by the author’s account was very realistic indeed.

In an era which has seen terrorism become a problem of global magnitude, the question of how governments, security forces and the media should respond has seemingly lagged one or two steps behind. The latter half of the 1970’s saw the growth of “response teams” — negotiators and armed tactical squads — but often without adequate direction, standardization and training. The latter problem has been particularly acute with, in some cases, disastrous results. Dr. Sloan therefore, has made a timely and effective contribution to the training task with his book *Simulating Terrorism*.

At the outset he states what the book is supposed to do: to integrate “the concerns and skills of the operationally oriented representatives of law-enforcement agencies with social-science techniques . . . It presents a detailed analysis of a simulation technique developed to provide the most realistic training possible for those who must respond to hostage-taking in general and those who one day may have to deal with the additional complexities surrounding a politically motivated terrorist seizure.” The book delivers on its promise completely. In seventeen concise and well-written chapters the author takes us through the entire process of preparing and running a simulation exercise, from the writing of the plot, through the technique of role playing, and safety versus realism, to the complex issues of jurisdiction and police-media relations. Problems arising out of crisis management, negotiation techniques, communications, even the physical layout of a command post, are discussed in detail and useful lessons are identified. The book opens with an account of a sample simulation which illustrates many of the problems that can arise in a real terrorist incident. The last five chapters are mainly concerned with the lessons learned from the simulations Dr. Sloan has run — and his experience in this field is considerable.

The reviewer has one problem. On pages 37 and 52 the author listed the qualities needed in those cast in the role of simulated terrorists. He wanted individuals with extensive tactical experience, preferably unconventional, in current position or in the past — but who are not law enforcement personnel, and who are knowledgeable and articulate in presenting radical ideologies. Outside of a real terrorist group, would such a person exist? It is doubtful that this combination of qualities can be found in normal life, and in reality the role may have to be filled either by the experienced professional soldier or policeman who has a flair for portraying the violent radical, or by a young, articulate

student, to whom the rhetoric may come easily, but who must learn what he can about tactics and coercion. This difficulty apart, and a slip-up which translates Stockholm from Sweden to Denmark, the book has no flaws.

In addition to the text, the book includes a good bibliography and two useful appendices. The reviewer recommends this book for anyone who may have some responsibility for responding to and managing a terrorist incident.

D.C.

Ambassador Frank J. Devine  
*El Salvador: Embassy Under Attack*  
Vantage Press, New York, 1981

As we watch the unfolding tragedy of El Salvador from the safety of our living rooms, we are apt to become so preoccupied with the daily television horror that we neglect the past and the future. If North Americans and Europeans are to contribute to the resolution of this conflict, they have to clear their minds of images and symbols, and of the propaganda that colours most reports from that unhappy land, and try to comprehend the present through study of the past. Only in the light of knowledge and understanding can we begin to address future options.

Frank Devine's book is a valuable source of knowledge. As United States Ambassador to El Salvador 1977-1980, the author was a close observer during the period when that country endured Marxist terrorism, counter terror by authority or by vigilante groups of the Right, a revolutionary coup that failed to resolve the conflict, and the slow, deadly slide towards civil war. As a diplomat, trying to interpret what were sometimes confused and contradictory instructions from Washington to Salvadorian leaders, Devine was at the centre of this storm. And he was also at the middle of two other, related tempests.

One concerned his personal safety. As Paul Wilkinson pointed out in the Spring 1981 issue of this journal,<sup>1</sup> the profession of diplomat must now rank as one of the most dangerous in the world. Devine's departure to his Salvadorian mission had to be postponed because rightist terrorists planned to kill him on his arrival. *The conspirators' intention had evidently been to leave evidence pointing to Marxist culpability, thus turning American public opinion against the left and justifying a repressive counter.* Hardly had he and his family settled into their new home when it became apparent that the Marxist groups were planning his kidnap. Careful and involved measures were needed to thwart this plan.