



la révolution
**WILL
THEY
SHOOT
REGIS DEBRAY?**

By OLIVIER TODD ✓

CPYRGHT

Translated from LE NOUVEL OBSERVATEUR, Paris

Born to wealth and privilege, Régis Debray, the young French philosopher-revolutionary now awaits, in a Bolivian jail, a trial and possible firing squad for alleged guerrilla activities. Debray's book, *Révolution dans la Révolution?*, is reportedly favored reading by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and his imprisonment has drawn pleas of clemency from hundreds of international figures including General de Gaulle, the Archbishop of Paris and Bertrand Russell. As described by Olivier Todd of Paris's leftist *Nouvel Observateur*, Debray's life story reads like that of a hero out of Stendhal.

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IN VIETNAM, in Greece, in the Sudan—here and there, all over the globe today—young people are being imprisoned and tortured, are dying in silence. Now, unexpectedly, in Latin America, a continent whose revolutions are ordinarily laughing matters for French *chansonniers*, the arrest of a young professor in Bolivia—a country of whose existence Europeans in general are barely aware—has suddenly acquired symbolic dimensions.

How did Régis Debray, a twenty-six-year-old professor of philosophy, get involved with Bolivian rebels? What is his background? Why has there been intercession on his behalf by the Pope, unofficially, and officially by General de Gaulle? And why has so much animosity been displayed by his captor, the Bolivian General Barrientos, who has alternated promises of justice with threats of the firing squad in a country that does not practice capital punishment? The answer can be found in the conclusion to Debray's icily brilliant book, *Révolution dans la Révolution?* ["Revolution Within the Revolution?"].

When Comrade "Che" Guevara resumed the work of the insurrection, he assumed on the international level the consequences of the line of action that was formed by Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban revolution. . . . Should Che Guevara reappear, it would not be too risky to say that he would be the indisputable political and military chief of a guerrilla movement.

The Bolivian national security service—under the guidance of members of its branches for American affairs and members of the Central Intelligence Agency—is convinced, wrongly, that Régis Debray is one of the few who knows the whereabouts of Che Guevara, the man who symbolizes South America's struggle against the United States in the eyes of Washington. The Americans have carefully read Debray's book (200,000 copies were printed in Havana) which spells out Castro's strategy. This strategy presupposes a unified command for both political and military affairs under the leadership of the guerrillas. If Régis Debray is being held incom-