

BALTIMORE RADIO COMMENTATOR SPEAKS OUT ON BRUCE BAECHLER CASE

by Dorothy T. Samuel

General Ky is in a United States refugee camp choosing among offers--one, at least, for Vice Chancellor of a California State College. Richard Nixon is in San Clemente preparing his memoirs and choosing among publishing offers. The Watergate burglars have been freed from prison; their part in the Watergate criminality pardoned. Solzhenitsyn, who shows HIS government less respect than even Ellsberg showed for HIS, is the most lionized hero in America today. We seem to be saying that Solzhenitsyn is the perfect example of how a man should respond to a government which, in his OWN opinion, is acting immorally.

But down in West Virginia, a twenty-year old Quaker youth has just been shut up in the Robert Kennedy memorial Federal Youth Prison--and isn't THAT a memorial for a man to sleep with?

Bruce Baechler turned eighteen ONE DAY AFTER the effective date of the Vietnam Peace Accords--three months AFTER the end of INVOLUNTARY inductions under the draft law. But Bruce Baechler's conscience wasn't easy on the Military Archipelago, and so he informed the Orange County North Carolina draft board and the local U.S. Attorney that he would not be registering for selective service.

No subversion for Bruce, no going underground or hiding away like a criminal. And almost a year later, the Government picked him up--plucked him out of a specially called Meeting for WORSHIP at the Quaker Meeting House in Washington D.C. Now Solzhenitsyn, of course, always had the support of Americans when HE called HIS government names. But young Bruce wasn't calling ANYBODY names--and he certainly wasn't the darling of ANY foreign powers. He just wanted his OWN country to let him follow his OWN conscience--privately, quietly, without writing any horror stories or embarrassing that nation internationally.

Young Bruce was tried and convicted; his appeal was denied. And eight of the nine old men on our Supreme Court declined to bother about Bruce and his conscience. So Bruce is in jail.

Just before entering, he made a little statement. It will never win him a lionized tour of Russia anymore than it won him compassion in the United States:

"Tomorrow I enter Federal Prison," Bruce said. "I was convicted of refusing to register with Selective Service, an agency many people think doesn't exist. But it's still there all right, and its purpose is the same as always: to provide involuntary MANpower to the Armed Forces when they can't get enough on their own. The draft made the Vietnam War possible--and resistance to it helped end the war. The draft system still exists, with its pool of I-A 19-year-old men, ready to make the next war possible--unless we work to abolish it, and until then refuse to cooperate with it."

Bruce Baechler refused to cooperate, and Bruce Baechler is in prison. Rejoice, oh, Richard Nixon; rejoice, oh Howard Hunt; rejoice, oh General Ky. Amnesty stops at the edge of power, and YOU are safe! Bruce Baechler is in prison, and Solzhenitsyn tours the United States!

Until tomorrow night, this is Dorothy Samuel.

(Prepared for broadcast over WBAL-AM, Baltimore, on Monday, August 4.)

Is there a commentator or columnist in your area who might be sympathetic? Contact her/him and urge her/him to say/write something on the case.