

# "FUTURE STRESS" - THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EXILE

**War resisters living in Canada find stress either with forgetting about the U.S. or waiting to go home.**

The process of immigration traditionally has been one which exerts a great deal of psychological strain while the individual learns to adjust to his/her adopted country. The American war resister living in Canada is no exception; however, other factors have entered into the picture which have tended to make this adjustment period even more stressful than average. Two such factors -- the generally involuntary nature of the decision to immigrate and the off-and-on discussion in the United States over amnesty -- have left many war resisters high and dry in the adjustment process.

Social scientists who have studied the problem of immigration have looked at it from the perspective of desocialization and resocialization: "...In the first post-immigration period two processes occur concomitantly: desocialization, which is always intertwined with defense acts aimed at salvaging parts of the socio-personal system, and resocialization, the seeking of the new identity adjusted to the new social environment." (Rivka Weiss Bar-Yosef, "Desocialization and Resocialization: The Adjustment Process of Immigrants", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 1968, p. 29.)

The immigration process sets in motion the disintegration of the individual's old social identity and with it comes the displacement of one's self image. Migration, in other words, has a desocializing effect. In the "normal" psychological development of an immigrant, the individual will begin to develop a new social identity as he/she learns how to fend for himself in a new environment. Under ideal conditions, as this process unfolds, a new personal self image will begin to replace the old image. After a period of time, varying with social conditions of the host country and the individual's ability to desire to respond to the new environment, the immigrant will be well along the road to resocialization.

Under the best conditions, the desocialization-resocialization process is difficult, but it is even more precarious for involuntary migrants or refugees who leave their home country under social, political, religious, or economic duress. Most war resisters would fall into this category, at least when they first came to Canada. Many war resisters decided after living in Canada for some time to cease being refugees in exile and become immigrants; that is, to complete the desocialization-resocialization process. Others have remained exiles in their outlook in life.

According to social scientists who have studied involuntary migration the possibility or impossibility of returning to the country of one's origin or migrating to a third country is an important factor which influences adaption or maladaption in the new country.

An immigrant who knows, or believes, he can return to his old environment and maintains close contacts abroad, may be hesitant to change. Individuals migrating against their will may sabotage themselves unconsciously, refusing to succeed in a country of asylum they did not choose. For example, many persons who left Hitler Germany to go to Palestine before World War II began serious study of Hebrew only after Israel attained independence as they came to realize that they could not or did not want to leave the country.

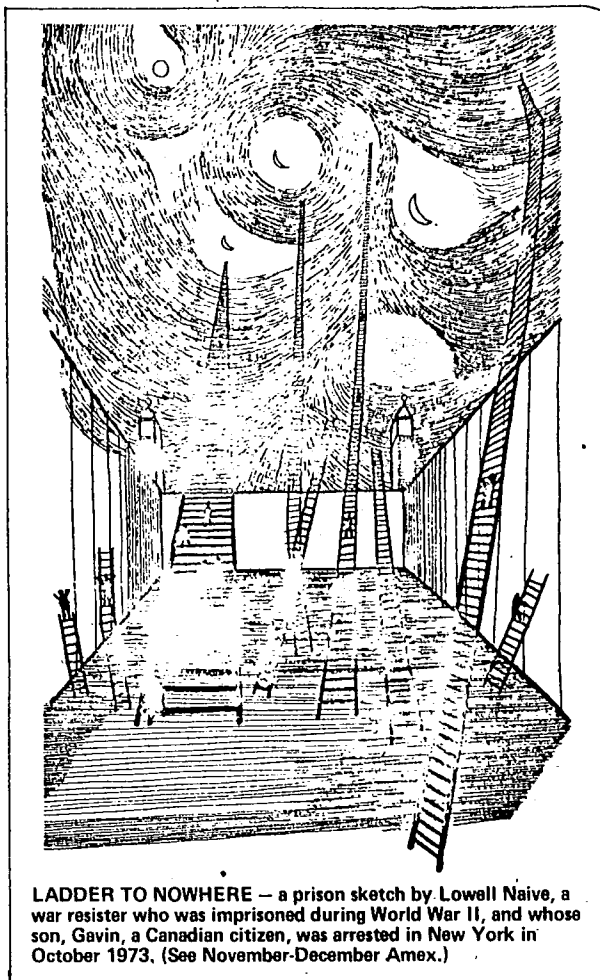
Henry P. David, "Involuntary International Migration: Adaption of Refugees", Eugene B. Brody, ed., *Behavior in New Environments: Adaptation of Migrant Populations*, Sage Publication, (Beverly Hills, Cal., 1969), p. 80.

With respect for those who see themselves as exiles, the adaption process in Canada is not complete.

It is not surprising that for war resisters who see themselves as exiles the public discussion of amnesty in the United States has raised the possibility of a future return to the home country. Thus the question of amnesty is quite unsettling with respect to making a decision to go further along the path of desocialization-resocialization ending with a full rejection of America and a full embrace of things Canadian. On the one hand, the possibility of amnesty would strongly tend to arrest the adaption process, while on the other hand the less than conclusive status of the prospect for amnesty leaves the exile who hopes to return uncertain about how soon an honorable amnesty could be achieved.

What has turned out to be suprising, though, is that the amnesty debate that raged for the first four months of 1973 had very unsettling effects upon war resisters who saw themselves as immigrants rather than exiles and seemed to have adapted quite successfully and happily to life in Canada, just marking time until their citizenship application date came up. The psychological state of such war resisters was described by Canadian psychiatrist Saul Levine as one of "Adaptation and Integration". "During this period the individual becomes totally involved in his new life style. For the first time he is engaged wholly in being Canadian, not specifically an American-in-exile. He is concerned about 'making it' and about Canadian social problems and politics. He has adapted to his new life in Canada; it is no longer particularly stressful, and he seldom longs for a return to the United States." Saul Levine, "Draft Dodgers: Coping With Stress, Adapting to Exile", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, (42:3 April 1972)

Dr. Levine has made it his business to keep in touch with war resisters both professionally and socially. During the first part of 1973 when amnesty was a topic of heated discussion, he found war resisters to be undergoing great psychological stress, especially among those who had made it to the "Adaptation and Intergration" stage. Such people apparently were more susceptible than he expected to pressure from parents and friends to go back home to the U.S.. As well, many individuals who seemed to have opted to make



**LADDER TO NOWHERE** — a prison sketch by Lowell Naive, a war resister who was imprisoned during World War II, and whose son, Gavin, a Canadian citizen, was arrested in New York in October 1973. (See November-December Amex.)

their home in Canada were not as certain as they once had been about where they would live in the future.

The following observations drawn from an interview with Dr. Levine certainly are not discriptive of all war resisters since he has not seen a wide enough sample for any results but they are a significant indication of some psychological trends among war resisters. From our own vantage point, one group which has been little affected in a psychological sense by the recent amnesty discussion is those who no longer have family or social roots in the States.

Dr. Levine's assessment of the current psychological pressure faced by war resisters is based on continuing work with this group. He has noted a shift in their general psychological situation which is related to the "end" of the Vietnam War in January 1973 and the subsequent upsurge in discussion of the amnesty question. Levine cited the case of an American professional who completed his studies in Canada, married a Canadian, and considered his future to lie wholly in Canada. With the end of the war, family and professional colleagues in America began to call upon him to return. Second thoughts about his apparently firm decision to make a life in Canada placed great strain on his marriage. Although the situation improved as the American public turned its attention

from amnesty to Watergate, it is evident that the manifested issue will linger.

In addition to creating some sense of an increased possibility to return home through amnesty, the "end" of the war necessarily places the original refusal to serve the American military in a different perspective. Dr. Levine remarked that anger as a predominant affective state seems to be the most self-destructive emotion faced by war resisters: anger at Canada for its often indifferent or even hostile reactions, anger at themselves for the original refusal or for current regret, or anger at fellow exiles who promote amnesty or who return to the U.S. under other conditions. The general attitude of the American public seems to be that everything connected with the "ended" Vietnam War should be forgotten as quickly as possible. This attitude, coupled with an implicit denial of the meaning of refusal to serve in a war that supposedly is no longer being fought, seems likely to reinforce the particular situations producing anger.

Adjustment (or resocialization) of the war resister in Canada has been affected by a number of factors related to the question of national identity. First, as Dr. Levine pointed out, American exiles have been seeking to resocialize themselves in a country whose growing nationalism is often directed specifically against their country of origin. Second, the passage of time has done much to disperse the communes and neighborhoods that may have offered some support. Dr. Levine noted that most exiles moved three times during their first year in Canada. Finally, Dr. Levine remarked that a move from the American "melting pot" to the Canadian "vertical mosaic" poses special problems for resocialization. The subtle differences between America and Canada can make it especially difficult to distinguish between the two countries, and the resulting ambiguity can provide considerable stress.

With respect to the involuntary nature of the migration, Dr. Levine indicated the importance to some exiles of the feelings of having made an irrevocable decision that precludes certain possibilities: the idea that a door is closed, even if there is no intention of going through it, can be particularly stressful. This is particularly true for those who have been brought up to believe in unlimited options. Among other things, war resisters have been cut off from familiar settings, family and friends, and a certain range of job opportunities. To the extent that he has begun to find these things in Canada, the war resister has made some progress toward resocialization.

Additional insight into the current psychological situation of deserters was obtained through an interview with Dr. Angus McDonald, a psychologist who has counselled deserters over a period of two years. While Dr. Levine's discussion centered on Americans who are comparatively "permanent" exiles, McDonald's experience lay primarily with deserters, most of whom have returned to the U.S.

McDonald said that most of the deserters that he counselled were better off in returning to the U.S. -- with the qualification that they not be returned to a stockade, which is usually the case. The deserters referred to him were those who seemed likely to obtain a discharge upon some psychological grounds, such as inability to adjust to the military. Although the IQ scores of those he counseled were above average, average education was about grade 11 and their occupa-

tional skills virtually nonexistent. These deserters had been underground in Canada anywhere from a few weeks to four years.

When questioned about Canada's special 60-day immigration period in the late summer of 1973, McDonald stated that an extension of the period could have been a real benefit to deserters who desired to stay in Canada. He pointed out that the illegal status of those he counselled, coupled with previous bad experiences in the military, had seriously aggravated certain psychological conditions. Some deserters were so fearful that they never showed up for the interview that had been scheduled with him. McDonald suggested that the longer deserters remain underground, the more likely they are to take the risk of applying for landed immigrant status. This would not apply, of course, to those war resisters who felt that some criminal record would prevent their acceptance. McDonald noted that the deserters he had seen did not have records of violence against persons, but rather convictions for various types of property violation.

The average deserter's lack of a background that would facilitate adaptation to a new country, coupled with the pressures created by having to remain underground without legal employment, have created a situation in which most of the deserters seen by McDonald have found it preferable to return to the U.S. even under punitive conditions.

Our own observations within the exile community tend to confirm the psychological insights expressed by these two professionals. For the comparatively permanent exiles, the past year has been a noticeably unsettling one. We have established contact for the first time with a number of exiles who have progressed a long way towards establishing a life in Canada, but came to feel that it was in some way not sufficient. Longstanding relationships of various kinds--personal, social, and business--have unexpectedly been broken off. Parents and friends have placed great pressure on some exiles by urging them to settle their cases by whatever means necessary. Other exiles have become more aware of the exact nature of their cases, and the possibilities of settling them, through the legal services offered by the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors or similar groups.

One of Dr. Levine's impressions is that for exiles who have been in Canada for some time (those who obviously cannot adapt tend to return to the U.S. after a short stay here), there is no greater prevalence of serious psychopathology than for any comparable young adult group. The lives of these exiles, however, are subject to a continuing and potentially detrimental ambivalence, as long as the question of returning home is not resolved. Of course, the level of uncertainty has subsided from that which immediately followed the "end" of the war and the attendant wide discussion of amnesty. But the problem remains and will remain, either until amnesty is granted, until the exile returns under less favorable conditions, or until the exile has remained in Canada for so long that resocialization has completed its process despite the obstacles. Because lives cannot continue in psychological limbo, it is apparent that the sooner amnesty is granted, the exile is more and more likely to have resolved his/her ambivalence through other alternatives, however great the psychological, personal, and social cost involved.

TWO "DESERTERS" (Continued from page 13)  
passed through my neighborhood and took me and my friends to war. I've been at war ever since. Now I want to come home."

He is also concerned about the harassment and pressure his underground exile has caused for his family, and would cause his fiancée, Robin. In November, two FBI agents showed up at his parents house in Brooklyn and at first it sent him into hiding again. But it finally tipped the scales in persuading him to turn himself in. And like Lew Simon, his family, his fiancée and his friends were witnesses when he surrendered to the authorities at the Village Gate.

Ed said, "I want them to leave my people alone and deal with me. I don't feel guilty, but if they do send me to prison, I'll tell the other guys in the stockade, Hey, man, you didn't do anything wrong. The war was wrong."

Since their arrest, the parents of Lewis Simon and Ed McNally, Safe Return, and Families of Resisters for Amnesty have been working hard to bring about their release.

#### LATE NEWS: ED RELEASED WITH BAD DISCHARGE

As this story was going to press, AMEX received the information that Ed McNally's court martial had been held and he was found guilty and released with a Bad Conduct Discharge. Lew is still in custody. Ed writes:

"The happy fact that I received no prison time is due in part to the pressure your letter-writing placed on the Army and in part because the high military command has decided to concentrate all their efforts in 'getting' Lew. He has been chosen as their target because of his long history of outspoken opposition to the war and by severely punishing him, one of the first Vietnam resisters, they hope to set an example for tens of thousands of others. His imprisonment in the Dix Stockade over the past two months has had a nightmarish quality: constant harassment and weeks at a time in the hole."

Lew has been charged with "desertion with apprehension", which carries a maximum sentence of three years. His court-martial is expected in mid-March. His supporters are asked to write the military asking for his release with an Honorable Discharge. Letters and cables should be directed to:

Howard Calloway, Secretary of the Army,  
The Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

-- Alfred Clemens

#### UNDERGROUND... (Continued from page 41)

Many are scattered to the winds. I will never see them again. Others are married and have kids and have evolved in directions which make genuine communication impossible now. Others are dead, victims of cancer and car crashes. A few, here and there, are eager to touch again and do not care that four years have gone by. But the truth is that most of the threads cannot be picked up again. They had been unraveled even before I went underground, when the madstorm of Vietnam hit us and, reeling from the blow, we had to pick among impossible and insane alternatives.

--Steve Trimm