Wars are waged not only on the field of battle, but also in the domestic sphere, on the home front. While the soldiers are away, their families and close ones at home inevitably experience the absence and personal loss of their male relatives and friends. These feelings are particularly pronounced in an overseas conflict where the soldiers are sent to fight in faraway theaters against a distant enemy. Wartime administrative measures such as war censorship, rationing, war propaganda or increased surveillance of popular opinion can have a wider effect on the entire civilian population. An atmosphere of wartime insecurity and fear can exist even in a situation where the conflict is not immediately threatening to the community. The experience of war at home can have an impact on culture, public morality, social order, national identity and gender roles. The effects of war can never be completely prevented from making their way to the people back home.¹

The Finnish Guards’ participation in the 1831 campaign against Polish revolutionaries was no exception. The effects of war were directly felt by the Finnish elites, who were quite conscious of the broader significance of the conflict, and also by the families of the rank-and-file sharp-shooters, who were very much affected by the service of their loved ones in the Polish battlefields. The war aroused fears and hopes, and presented the people at home both with emotional as well as material challenges. Although the direct effects of war were mostly limited to a fraction of Finnish society, it is worth noting that they disproportionately touched the ruling elites of the Grand-Duchy. In this respect,

the war was inevitably of national significance. By the time the Finnish soldiers finally returned home in the spring of 1832, they returned to a community which had also experienced the repercussions of the same conflict where they had served.

This chapter will focus on the home front of the Grand-Duchy of Finland during the Polish campaign of 1831. The effects of the war on the internal political situation of the Grand-Duchy have been adequately covered by Juhani Paasivirta in his study of the international crises during the Era of Autonomy. This chapter aims for a broader portrayal of domestic war experience. The main questions are the impact of a foreign, overseas military campaign on the atmosphere of the home front, its reflections in public and private civilian discourse, and the differences in the domestic war experience across the social spectrum. The main sources consist of the correspondences between those noble Finnish families which were directly affected by the war, and for whom private letter-writing allowed a chance to share their wartime sentiments of fear and pride.

The experiences of the families of the sharp-shooters are approached mostly through the documents of the civil and military administration of the Grand-Duchy. Even though primary material on the experiences of ordinary soldiers’ families is regrettably scarce, these papers nonetheless provide a glimpse of their lives during the 1831 campaign. The soldiers of the Finnish Guard were not, of course, the only ones whose families were affected by the war. The crisis of 1830–31 triggered a large-scale organized recruitment of Finnish soldiers into the Russian armed forces, with well over 3000 Finns opting for military service in the Russian army and navy. Many of these men also served in the wars against the Ottoman Empire and Persia. Observations of this chapter are limited once again to the Finnish soldiers and officers of the Imperial Life-Guard who fought in Poland, and the experiences of their families at home.

Controls and Censorship: The Public Atmosphere in Finland during the Polish Uprising

The bloody suppression of the November Rising aroused feelings everywhere in Europe. In the general revolutionary enthusiasm of the continent, the Polish

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3 Max Engman, Pietarinsuomalaiset, WSOY, Helsinki 2004, pp. 130–133.