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In captivity—at Lewes

The life of Dr Juhan Paasikivi has been closely linked to Finland's struggle for independence. His grandfather was Finland's prime minister and president in the perilous times following the second world war. His father was killed in the Russo-Finnish winter war of 1939. He became an academic physician in Stockholm and in the 1960s showed that tolbutamide lowered the incidence of myocardial infarctions in patients with abnormal glucose tolerance.

He had a country house in the Aland Islands, where during the Crimean war an Anglo-French naval expedition under Sir Charles Napier stormed the fortress of Bomarsund (few casualties, but 600 died later from cholera). They took Finnish prisoners (regarded at the time as "Russian"), who were then stranded for six weeks on the battleship *St Vincent* and later the *Devonshire*—without much food but on hammocks infested with lice, allegedly left over by the French.

In October 1854 some 170 emaciated "poor victims of the ambition and criminality of the emperor of Russia"—including 15 officers, six wives, and one child—were marched to a former jail in the "ordinarily quiet country town" of Lewes, England. Treated on the whole quite well, even taken once a week to the town's outskirts to breathe the fresh air, they were housed three in a room with no doors or fireplaces, kept on frugal rations of beef and cocoa, but weighed periodically to ensure they were getting enough food.

Several tried to escape and were recaptured; two escaped in civilian clothes with false beards, almost walked into the British embassy in Hamburg, but eventually made their way to St Petersburg. In November 1855 a "young Fin" was unexpectedly born to one of the wives and duly baptised. Altogether some 27 prisoners died—from "rheumatism and disease of the chest," "dysentery with ague and fever," "phthisis pulmonalis," and "extensive disease of the left orbit." Some of the officers were "in great favour with the young ladies," but thought that the English danced the waltz rather poorly.

All this is detailed in a large file of letters and newsletter clippings from the 1854-5 *Illustrated London News* and the *Sussex Advertiser* that Dr Paasikivi sent to me some 25 years ago. For many years we planned to meet in person. It never came to be. He died in October 2004, age 74.