

Review of *MASS ARRESTS AND TORTURES IN 1944-1953*
by Dr. Arvydas Anušauskas

I have only few comments of principle concerning the chapter on tortures. Although the tortures really had to be sanctioned by the Minister or Deputy Minister of the MGB, I believe, no one ever asked for these permits. None of the stack of papers included any application or any permit. It is possible that in some cases the permits used to be obtained through the VČ. However, since guerrillas taken alive were often tortured in the sites of their arrest, i.e. close to the bunker or in a forest, one might conclude that it was allowed to torture a certain group of “enemies” (guerrillas, their closer supporters and contact persons) at any time without any sanction. Some kind of scandal would emerge only when an insignificant arrestee was tortured, esp. if he was crippled or even tortured to death and the officials failed to conceal this fact.

Furthermore, the military procurators, the MGB inspection and, finally, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LKP(b) put some efforts to regulate torturing, esp. since 1948. They used to investigate more scandalous cases and to punish one or two officers of the secret surveillance services in rare events. They attempted at controlling tortures due to various reasons but the main one, which was regularly stressed by Military Procurator S. Grimovitch, was that by torturing the officers used to elicit confessions and convict the “guilty ones”, yet meanwhile the real perpetrators were left loose and further caused harm to the Soviet rule. Another argument expressed by S. Grimovitch against total tortures was that the officers failed to initiate cases for about 15 per cent of all tortured arrestees, and the latter when released by their stories on the suffered tortures would increase the numbers of Soviet enemies.

Certain efforts to regulate torturing, forced the officers of the secret surveillance services to palter to some extent, and, thus, most of them started employing tortures without shedding blood. During the entire Stalinist period, there prevailed tortures by preventing persons from sleep, by keeping them standing on tiptoe, with lifted hands, sitting on chairs with sharp brims, etc. No traces were left on the bodies after these tortures and it was impossible to prove any tortures even having the best intentions. Meanwhile, the officers were sparing their nerves by employing tortures of this kind.