



Crueller than Gang of Four

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A former Khmer Rouge prison chief on Thursday said regime leader Pol Pot was worse than China's 'Gang of Four' as he admitted further 'cowardly' deeds at Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court.

Duch - real name Kaing Guek Eav - is on trial for overseeing the torture and extermination of 15,000 people who passed through the regime's Tuol Sleng prison, also known as S-21. He told the tribunal on Thursday that the regime's hardline communist theory was worse than China's cultural revolution, led by the so-called 'Gang of Four' who orchestrated extremist social reforms over ten years up to 1976.

'Pol Pot evacuated all the people from Phnom Penh city, smashed the former regime officials, smashed the capitalists, smashed the intellectuals. So... only the peasant worker class remained,' Duch said.

The Khmer Rouge regime used the word 'smashed' to refer to killing. 'This 'Gang of Four' went one step forward, but Pol Pot went ten steps forwards... Pol Pot's theory was even crueller than the theory of this group of four,' Duch said.

Duch said his appointment as chairman of S-21 prison meant that his 'duties became crimes against humanity by way of (overseeing) killing", but said his early sympathy for the victims gave way to an instinct for self-preservation.

'I was compelled to go on,' Duch told the court. 'I was rather cowardly in that I did not contest but went on carrying out their orders and sometimes even exercised my power... to ensure that myself and the lives of my family would be out of danger,' he said.

'Therefore, I committed all kinds of crimes, serious crimes. In S-21 no one is considered to have committed more crimes than me,' he added, saying that he 'regretted' the killings. Earlier Duch told the court he knew the hardline communist regime would eventually be brought to justice.

'It is clear that the communist party (Khmer Rouge) could not avoid being prosecuted for the crimes they have committed,' Duch told the five-judge panel, while saying he had lived in fear of being beheaded if he spoke out.

Duch later confirmed that 'all prisoners sent to S-21 must be killed', including those mistakenly arrested in order to ensure 'secrecy and security.' He said the party had an 'absolute' rule that meant those sent to S-21 would never be released.

'No one was entitled to release them, (not) even Pol Pot,' Duch said.

Tribunal judge Nil Nonn late Thursday announced the trial would adjourn and resume hearings on May 18.