



Khmer Rouge Jailer Had Brother-In-Law Tortured

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Another astounding confession came from Khmer Rouge jailer Kaing Guek Eav (nicknamed "Comrade Duch," pronounced "Doik") yesterday, during the first of an expected handful of trials of officials who served under Cambodian dictator Pol Pot in the late 1970s. Agence France-Press reports:

Duch said he had his brother-in-law locked up at the notorious Tuol Sleng detention centre to protect himself and his family, adding that the man was later killed by the hardline communist movement.

"I vouched for my younger sister and I vouched to educate her, but I could not do that for my brother-in-law," said Duch, who acknowledges overseeing the extermination of some 15,000 people at the jail.

"As a principle, when the husband was arrested the wife was arrested as well. But my younger sister was not arrested and she is still alive today," he added.

"Educate" meant to retrain the minds of all Cambodians to swear loyalty only to the government -- not family, not God, not anyone or anything else. The megalomaniacal Pol Pot eliminated all individuals who showed evidence of wealth or an education, even if they wore eyeglasses, for fear of an intellectual rebellion. Families were divided and driven far from their home provinces. What was left was an agrarian peasant society, as desired by the dictator's vision for a communist utopia.

He said that after his arrest (actually a second time), his brother-in-law tried to protect the rest of the family from the Khmer Rouge's spiralling paranoia, which involved witchhunts for suspected agents for the CIA, KGB and Vietnam and other groups.

"What he was afraid of was that when he was arrested and handcuffed, he wanted to know whether I would be arrested. Because if I was arrested, then the whole family would be gone," Duch said.

Yesterday also brought the first outside testimony, by Cambodian-American minister Christopher LaPel, about Duch's conversion to Christianity in the 1990s. This was while Duch was still in hiding and had not yet been discovered as a Khmer Rouge criminal. From the Phnom Penh Post:

The pastor said he only learned Duch's real name when an Associated Press reporter contacted him in April 1999 for a story on the former prison chief.

"That was a surprise for me," LaPel said, though he added that it was evidence of God's ability to change someone "from the killer to the believer".

LaPel, a character witness appearing for the defence, said he had no trouble forgiving Duch despite the fact that he lost family members to the Khmer Rouge as well as close friends who were sent to Tuol Sleng.

"When I met Duch in June 2008, I told him that I love him and I forgive him for what he had done to my parents, my brothers, my sister and my close friends at S-21," he said. "I speak for myself – as a Christian, as a believer in Jesus Christ."

Of course this is still deemed not newsworthy by most of the American media (TIME had a story recently, mostly about Cambodian television coverage of the trial).

Finally, to update my last post about the corruption of the court trying these cases, Belgian academic Raoul Marc Jennar called Duch a "scapegoat" for the government and said his crimes were surpassed elsewhere during the regime's reign. From *The Straits Times*:

There were nine centres where there were more victims than (Tuol Sleng). And from those centres, no one is before the court,' Mr Jennar, an expert on Khmer studies who has advised the current Cambodian government, told the court.

'My concept of justice is not to have scapegoats. It's to treat everyone the same way... There are a number of directors from those centres that are still alive - I want to emphasise that,' he added, refusing to name the suspects.

He cited researchers from the Documentation Centre of Cambodia to support the claim....

Jennar, who interviewed Duch in custody, said there was no hierarchy among the 196 Khmer Rouge detention centres around Cambodia, refuting prosecution claims that Tuol Sleng served as the regime's main jail.

Just like there was no "main" mass grave -- they still pockmark the entire country.