



## **Khmer Rouge defendant: Pol Pot a 'murderer'**

**May 27, 2009**

The former chief jailer for Cambodia's Khmer Rouge blamed the group's late leader Pol Pot for its murderous policies as he faced a tribunal Tuesday charged with crimes against humanity.

Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, commanded Phnom Penh's notorious S-21 prison, where as many as 16,000 men, women and children are believed to have been tortured before being sent to their deaths.

Duch, 66, is being tried by a U.N.-assisted genocide tribunal for crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture. An estimated 1.7 million Cambodians died under the 1975-79 communist Khmer Rouge regime from forced labor, starvation, medical neglect and executions.

"Pol Pot was a murderer. He was the greatest criminal father of Cambodia," Duch told the tribunal. "I did not think of Pol Pot as a patriot, he had blood on his hands."

Duch (pronounced Doik) said he was forced to take the job of overseeing the prison because of Pol Pot, but acknowledged he was still responsible for his actions as commandant.

Recent testimony in the trial has focused on fighting between Cambodia and Vietnam, which finally invaded in late 1978 to topple the Khmer Rouge regime. Nayan Chanda, a journalist who wrote about the fighting in his book "Brother Enemy," is testifying before the tribunal this week.

Cambodians have traditionally considered their bigger neighbor Vietnam an avaricious enemy, and having communist regimes in common failed to temper that xenophobic stand among the Khmer Rouge.

The war crimes charge stems from that conflict. Vietnamese prisoners of war were among the people held and tortured at Duch's prison.

Duch said the dispute between Pol Pot and Vietnam's then-communist party boss Le Duan was a "life and death" conflict. He said like many senior Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot resented Vietnam's claims to be the leader of the communist movement in Indochina, covering the former French colonies of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Pol Pot's attitude led to war and purges costing the lives of more than 1 million people, Duch said.

Duch is the first senior Khmer Rouge figure to face trial, and the only one to acknowledge responsibility for his actions. Senior leaders Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Ieng Sary's wife Ieng Thirith are all detained and likely to face trial in the next year or two.