

without counting wounded or civilian casualties.
They are said to have lost some 14,000 men in the
three years since the conflict was supposedly ended.

The British army has described the Gurkhas - the hill tribesmen of Nepal - as brave, cheerful, indomitable and loyal to the death, and no foreign force fighting under the British flag has ever been accorded such affection as the British people reserve for the incomparable Gurkhas.

America, very briefly, has also had its hill tribesmen who were brave, cheerful, indomitable and loyal, when they fought a proxy war for us in Laos between 1960 and 1975. They lost at least 2000 dead in a fighting force of 10,000 in that cause of ours which they regarded as theirs also. When we collapsed in 1975 and withdrew to the safety of our distant shores, most of them remained behind, and they are still fighting. They are the Hmou, as the Americans called them. They prefer to call themselves the Hmouy - the "free people."

Unlike the Gurkhas and the British, our little allies do not reside in the hearts of the American people, but rather in the crowded refugee camps of Thailand - if they have been lucky enough to escape from Laos at all. There, in the mountains around Phou Bia, the last of the fighting Hmouy are waging a losing battle to stave off the North Vietnamese army's "final solution" for the Hmouy people, which features aircraft, artillery, poisoned salt and poisoned

Whatever humans may now feel about the Indochinese conflict and its outcome, its Communist victory has been followed by certain now undeniable facts. The first is the mass slaughter in Cambodia; the second is the exodus of the "boat people" from Vietnam; and the third is the near extermination of the ~~last~~ Hmong hill tribesmen of Laos. The resultant flow of refugees continues today from all these countries - three years after peace supposedly came to Indochina. President Carter has recently condemned the Cambodian regime for its violations of human rights. Much notice has been taken of the "boat people" from Vietnam who, if they manage to survive the sea itself, fetch up on Asian shores all the way from Hong Kong and the Philippines to Thailand and Malaysia. But the Hmong ~~people~~ refugees have been all but forgotten by the American people even though there are far more of them involved - some 40,000 in Thailand alone, as against about boat people throughout Asia.

Furthermore, most of the current Vietnamese boat people are simply escaping and had no particular ties to or claims on the Americans, yet under existing mores they are almost certain to find ultimate refuge in the United States, Australia, France or Canada. In

people" & remain confined in the teeming
camps of Thailand as they have been for three
long years already, and no solution is yet
in sight.

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Originally ^{central} in China, ^{as a lowland people,} the Hmongs were forced into the mountains thousands
of years ago, and ^{eventually} migrated southward into
Yunnan and Vietnam and reaching Laos only
^{in the last} a hundred years ago. Some 350,000 of them
maintained a proud and independent existence
in the hills around the Plain of Jars, controlling
dominating the natural invasion routes from
Vietnam into northern Laos. After World War II
both the French and later the Americans found
them to be eager allies against the hated Vietnamese.

Prior to 1962, U.S. Special Forces "White Star"
teams provided arms and training for the Hmongs.
^{They} ~~had~~ were withdrawn in that year pursuant to the
terms of the Geneva accords which purported to
guarantee the neutrality of Laos and forbade
the introduction of foreign troops or weapons.
The International Control Commission which was
supposed to guarantee observance of the Geneva
pact was, in fact, never permitted to set foot
in territory controlled by the Communist Pathet

The long years of war took a heavy toll. Thomas J. Darns, who now heads up the on Cambodia's refugee effort in Bangkok, recalls visiting many villages in which all the males between 15 and 55 were either away in the army or already dead.

into Laos in total disregard of its former records, much as they were to do ^{in violation of some relevant} eleven years later, after the 1973 ~~ceasefire~~ Paris agreement.

To counter this illegal buildup, the U.S. government authorized the CIA to ^{fund and support} ~~support~~ what came to be known as the Neo "secret army," similarly evading the inspection procedures of the International Control Commission. For more than a decade, these American-sponsored ~~thru~~ groups were the main defense against Hanoi's expansion into Laos, tying up some two ^{NVA} divisions which would otherwise have been free to strike the Americans in South Vietnam.

One famous Hmong victory occurred at Boume Long in its ^{spring} rainy season of ^{when} 1100 Hmongs held off the incessant attacks of a North Vietnamese division for two months. The defenders suffered 100 dead before the North Vietnamese withdrew. ^{the Vietnamese left behind} ~~leaving~~ 500 of their own on the battlefield, but ^{took revenge} ~~not~~ slaughtering the defenseless Hmong women and children of nearby villages.

In 1973 a Sautran ceasefire followed that negotiated for Vietnam under the Paris agreement, and was upheld by the Pauth Lao and the North Vietnamese, as in South Vietnam, to consolidate their positions. CIA support for the Hmongs was

1975, its still undefeated Hmoung dispersed. Some were evacuated to Thailand with ~~for~~ their leader, Vang Pao, and 6000 of them have since been admitted to the United States. Most remained behind in Laos, however.

Dua Xiong, now 34, was then a Major in the Lao Army, occupying the vital road junction of Salo Phokhou north of Vientiane, and prepared to fight. But when the order came from Vientiane not to resist, he knew the war was over and returned to his home village of Moung Phoum, six kilometers west of Louang Phang. He hoped to live in peace, but was not allowed to do so. Hmoung were killed by Pathet Lao and Vietnamese troops at will, while going to their fields to tend cattle or while sleeping in their houses at night. Xiong says sixteen people were killed in his village alone during the last months he stayed there, and so on December 7, ¹⁹⁷⁵ he gathered together his parents, brother, wife and four children and set out for Thailand. All arrived safely in Nong Khai, but his uncle and four others were shot by the Pathet Lao while crossing the Mekong. Dua Xiong - three years later - is still in the Nong Khai refugee camp, but now he has hope. He believes he will now be allowed to join his parents and brother who are already in Burdett, Borneo Island.