

## POVOS INDÍGENAS NO BRASIL



ESLY SALINAS—SABA

**'No prisoners': A U.S. base in Peru**

ment's existence, denying it represented Army policy. But Gen. Luis Pérez Documet, the commander of Army forces in the central Andean highlands, says: "The State Department is defending the terrorists by talking about human rights."

Brutality brings temporary results. In the highlands of Ayacucho department the military has killed and tortured thousands over the last decade. For four years in a row, human-rights groups say, Peru has led the world in "disappearances," including 119 so far in 1991. A soccer stadium in the town of Huanta, site of mass executions between 1983 and 1986, became known as Pinochet Stadium, after Chile's former military dictator. Bullet holes in its walls are still visible. Today Shining Path has largely been ousted from Huanta, giving way to Army-controlled peasant patrols. Instead of torturing and killing peasants, the Army lets them live—as long as they inform on Shining Path and join the patrols.

**State of fear:** Fujimori regards economic development as the best weapon against Shining Path. But no amount of crop-substitution money can compete with drug profits—much less terrorist intimidation. "The objective of a counterinsurgency war is not to win territory, but people," says Gen. Alberto Arciniega, who won popular support for the anti-guerrilla fight in the upper Huallaga Valley two years ago by allowing people to grow coca—only to be ousted amid U.S. charges he was on the traffickers' payroll. Yet U.S.-financed coca eradication has driven many peasants into the rebels' arms.

The aid proposal is being held up by congressional worries about human rights. Says Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, "We all want to stop the flow of drugs into this country. But . . . we cannot ignore the deplorable human-rights situation in Peru today." Embattled Peru isn't exactly "another El Salvador," as some critics contend. But for U.S. troops it won't be Kuwait revisited, either. It could follow another, tragic, model. U.S. counterinsurgency manuals don't contain much proven advice about how to piece a broken country back together.

CHARLES LANE with BROOK LARMER in Lima and CLARA BINGHAM in Washington

## A Tribe Turns to Suicide

In western Brazil, Indians despair over lost lands

**B**razil's Guarani-Kaiowa Indians, who once had no history of suicide, are now killing themselves with increasing frequency. Government officials once tried to conceal that dismal trend. Then late last year Manoel Hélio de Paula took over as the Indian affairs officer in Guarani-Kaiowa territory and put an end to what he calls a "cover-up" to protect Brazil's image. Now the numbers are out. A rash of suicides started in 1987 and has taken off since, with 51 in the last 19 months. The majority hanged themselves from trees or the rafters of their wood-framed huts. Their average age was 17. In a tribe of only 7,500 members, there are now 4.5 suicides for every 1,000 people each year—a rate nearly 150 times Brazil's national average.

In January President Fernando Collor de Mello ordered an investigation into why this tribe is self-destructing. The emerging answer goes back to the 1970s, when ranchers and farmers began forcing the Guarani-Kaiowas off lands in the western state of

Mato Grosso do Sul. Now largely confined to an 8,000-acre reservation, the farming tribe does not have enough land to sustain itself. Young men leave for seasonal work in sugar-cane fields and distilleries. They return home to discover that in their absence, their wives or sons have left. Young women go off to make a living in cities, where often the only livable wages are in prostitution. Families and spirits are fraying. Half the suicides are women.

**Witch doctors:** Since the Portuguese first arrived in Brazil in the 16th century, the Indian population has fallen from an estimated 5 million to 220,000, decimated by marauding settlers and new diseases against which Indians have no immunity. This, however, is the first known outbreak of Indian suicides. The Guarani-Kaiowa's culture, based on a mystical religion deeply linked to their homelands, is unraveling. Confounded by the suicides, tribal elders blame sorcerers and evil spirits. They have summoned witch doctors, or *payis*, and have held dancing and chanting rituals to banish the spirits. But these days few of the tribespeople know the ritual dances, and the reservation no longer has its own *payi*. This year the elders had to bring one in from a Guarani-Kaiowa tribe in Paraguay.

In past years Brasília allowed Protestant churches to seek converts among the Guarani-Kaiowa. Federal police and human-rights groups now say evangelists created "spiritual conflicts" that may have contributed to the suicides. Recently, the government banned the building of more churches on the reservation—and helped the tribe find the Paraguayan *payi*. The government also sent in a counseling team, including a regular doctor. But the suicides continue. The most recent was July 29, when 24-year-old Almiro Ajala hanged himself from a tree.

The government is trying tougher measures. Brasília has forbidden women and children to leave the reservation to find work. It has tried to restrict bootleg sales of *cachaça*, a sugar-cane rum that emboldened many of the suicides. In January, Guarani-Kaiowa vigilantes joined in, smashing clandestine *cachaça* stocks on the reservation. But so far the government has put off the one measure that could clearly ease the strain—enlarging the size of the Guarani-Kaiowa reservation. The tribe cannot find stability without more land, or fewer people.



FUNAI

A culture unraveling: One of the casualties

TONY EMERSON with MICHAEL KEPP in Rio de Janeiro