

Tribe opts for death over civilization

MANAUS, Brazil (UPI) — Mayurunas Indians in the remote, western edge of the Brazilian Amazon Jungle have begun killing newly born females in an attempt to wipe out their tribe rather than confront civilization, according to a Brazilian anthropologist.

Anthropologist Paulo Lucena said the Indians, whose numbers have been severely diminished in the last four years since coming into contact with white oil explorers, intend to exterminate themselves rather than continue suffering the impact of civilization.

"Desperate and feeling that they have no place to go, they decided to die," Lucena wrote to Ismarth de Oliveira, the president of the National Indian Foundation. The document was made public today.

The Mayurunas, who inhabit dense jungle along the Brazilian-Peruvian border, 1,480 miles up the Amazon River, have been reduced from approximately 2,000 at the end of 1972 to little more than 400 at present, Lucena said.

He said the Indians died quickly from flu, measles, venereal diseases and gas-

trointestinal ailments brought to their settlements by the whites.

The remaining 400 are the only members of the Mayurunas living on the Brazilian side of the border.

He said the rest of the region's approximately 10,000 Mayurunas live on the Peruvian side, where they enjoy far more favorable living conditions and are aided by a new Peruvian law that provides for self-government and medical and housing aid.

Lucena said the remaining Indians decided to stay in Brazil because they revere

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Tribe kills female babies

their land.

"This is the reason there hasn't been a total exodus for Peruvian territory," he said.

According to the National Indian Foundation, the Mayurunas were once considered "the terrorists" (terrorists) of the region, and a military expedition was launched against them in 1963.

Lucena said that by the time the oil workers arrived in 1972 the Indians be-

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came meek and were fascinated by the sophisticated machinery of the prospectors.

"They thought that the Petrobras (the Brazilian government oil company) workers were gods because they descended by gigantic helicopters."

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Povos Indígenas no Brasil

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