

Modern highway across Brazil spells danger for primitive tribe

By Richard Weingarten
United Press International

BRASILIA — A group of pre-neolithic Brazilian Jungle Indians must learn in the next few months how to live in the modern world, or face the threat of extinction.

The tribe, whose existence was not known, was discovered in early August by Roman Catholic missionaries who flew over their jungle-surrounded village in the western state of Mato Grosso.

According to Jesuit missionary Thoma De Aquino Lisboa, one of the men who found the village, it lies only 23 air minutes away from the almost-finished Cuiaba - Santarem Trans-Amazon Highway.

The tribe belongs to the Cinta Larga Indian Grouping, father Lisboa said, and the completion of the road spells great danger for them. "An outbreak of the common cold would be enough to wipe out the

entire 300-member tribe," the priest said.

The slim missionary works for the Anchieta Indian Mission, a stand-in for the Catholic Church and Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in the region. The mission uses a well-developed "pacification" program which tries to introduce primitive Indians to the white man's world without loss of tribal customs and beliefs.

More directly, it is a course in survival. The program provides the cultural skills by which the Indian can conserve his health and lands in the face of inevitable outside intrusion.

Father Lisboa said that presents have already been exchanged and peaceful contact established between the mission and the village. An Indian woman, named Irantxe, has

INDIANS, Page 17

CLR00002

NEW YORK TIMES, 3/08/72

Jungle tribe threatened by new Brazilian road

★ INDIANS

Continued from Page 1

been sent to live with the tribe in order to carry out the first stages of pacification.

Irantxe is also a Cinta Larga, father Lisboa said, and has the advantage of speaking their language. She has already worked in the successful pacification of the Tupxi, Tikbaksta, Beico-De-Pau and Munku Tribes.

Father Lisboa described her job as "extremely delicate."

She must work closely with the Cinta Larga chieftain," he said. "She must always respect his authority for without his help nothing can be accomplished."

Irantxe's initial task will be to get the Indians to improve their sanitary conditions. She will try to teach them, mostly by personal example, to boil their water, install privies, and give more attention to personal hygiene.

She then will introduce basic gardening skills, in hopes that the nomadic Cinta Largas will in time become subsistence farmers, able to produce flour, corn meal and other staples.

Later more sophisticated economies will be tried out, based on locally available resources.

Another Mato Grosso Tribe, the Xavantes "civilized" less than 20 years ago, have already begun to raise lumber, peanuts and rubber on their lands.

Father Lisboa said that pacification efforts in the Cinta Larga area were given a boost last month



BRAZILIAN INDIAN
... threatened

when the mayor of Aripuna in Mato Grosso called off construction of a municipal road that would have cut close to the Cinta Larga village.

"A single act of violence and all our work would be ruined," the missionary said, recalling a sad, earlier experience. "Fifteen years ago, workers panicked when they heard there were wild Indians in the vicinity," he said. "They started carrying guns to work, and finally fled the site altogether."

Staking out the tribe's lands is another important part of the pacification work.

Father Lisboa said that Irantxe will try to learn where the tribe's natural boundary lines are. The Anchieta mission will then ask the Federal government to give the Indians legal possession of their lands.

Under Brazil's newly drafted Indian statutes, the tribe will have the right to all the lands they have traditionally lived on and roamed, although the government does reserve the right to take some lands when such action is deemed to be in the national interest.