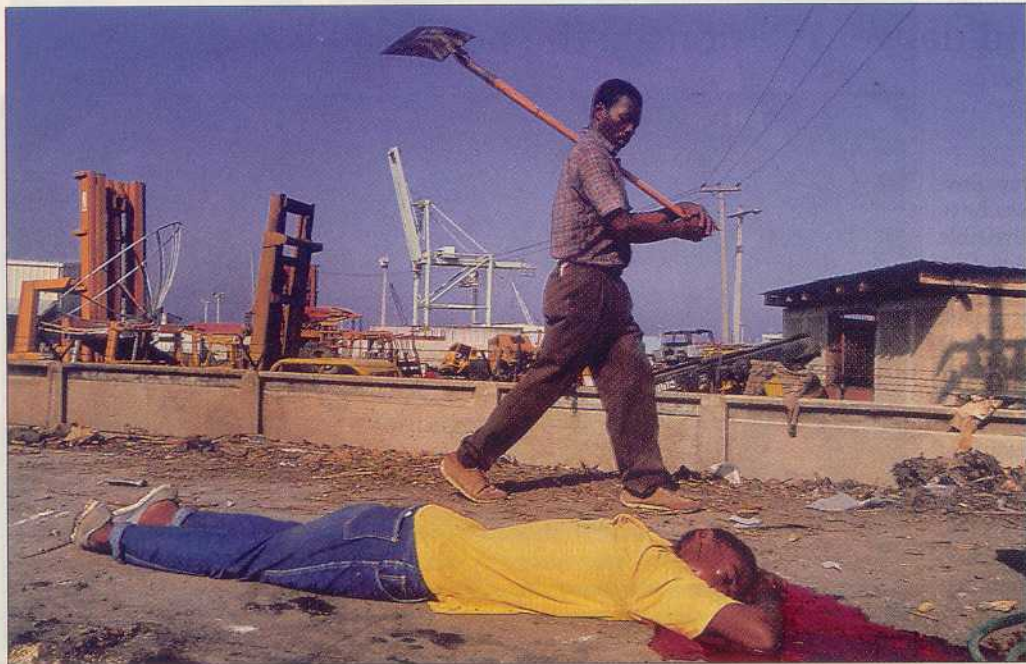


Challenging the Rule of Fear

Human-rights teams guard Haiti's uneasy truce



valier into exile. A week after the seven-member human-rights team arrived, rebellious slum dwellers staged one of the first street marches held in Haiti since the army overthrew Aristide. The monitors covered the demonstration as promised, driving ahead of the parade in their white Toyota. "Watch out, the mission is here," a sergeant was overheard warning his men. Hours after the protest, soldiers arrested and beat up 11 suspected demonstrators—but the monitors intervened, and the detainees were quickly released. Father Daniel Rousiere, a priest from France who has spent six years documenting atrocities in Haiti, says the team averted a bloodbath.

Lying low: The people of Gonaïves still distrust the army. "After so many deaths, we don't want any more," says Mary Kenol, a local activist. Her 30-year-old brother, Marc Antoine Nicolas, helped organize the protest; now he's lying low. Even people who didn't march worry about talking to foreign reporters. They say the town needs dozens—even hundreds—more monitors. The mission's leaders hope U.N. funds can be allocated soon to boost

Balance of brutality: A passing glance at the corpse of an executed suspected thief, 1992

RON HAVIV—SABA

Amio Metayer is running scared. The morning before, soldiers burst into his house in the Haitian provincial capital of Gonaïves, looking for the organizers of a recent protest march. Metayer wasn't home when the soldiers visited, but they said they'd be back. Ordinarily the broad-shouldered 31-year-old prides himself on his toughness, but now he's hunched in the back seat of a visitor's Jeep, a woman's straw hat pulled low over his face as a makeshift disguise. He doubts he can escape much longer; troops would need only a few hours to search the town of 70,000 thoroughly, and government informers are everywhere. "I'd like to get out of town," he says. "But if they spot me they'll kill me."

Fear continues to dog anyone fingered as a protest ringleader in Haiti. According to a recent United Nations investigation, soldiers and paramilitary thugs have murdered at least 1,000 people—perhaps as many as 3,000—since September 1991, when the Haitian Army ousted the elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Last month Haiti's military-backed rulers grudgingly let the United Nations and the Organization of American States send in a contingent of 108 human-rights observers. The monitors have fanned out across the country in teams of six or seven. On Saturday, for the first time since the coup, the government refrained

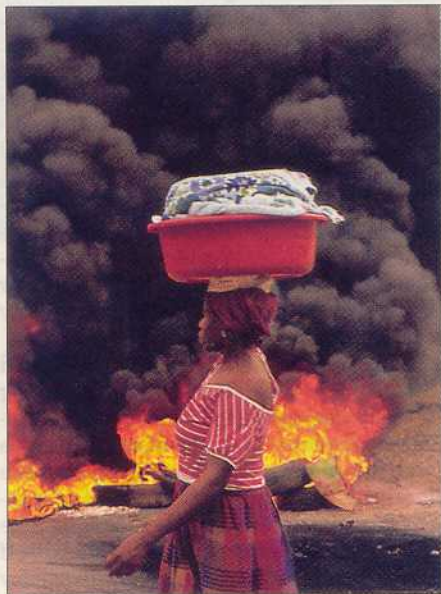
from breaking up a pro-Aristide march in Port-au-Prince. But most Haitians remain too scared to defy the army.

The people of Gonaïves have been bolder than most. The dust-shrouded coastal town, 100 miles north of Port-au-Prince, was the birthplace of the 1986 uprising that forced dictator Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Du-

their presence in Haiti by 150 or so.

In large part the army's brutality arises from the soldiers' well-founded fear of violent retribution. Such fears have been a major sticking point in U.N.-sponsored talks between Aristide and Haiti's de facto rulers. Outside their headquarters in Gonaïves, troops have stacked dozens of confiscated old tires. In the past, shantytown mobs have been known to punish soldiers by "necklacing" them—looping a tire around their necks and setting it on fire. In his last speech before the coup, Aristide seemed to endorse the tactic. Col. Bellony Groshomme, the district commander of Gonaïves, complains that the mission's presence "excites the people to rise up." He adds: "They just want to kill and burn people." If the soldiers' worst fears come true, they may yet welcome the observers' presence. The observers' job is to defend the rights of all Haitians—soldiers included.

Some Gonaïves residents already regard the team as a godsend. After a 90-minute meeting with the observers, Amio Metayer leaves their office with a bounce in his stride. They have given him their day and night phone numbers and told him to have friends call immediately if the police arrest him. He heads straight for his neighborhood to distribute the numbers. He no longer looks like a hunted man.



MAGGIE STEBER—JB PICTURES

Fiery fury: Daily chores amid a 1990 riot

PETER KATEL in Gonaïves