

# The Best of Times, or Not

**Haiti:** As the U.S. intervention nears its end, the capital tells a tale of two cities—ours and theirs

**A**FTER SIX MONTHS OF U.S. OCCUPATION, Haiti's glass is half full or half empty—depending on whether you are an American or a Haitian. Americans brag that political violence has virtually ended, that the once oppressive army has been largely disbanded, that democratic government is beginning to take hold and that business is picking up. Haitians are grateful for the attention they have received, but many wish the U.S. mandate had gone further. "I don't see any jobs yet; the only people I see working are the foreigners," complains Sylva Joseph, 65, who runs a small soft-drink shop in Port-au-Prince. "I would like to eat more than once or twice a day," says André Gilius, 32, who shines shoes for a living. "Except for the army being gone, things have remained the same," insists Jean Guichard, a 20-year-old slum dweller who wants to go to university but can't afford it. Still, he adds gamely: "I'm slightly optimistic."

*'I would like to eat more than once or twice a day,' says a worker*

On March 31, with a lot more optimism than that, Bill Clinton plans to declare victory and get out. Attending a ceremony in Port-au-Prince, the president will officially end the U.S. intervention in Haiti and hand over to a United Nations peacekeeping force. Nearly half of its soldiers will be American, as will its commander, but the transition to U.N. status is a powerful symbol of a job well done. Or only half done, if you're a Haitian.

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide maintains that "Haiti is open for business." Last week Strobe Talbott, the deputy secretary of state, and a team of U.S. officials took some 30 American businessmen to Haiti to see for themselves. It wasn't an easy sell, given the collapse of Haiti's infrastructure, its endemic corruption and its 70 percent unemployment rate. But over the next two years, the U.S. Agency for International Development plans to employ 50,000 Haitians on new public-works projects.

Aristide's government made some impressive gestures for the visitors. Illinois businessman Norbert J. Budnick had been waiting three and a half years for Haitian customs to release three vacuum pumps intended for his company's copper mine near the northern city of Gonaïves. Last week they were suddenly released. "Just like that," says Budnick. "The attitude seems to have changed."

But Aristide's government still hasn't set up a mechanism that would allow the most important foreign-aid program, \$1 billion worth of new infrastructure, to get moving. To guard against waste and fraud, donor countries insisted on the creation of a coordinating unit in the prime minister's office. The unit isn't functioning yet. Presidential spokesman Yvon Neptune insists the government is working as fast as it can. "This is an inevitable period of transition," he says.

The government also has been unable to stop a wave of street crime. Just last week gunmen ambushed four buses north of the capital, killing a driver and wounding 14 passengers. Port-au-Prince Mayor Evans Paul, who may run in the presidential election next December, calls for a severe crackdown. So far, however, the U.S.- and Canadian-trained interim police force hasn't had the stomach for anything like that. "The foreign police arrest a thief and then let him go," complains merchant Joseph. "When you arrest a thief, you have to

**An economy in collapse:** A charcoal seller offers poor shoppers a low-tech fuel

TONY SAVINO—IB PICTURES





beat him." After its bloody fiasco in Somalia, the Clinton administration wants to avoid any aggressive action in Haiti that might produce U.S. casualties. Street sweeps and buybacks have taken more than 30,000 guns out of circulation, but no one knows how many have disappeared into houses, where U.S. troops don't go. Things are much better now in Haiti, but the Americans have left a lot of nation-building to the ill-prepared Haitians and their fragile new government.

PETER KATEL and KAREN BRESLAU  
in Port-au-Prince

## Will It Be Springtime for Tudjman?

### Croatia: A Balkan war could suck in U.S. troops

FOR THREE YEARS NOW, CROATIA has been biding its time—stockpiling weapons, training young men and waiting for the right moment to attack the Serbian nationalists who control more than a quarter of the country. Now the moment is almost at hand. With winter nearly over, the stand-down that has kept Croatia and other Balkan battlegrounds relatively quiet is about to end. Croatia has threatened to throw United Nations peacekeepers out of the country, starting at the end of this month. If they go, all hell is likely to break loose in Croatia and in neighboring Bosnia, where U.N. troops could also be forced out. And if fighting erupts, someone will have to cover the withdrawal of the peacekeepers. That need could put U.S. combat troops precisely where successive American presidents have said they shouldn't go: on the blood-soaked ground of the Balkans.

The U.N. withdrawal "could set off a chain reaction leading to a general Balkan war," Richard Holbrooke, the assistant secretary of state for European affairs, said last week. "We are going all out to prevent this," he added. At the weekend, Holbrooke and Vice President Gore appeared to have reached a tentative agreement with Croatian President Franjo Tudjman to keep at least some peacekeepers in place. The American plan called for a much smaller U.N. peacekeeping force, which would have a more difficult mandate. To satisfy a longstanding Tudjman demand, the new U.N. force would patrol Croatia's borders with Bosnia and the Serbian Republic, the major component in what is left of Yugoslavia. The U.N. presence would also have to



DARIO NJAVRO—AP

**Out of hibernation:** With spring coming, Croatian soldiers deploy artillery

be accepted by Tudjman's enemies, the Croatian Serbs, who control the Krajina region (map). Even if everyone signed on, the peacekeeping force might be too puny to prevent the outbreak of a general war.

NATO commanders had already drawn up a plan to bail out the U.N. troops. A well-placed Pentagon source told NEWSWEEK that if the peacekeepers get into trouble, NATO will respond with more than 40,000 soldiers: the U.S. First Armored Division (based in Germany), a British division, a reinforced U.S. Marine brigade and French and Canadian brigades, under the overall command of a British officer, Lt. Gen. Michael Walker. Support would come from five aircraft carriers and land-based NATO warplanes. Airstrikes would be called in by U.S. Special Forces personnel. Some of them, the source said, are already deployed in the Balkans, wearing blue U.N. helmets instead of their usual green berets.

**Spoiling for a fight:** Washington has assured its allies that U.S. forces will help if it becomes necessary to evacuate their peacekeepers. The Croats appear to be eager for a fight. "I don't think Yugoslavia would even have time to intervene before we deal with Krajina," Defense Minister Gojko Susak boasted recently. Even as Tudjman was hosting Holbrooke in Zagreb early last week, the Croats were announcing a new, anti-Serbian military alliance with Bosnia. But the Serbs won't be beaten easily. Crusading for a "Greater Serbia" in Bosnia and Krajina, they have been the aggressors—and usually the victors. Last week, U.S. officials leaked to The New York Times a CIA study concluding that the Serbs were



responsible for at least 90 percent of the "ethnic cleansing" atrocities that have driven Muslims and Croats from their homes in Bosnia. The report undercut the official European—and occasionally American—excuse for not intervening in the Balkans: that the struggle is a civil war for which the Serbs, Croats and Muslims are all to blame.

The irony is that, because they failed to intervene against Serbian aggression when it began in 1991, the NATO allies may now have to intervene to rescue the peacekeepers. But if he sticks to his order evicting all the peacekeepers from Croatia, Tudjman will be subjecting his country to an even more fearful risk. Clinton administration officials have warned him publicly and privately that they will not help him if he gets into another war with the Serbs. With U.N. forces out of harm's way, the Western powers would have no incentive to stop the Serbian juggernaut—and save Croatia.

RUSSELL WATSON with ROD NORDLAND in Zagreb, KAREN BRESLAU in Washington and DAVID H. HACKWORTH in New York