

Hell-bent on bitter revenge

Massive operation to save holiday Britons

by Roger Bray

A MASS evacuation of British holidaymakers from Yugoslavia's seaside resorts was underway today as the federal army convoy headed towards the rebel provinces of Croatia and Slovenia.

A flotilla of ferries and hydrofoils was hastily assembled to carry 2326 Britons to safety from Croatia's Istrian Peninsula.

As tension in Yugoslavia reached new levels, the Foreign Office advised Britons in Slovenia and the Istrian Peninsula to leave.

But 4000 British tourists are continuing with their holidays.

Norman Lister, the honorary British consul in Trieste, said: "Thousands have returned, but the rest have decided to get their moneys-worth."

"The Brits, in typical fashion, are using their stiff upper lips because they are not afraid."

One tour operator, Yugotours, decided to evacuate its customers — and some Britons holidaying with other operators — by sea because it feared Pula airport would be closed.

A spokeswoman said the airport was closed yesterday, although there was not thought to have been any fighting on the peninsula.

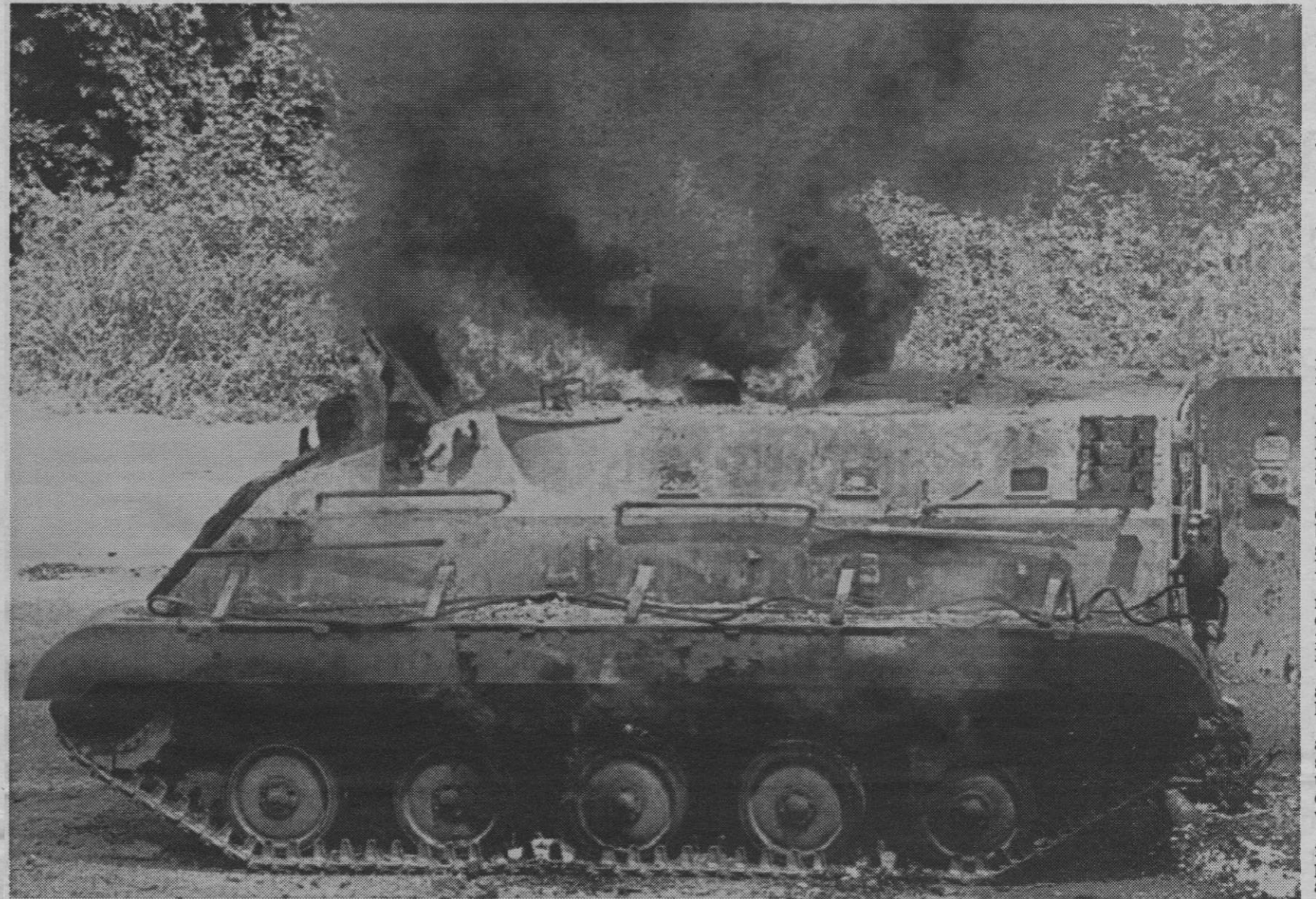
But the risk to travellers was highlighted by an air attack on Ljubljana airport on Friday, when damage estimated at around £60 million was caused to aircraft and equipment of the Slovenian airline Adria.

After the Foreign Office issued its advice, Yugotours had only a few hours to charter two hydrofoils — each carrying 120 passengers — two fast ferries, the Prince of Venice and the Iris, and the Adriatic, a ship with capacity for 500. The first group left at 2am and the evacuation continued throughout the early hours.

Among the evacuees were Val and Barry Pearson, from Cheddar, Somerset. The couple, on a three-week holiday in the resort of Croatia, were on the first hydrofoil used for evacuation.

Mr Pearson, 48, said: "The resort was like a ghost town when we arrived. One in 10 shops was open and the hotel was virtually deserted."

The evacuees were heading for the Italian port of Trieste and returning to Britain on six special charter flights. Yugotours said it still had some 800 customers on holiday in the Croatian coastal town of Split today, and about 2000 in and around Dubrovnik.



Smoke rises from a burnt out Yugoslav armoured car after it was attacked by Slovene rebels at Brezice



Two captured Slovenian militiamen raise their hands in surrender as a Yugoslav army soldier stands guard at Krakovskog Gozd



A passing cyclist helps Yugoslav soldiers lift the body of a comrade into a coffin after the battle of Brezice



Women comfort each other after explosions in Ljubljana

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week's fighting, were reinforcing barricades and moving up what heavy weapons they have.

The government spokesman said the only way they could stop a tank was if a man with a shoulder-launched missile confronted it at short range.

But the Slovenians have had some success against Yugoslav armour in the past week with these weapons and they say they have enough fire-power to resist effectively.

Activity today was concentrated on the road between Zagreb and Ljubljana. Driving along it, I saw mines being laid, explosives being wired at bridges and

heavy earth-moving vehicles packed together to make barricades.

The Slovenians say they want a truce and will only fire in self-defence.

In Belgrade, eyewitnesses who saw the convoy leave said it was made up of tanks, many of them carried on transporters, and heavy artillery. It stretched for several miles and was supported by thousands of troops. A Zagreb television

reporter said that after about 50 miles, the convoy had split up into three parts with the main section staying on the motorway. At the border with Croatia, it halted, sending out probe units before advancing further.

First reports came through of fighting between the army and Croatian territories. These clashes involved army units already stationed in Croatia — in the mainly Serbian-inhabited

areas — ostensibly to defend the Serbian minority against the Croats but seen by Croats as an army of occupation.

During the night, the Croatian leadership was reshuffled. Out went the moderates and in came the rampant nationalist.

One appointment will be like a red rag to the Yugoslav army bull — the appointment of Croatian Defence Minister Martin Spigelj as de facto Commander-in-Chief of the Croatian forces.

The army has been trying to arrest Spigelj for months on charges of treason, and plotting the mass murder of Serbian officers and their families.

The huge column of tanks

trundling out of Belgrade was not the only part of the Yugoslav army rolling towards Slovenia.

More units were on the move from other parts of Yugoslavia, all heading west. In doing so, however, they are leaving their backs uncovered.

There is more trouble brewing down south in Kosovo, where the army has been holding down the ethnic Albanian population for the last two years.

The Slovenians and Croats are both experts in partisan warfare, as their record in the Second World War proved.

They will probably allow the army to get through beyond Zagreb into marshland, where heavy vehicles leave the main road at their peril.

If the army tries to enter Slovenia from the north, it will find itself in hilly country, perfect for ambushes.

If it heads south, it could be trapped in the marshes by the blowing up of a couple of strategic bridges.

But the army, too, has been preparing for this strike for months, champing at the bit to teach the rebel Slovenians and Croats a lesson, and to impose a "Serbian Peace" on them. They have air power, which Slovenia and Croatia lack.

The vision of the Yugoslav army bombing the taxpayers who have financed its vast armory has come close to reality. But there is resistance among the population

in Serbia too. Hundreds of parents stormed the Serbian parliament yesterday and demanded that their sons be sent home.

Thousands have deserted from the army, which has a 70 per cent Serbian dominated officers' corps but whose other ranks are 70 per cent soldiers from republics which oppose Serbia.

Mutiny is close at hand. What will be unleashed is

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the vast reservoir of pent-up hate between the Serbs and the Croats.

The tanks started moving today a few hours after Army Commander-in-Chief General Adzik, speaking after yesterday's fierce fighting in Slovenia, vowed to smash Slovenian independence forces.

At least 10 federal troops were killed and 13 wounded in the clashes that involved Slovenian defence units and Yugoslav army forces trying to return to barracks under a ceasefire agreement.

Violence had spread to Croatia yesterday when soldiers opened fire as hundreds of people hurled stones and petrol bombs at army tanks pulling out of a barracks in Zagreb, apparently heading for Slovenia.

At least three people were killed in the shooting.

The man who would be king

CROWN Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia appeared to offer his services as king last night at an all-party Commons committee meeting on human rights at Westminster. He spoke of "my country" and volunteered his role as constitutional umpire, promising to lead his people towards a democratic state with a reborn free market economy. The son of exiled King Peter lives in London and has never visited his potential kingdom.

A COUNTRY TORN BY WAR

NATIONAL WEATHER

South-east tonight: Further heavy thundery showers likely. Warm and humid with a light north-easterly breeze. Low: 14C (57F)
 Tomorrow: More sunshine but still the risk of thundery showers. Warm and humid with a moderate north-easterly wind. High: 24C (75F). Information supplied by the Met Office
 Pollen count: 4 Forecast: Similar Data: St. Mary's Hospital

LONDON AIR WATCH

TODAY'S FORECAST

very poor	0 ₃ = ozone
poor	NO ₂ = nitrogen dioxide
good	SO ₂ = sulphur dioxide
very good	0 ₃ NO ₂ SO ₂

YESTERDAY'S POLLUTION

very poor	0 ₃ NO ₂ SO ₂
poor	0 ₃ NO ₂ SO ₂
good	0 ₃ NO ₂ SO ₂
very good	0 ₃ NO ₂ SO ₂

Central Roadside
 Information: Dept. of the Environment

WORLD CITIES FORECAST

LOCATION	Tomorrow		Friday		Saturday	
	°C	°F	Weather	°C	°F	Weather
LONDON	24	75	Showers	24	75	Showers
FRANKFURT	28	82	Showers	28	82	Showers
LOS ANGELES	19	66	Showers	19	66	Sunny
MOSCOW	26	79	Fair	25	77	Fair
NEW YORK	28	82	Rain	26	79	Cloudy
PARIS	30	86	Fair	30	86	Fair
ROME	30	86	Sunny	31	88	Sunny
TOKYO	26	79	Cloudy	26	79	Thunder
TORONTO	25	77	Cloudy	24	75	Showers

LIGHTING-UP 9.20 pm to 4.49 am.
 SUN sets 9.20 pm, rises 4.49 am.
 MOON set 11.40 am, rise 11.41 pm.
 HIGH WATER: London Bridge 6.26 am (6.6m), 6.27 pm (6.5m); Dover 3.20 am (5.8m), 3.40 pm (6m)

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