



TONIGHT'S WEATHER: SHOWERS

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LATE PRICES EXTRA

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Armoured column heads for rebel republic

Flotilla of ships sails to rescue holiday Britons

THE TANKS ROLL



Defiant Croatians stone a tank column in Zagreb. Soldiers opened fire on the protesting civilians, killing at least three people

Picture: AP

from Keith Dovkants in Ljubljana and Sue Masterman in Vienna

SLOVENIAN forces were digging in for an epic battle in defence of their new-born republic today as the might of the Yugoslav Federal Army bore down upon them.

"This is a struggle between David and Goliath," a government spokesman said in Ljubljana as the capital became a city under siege.

An armed column of federal troops from Belgrade was advancing on Ljubljana and, according to the Slovenian government, the republic would defend itself. Last-

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minute efforts to avert a horrific confrontation seemed doomed as the Federal Army high command swept aside efforts to implement a ceasefire.

"It's too late. We are at war," said the army's Commander-in-Chief, Bolshevik General Balgoje Adzik as he dismissed a six-point truce agreed late last night by the Slovenian leadership and Yugoslavia's new President Stipe Mesic.

Meanwhile, as the convoy rolled, a flotilla of ships was being hastily assembled to evacuate thousands of Britons to Trieste from resorts along the Croatian coast.

News of the convoy appears to indicate that although the Yugoslav government and presidency is nominally

still in power, there has been a military putsch and it is the Serbian-controlled army which rules Yugoslavia.

That army is hell-bent on revenge for the humiliating defeat inflicted by the Slovenians, whose territorials ran circles round their units in earlier clashes and are still holding them, trapped and hungry.

The convoy left its barracks in Belgrade at around 2 am (midnight London time) and began its inexorable advance down the main E70 motorway toward the Croatian capital of Zagreb 248 miles away.

One report in Zagreb said the column had halted at the Croatia-Slovenia border but the government spokesman said it had still to reach the frontier.

The Slovenians, who yesterday inflicted humiliating losses on Yugoslav detachments trapped after last

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