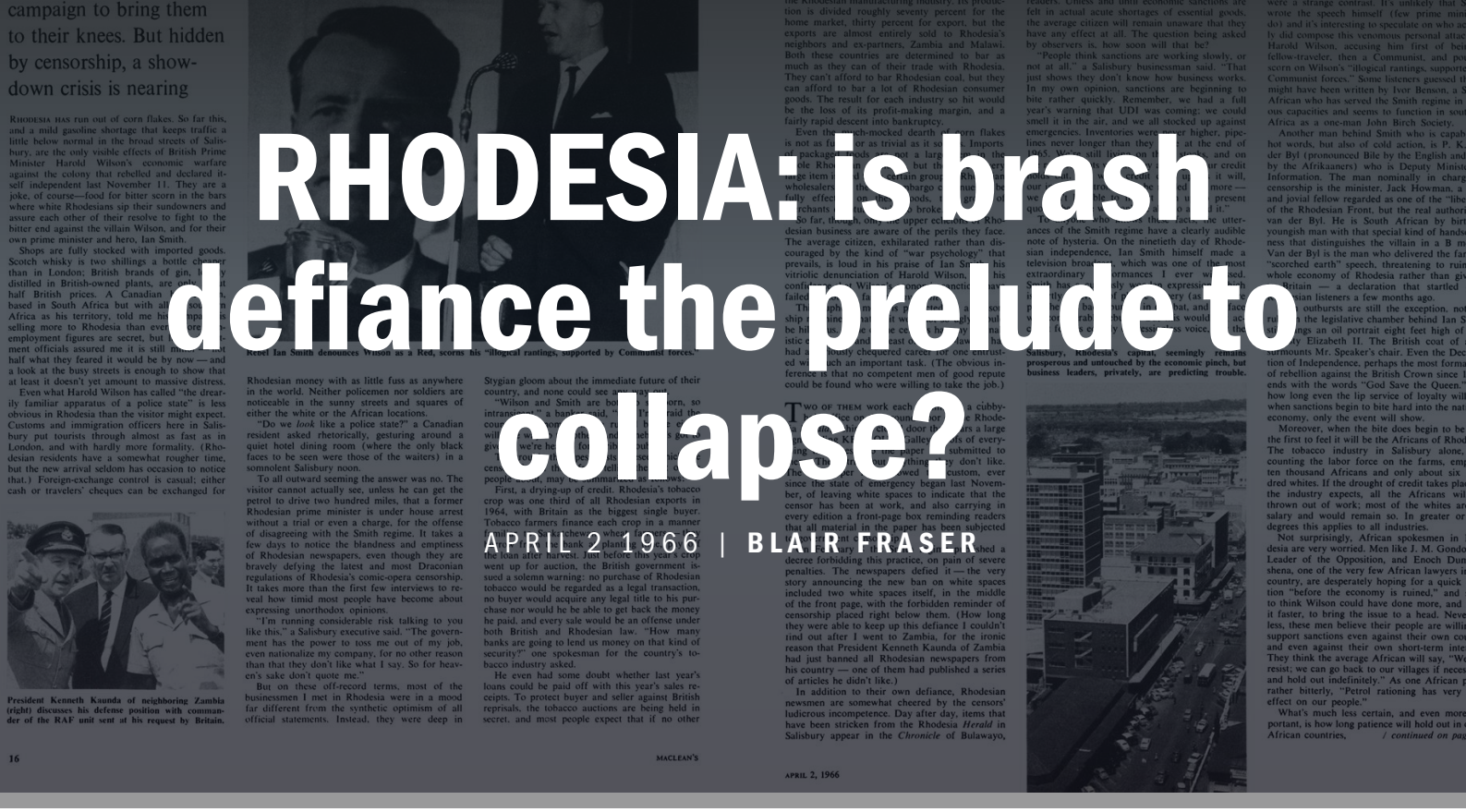

campaign to bring them to their knees. But hidden by censorship, a showdown crisis is nearing

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President Kenneth Kaunda of neighboring Zambia (right) discusses his defense position with commander of the RAF unit sent at his request by Britain.

Rebel Ian Smith denounces Wilson as a Red, scorns his "illogical rantings, supported by Communist forces."

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"Do we *look* like a police state?" a Canadian resident asked rhetorically, gesturing around a quiet hotel dining room (where the only black faces to be seen were those of the waiters) in a somnolent Salisbury noon.

To all outward seeming the answer was no. The visitor cannot actually see, unless he can get the petrol to drive two hundred miles, that a former Rhodesian prime minister is under house arrest without a trial or even a charge, for the offense of disagreeing with the Smith regime. It takes a few days to notice the blandness and emptiness of Rhodesian newspapers, even though they are bravely defying the latest and most Draconian regulations of Rhodesia's comic-opera censorship. It takes more than the first few interviews to reveal how timid most people have become about expressing unorthodox opinions.

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MACLEAN'S

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In addition to their own defiance, Rhodesian newsmen are somewhat cheered by the censors' ludicrous incompetence. Day after day, items that have been stricken from the Rhodesia *Herald* in Salisbury appear in the *Chronicle* of Bulawayo,

APRIL 2, 1966

Salisbury, Rhodesia's capital, seemingly remains prosperous and untouched by the economic pinch, but business leaders, privately, are predicting trouble.

RHODESIA: is brash defiance the prelude to collapse?

APRIL 2 1966 | BLAIR FRASER

Ian Smith's supporters scoff at the short-of-war campaign to bring them to their knees. But hidden by censorship, a showdown crisis is nearing

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But on these off-record terms, most of the businessmen I met in Rhodesia were in a mood far different from the synthetic optimism of all official statements. Instead, they were deep in

Stygian gloom about the immediate future of their country, and none could see any way out.

“Wilson and Smith are both so stubborn, so intransigent,” a banker said, “that I’m afraid the country’s economy will be ruined before either will give way to the other. And somebody’s got to give, or we’re headed for terrible trouble.”

The trouble these pessimists foresee, which the censors forbid them from telling the rest of the people about, may be summarized as follows:

First, a drying-up of credit. Rhodesia’s tobacco crop was one third of all Rhodesian exports in 1964, with Britain as the biggest single buyer. Tobacco farmers finance each crop in a manner familiar to Saskatchewan wheat farmers — they borrow from the bank at planting time, pay off the loan after harvest. Just before this year’s crop went up for auction, the British government issued a solemn warning: no purchase of Rhodesian tobacco would be regarded as a legal transaction, no buyer would acquire any legal title to his purchase nor would he be able to get back the money he paid, and every sale would be an offense under both British and Rhodesian law. “How many banks are going to lend us money on that kind of security?” one spokesman for the country's tobacco industry asked.

He even had some doubt whether last year’s loans could be paid off with this year’s sales receipts. To protect buyer and seller against British reprisals, the tobacco auctions are being held in secret, and most people expect that if no other

buyer is forthcoming the Rhodesian treasury will take up the 1965-66 crop at a “reserved price.” But a cash payment of the whole amount (more than $100 million in 1964) would strain the Smith regime’s resources beyond endurance, and a substantially cut price would not be enough to pay the debts facing the farmers.

Second gravest of businessmen's worries is for the Rhodesian manufacturing industry. Its production is divided roughly seventy percent for the home market, thirty percent for export, but the exports are almost entirely sold to Rhodesia's neighbors and ex-partners, Zambia and Malawi. Both these countries are determined to bar as much as they can of their trade with Rhodesia. They can't afford to bar Rhodesian coal, but they can afford to bar a lot of Rhodesian consumer goods. The result for each industry so hit would be the loss of its profit-making margin, and a fairly rapid descent into bankruptcy.

Even the much-mocked dearth of corn flakes is not as funny or as trivial as it sounds. Imports of packaged foods are not a large item in the whole Rhodesian economy, but they are a very large item indeed for a certain group of Rhodesian wholesalers. If the tight embargo continues to be fully effective on these goods, that group of merchants eventually will go broke.

So far, though, only the upper echelons of Rhodesian business are aware of the perils they face. The average citizen, exhilarated rather than discouraged by the kind of "war psychology" that prevails, is loud in his praise of Ian Smith, his vitriolic denunciation of Harold Wilson, and his confidence that Wilson's economic sanctions have failed — not are failing, have failed.

This euphoric mood is protected by a censorship machinery that, if it were not so ugly, would be hilarious. None of the censors has any journalistic experience and at least one, an ex-lawyer, has had a curiously chequered career for one entrusted with such an important task. (The obvious inference is that no competent men of good repute could be found who were willing to take the job.)

Two OF THEM work each evening in a cubbyhole office on the ground floor of the Rhodesia Herald, behind a closed door that bears a large sign reading KEEP OUT. Galley proofs of everything that goes into the paper are submitted to them. They strike out anything they don't like. The newspaper has followed the custom, ever since the state of emergency began last November, of leaving white spaces to indicate that the censor has been at work, and also carrying in every edition a front-page box reminding readers that all material in the paper has been subjected to government censorship.

On February 8 the Smith regime published a decree forbidding this practice, on pain of severe penalties. The newspapers defied it — the very story announcing the new ban on white spaces included two white spaces itself, in the middle of the front page, with the forbidden reminder of censorship placed right below them. (How long they were able to keep up this defiance I couldn't iind out after I went to Zambia, for the ironic reason that President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia had just banned all Rhodesian newspapers from his country — one of them had published a series of articles he didn't like.)

In addition to their own defiance, Rhodesian newsmen are somewhat cheered by the censors' ludicrous incompetence. Day after day, items that have been stricken from the Rhodesia Herald in Salisbury appear in the Chronicle of Bulawayo,

or vice versa. Many of the items removed are comically trivial, such as a letter to the editor that mentioned Prime Minister Wilson in terms that were insufficiently hostile.

Nevertheless, the compulsory optimism of Rhodesian press and radio, and the exclusion of any foreign publications that paint a different picture, cannot but have their effect on Rhodesian readers. Unless and until economic sanctions are felt in actual acute shortages of essential goods, the average citizen will remain unaware that they have any effect at all. The question being asked by observers is. how soon will that be?

"People think sanctions are working slowly, or not at all." a Salisbury businessman said. "That just shows they don't know how business works. In my own opinion, sanctions are beginning to bite rather quickly. Remember, we had a full year's warning that UDI was coming: we could smell it in the air, and we all stocked up against emergencies. Inventories were never higher, pipelines never longer than they were at the end of 1965. We're still living on those stocks, and on the replacements we can buy as long as our credit holds out. But when credit dries up. as it will, our import controls won't be needed any more — we won't be able to import even up to present quotas, because we won't be able to afford it."

To anyone who knows these facts, the utterances of the Smith regime have a clearly audible note of hysteria. On the ninetieth day of Rhodesian independence, Ian Smith himself made a television broadcast, which was one of the most extraordinary performances I ever witnessed.

Smith has a curiously wooden expression, which is partly an effect of plastic surgery (as a Spitfire pilot he was badly burned in combat, and his face was considerably rebuilt). But this would not account for his equally expressionless voice, nor the

hypnotic stare with which he reads from the TelePrompTer. (He had a cold when he recorded this broadcast; seven times he was interrupted hy a fit of coughing, and seven times paused to say solemnly, “Excuse me.”)

AGAINST THIS leaden monotony of manner, the shrill and strident words of the broadcast were a strange contrast. It's unlikely that Smith wrote the speech himself (few prime ministers do) and it's interesting to speculate on who actually did compose this venomous personal attack on Harold Wilson, accusing him first of being a fellow-traveler, then a Communist, and pouring scorn on Wilson's “illogical rantings. supported by Communist forces.” Some listeners guessed that it might have heen written by Ivor Benson, a South African who has served the Smith regime in various capacities and seems to function in southern Africa as a one-man John Birch Society.

Another man behind Smith who is capable of hot words, but also of cold action, is P. K. van der Byl (pronounced Bile by the English and Bail by the Afrikaaners) who is Deputy Minister of Information. The man nominally in charge of censorship is the minister. Jack Howman. a mild and jovial fellow regarded as one of the “liberals” of the Rhodesian Front, but the real authority is van der Byl. He is South African by birth, a youngish man with that special kind of handsomeness that distinguishes the villain in a B movie. Van der Byl is the man who delivered the famous “scorched earth” speech, threatening to ruin the whole economy of Rhodesia rather than give in to Britain — a declaration that startled even Rhodesian listeners a few months ago.

Such outbursts are still the exception, not the rule. In the legislative chamber behind Ian Smith still hangs an oil portrait eight feet high of Her Majesty Elizabeth II. The British coat of arms surmounts Mr. Speaker's chair. Even the Declaration of Independence, perhaps the most formal act of rebellion against the British Crown since 1776, ends with the words “God Save the Queen.” But how long even the lip service of loyalty will last when sanctions begin to bite hard into the national economy, only the event will show.

Moreover, when the bite does begin to be felt, the first to feel it will be the Africans of Rhodesia. The tobacco industry in Salisbury alone, not counting the labor force on the farms, employs ten thousand Africans and only about six hundred whites. If the drought of credit takes place as the industry expects, all the Africans will be thrown out of work; most of the whites are on salary and would remain so. In greater or less degrees this applies to all industries.

Not surprisingly, African spokesmen in Rhodesia are very worried. Men like J. M. Gondo, the Leader of the Opposition, and Enoch Dumbutshena, one of the very few African lawyers in the country, are desperately hoping for a quick solution "before the economy is ruined," and seem to think Wilson could have done more, and done it faster, to bring the issue to a head. Nevertheless, these men believe their people are willing to support sanctions even against their own country and even against their own short-term interests. They think the average African will say, "We can resist; we can go back to our villages if necessary, and hold out indefinitely." As one African put it rather bitterly, "Petrol rationing has very little effect on our people."

What's much less certain, and even more important, is how long patience will hold out in other African countries, / continued on pa^e 44

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Is an invasion possible? Yes . . . but politically unthinkable

especially Zambia. President Kaunda said in mid-February that "Britain must choose between the friendship ol African nations and a handful of white settlers." if "she continues to hold back on military operations" against Rhodesia.

Zambia's economy is hit almost as hard as Rhodesia's by the British economic sanctions. Royal Canadian Air Force fliers are the only men willing to airlift refined gasoline: the civilians chartered by Britain and the U. S. say it's too dangerous and makes their insurance prohibitively high, so they fly only fuel oil. I he airlift carries only forty percent of Zambia's

normal requirements. anyway. I he rest is being brought in by rail, barge and truck, but at a cost two and a half times as

high as the normal cost of oil imports from Rhodesia. The government picks up the extra cost and there has been no rise in the price of fuel to consumers. but the strain on the economy is there just the same.

"The question is." said a w hite Zambian editor, “whether Zambia can hold its breath long enough for sanctions to work."

Aside from the actual burden of sanctions, there is a vast and growing impatience among Africans—a purely emotional demand that “somebody should do something." When President Kaunda placed his sudden ban on Rhodesian newspapers, because of articles that were no more than sober and accurate analyses of Zambia's economic difficulties, it seemed to out-

siders like myself a mere temper tantrum. Europeans who live in the country thought differently.

"He's under constant pressure to do something drastic," said one. "This will probably satisfy the radicals in his cabinet for at least a week, maybe even a fortnight."

If this rising impatience should ever break out into open hysteria, the result could be a frightful blood bath — and again it would almost certainly be Zambia rather than Rhodesia that would suffer. African troops, however much they might wish to invade Rhodesia. are wholly incapable of doing so. Even if the Russians or the Chinese were to help them with air transport to Zambian air fields, they would still lack the equipment to carry them the

rest of the way — and African paratroops do not exist.

But if they cannot get at the real enemy in Rhodesia, there is a little band of w hite hostages who are within reach—the tiny, isolated communities of the Copperbelt in northern Zambia. They are vulnerable not only to the Africans who are their neighbors, servants and (increasingly) masters in government and industry, but also to invasion from the Congo a few miles farther north, and to refugee mobs from Portuguese Mozambique, four thousand of

whom poured into the Copperbelt last November after a battle with Portuguese police, and are still there with scanty means of support.

This is why gasoline rationing had such an impact of alarm in the Copperbclt. It was not, as I had supposed, that these spoiled white settlers were peevish at the loss of their weekends in the country; it was because they had lost the mobility on which safety would depend in an emergency. They no longer have enough gasoline to get away.

After Smith, what?

No doubt military intervention by Britain would remove this threat and satisfy African resentments, but a British invasion of Rhodesia is almost unthinkable. It is not. as some Rhodesians seem to think, unfeasible — the Rhodesian Air Force with its obsolete Hunters and Canberras could he shot down by RAF Javelins, armed with air-to-air missiles, before the Javelins were even sighted by the defenders, and a British paratroop landing would be a formidable but not unmanageable challenge. The real obstacle is not military but political. How' could a British government with a majority of three, on the eve of a general election, hope to get parliamentary hacking for such an adventure?

And even if military force is never needed, even if economic sanctions work, what then? What substitute is there for the Ian Smith regime, with which a British government could negotiate? What machinery could be used for the return to colonial rule, which seems to be the only alternative?

I met nobody in any country who had a coherent answer to these questions. But until they arc answered, Rhodesia and Zambia will remain as dangerous a powder keg as there is in the world at the moment. ★
