

Aimé CÉSAIRE

THE ESSENTIAL AND THE FUNDAMENTAL

In "Tell us... Aimé Césaire"

Interview by E. J. MAUNICK *

The activities and the work of the francophone West Indian poet Aimé Césaire together constitute a single struggle against the negation of identity. As a child in the house where he was born in the Lorrain in Martinique, a ramshackle patched-up old building, he was daily confronted with an image which became forever rooted in his mind: his mother riveted to an old sewing machine and endlessly pedalling away to ensure a decent living for her large family. Later, on entering the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, he discovered, and read assiduously, books which explained and underlined the basis of the precarious state of the colonized peoples. The sound of that pedal was ever present in his mind, in which it was associated with the oars of slave galleys. His native island became an ill-omened ship in which other present and past victims were in chains. He began to say « No ». The fact is that he was learning at the same time that the Black man was not a « thing » as the colonialists had proclaimed. Of course he read Freud and Marx, but above all Leo Frobenius who, on the strength of his travels and surveys, proposed a different vision of Africa and African man. Césaire then found in himself a being whose existence he had always suspected and which had nothing in common with the prevalent caricature of the black man which is constantly being inculcated upon the black people themselves and the wider world of interests. That was when he tore up all the poems conceived in the style of, as a consequence of, following the example of... He decided to return to his native country. Not only a physical return, that of the

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On 9 June last, in Dakar, Aimé Césaire was elected President of the International Association of the World Festival of Negro Arts. A few days later, « Demain l'Afrique » requested and obtained an exclusive interview with this great personality of the Negro-African world.

Cette interview exclusive du célèbre écrivain et poète négro-Africain, le Martiniquais Aimé Césaire, a été recueillie par le grand Poète Mauricien, E.J. Maunick, lauréat de plusieurs prix littéraires, et publiée pour la première fois dans Demain l'Afrique, n° 1, Septembre 1977. Nos sincères remerciements à « Demain l'Afrique » pour nous avoir permis de la traduire et de la publier dans « Africa Development ».

prodigal son, but also a return of his whole soul : taking root again. Proof of this was his first great poem, entitled « Cahier d'un retour au pays natal » — a biting text, a solid and salutary message. An incantation which transcends all magic formulas : a negro mass. Césaire drew his authority as celebrant from one passion, only one, that of the Essential and the Fundamental.

The Essential, that is the discovery, the recovery, the acceptance and the profession of an identity. Together with Senghor, Damas and other « rejects of history » whom he met and with whom he fraternized around the Sorbonne in Paris, he assessed the need for a black consciousness. The discovery of the American negro poets of the Black Renaissance was to do the rest. Césaire was the first to translate the sum of cultural values of the black world into a term which has since greatly prospered : *negritude*. Whatever the controversies about it and around it, the Essential has been proclaimed, and nothing will ever again be like it was before.

There remained the path to be followed in order that the future should not be like the past. Here, Aimé Césaire tackled the Fundamental, that is the choice among all those which are presented at the crossroads of the Black Man, of a road that is really his. One which meant superseding the temptations and thereby avoiding new enfeoffments, not to say new serfdoms. But, in so doing, not disdaining any enrichment, not refusing any dialogue, remaining open to all the winds. With one express proviso : that the deepest self should not be encroached on, and that the foundation should remain intact.

He who is the advocate of this Essential and this Fundamental is exposed to many risks. Aimé Césaire knows it and assumes responsibility for it. He knows that he does not have the miracle remedy which would cure all ills immediately, but it is sufficient to start the undertaking. To say No is already an antibody, and so much the worse for those who preach immunity while the disease is already well and truly there. Césaire's political action is inseparable from his literary works. From the « Cahier d'un retour au pays natal » to « La Tragédie du roi Christophe » and « Une saison au Congo » through « Les Armes miraculeuses » and « Discours sur le colonialisme », to quote only these books by him, there is always only the troubled presence of a man, the same one who, with Senghor and Damas, published in 1934 the corporative journal « L'Étudiant noir », the same one who, in collaboration with another West Indian René Ménénil, created the surrealist journal « Tropiques » in the midst of the occupation of the French West Indies by the Vichy authorities, the one who, elected a member of the French National Assembly after the Liberation, and believing there might be a chance of development for the Antilles, defended assimilation, the one who was to opt for autonomy and who, between 1958 and 1964, pleaded that cause with General de Gaulle and André Malraux, the one who sensationally renounced his membership of the French communist party to found the Parti progressiste Martiniquais, the one who still now, despite the burdens of office as mayor and a

member of parliament is tirelessly continuing what he finally regarded as a sacred duty: a better destiny for the men of the Antilles.

It is this man, who has honoured me with his friendship for nearly twenty years, that I interviewed on your behalf, that is, asked him to answer some of the questions which you, in my place, might have put to him. I did this because I am more than attentive to the work of the poet Césaire and because I know the man rather well. One summer I went to visit him in his mayor's office in Fort-de-France, Martinique. He insisted on doing me the honours of his town and of his island, stopping at houses and trees, at the ruins of Saint-Pierre and the mer du Diamant. On the road, an old woman approached the car just as it was stopping. She put her soft and wrinkled hand on the arm of my guide and said: « Césaire Aimé » and I understood « beloved Césaire ». Do you agree ?

Edouard J. MAUNICK

Aimé Césaire, we who in the vast world have our place measured as one third of the whole. For reasons of a new equilibrium, we prefer to use the proportion of one-fourth. One may smile at the irony of this reckoning, and yet... So, we in the fourth world with our victories and our defeats, with our cries and our silences. And, among us, those who are called the intellectuals: those who think and express, those who create and display... How does the poet and politician that you are explain the presence of the intellectual and what is his role in the struggle of the fourth world ?

The role of the intellectual in the fourth world can only be a particular case. I consider firstly that the intellectual is somewhat the conscience of a community. He is a being who serves a number of values. And this conscience must not be passive but militant. Among the values at the heart of his fight there are first justice, man and truth. This is very important particularity in our case. We are living at a time when it is essential to be lucid: to dissipate the myths, to destroy the mystifications, to see and make things seen, not to lie to oneself and not to lie to others...

How can we uncover this truth, show its real face, its proper weight, in the magma of all these truths which are jostling each other at the doors of the fourth world ?

I believe that, in all action, there is one side turned towards the universal and one side turned towards the particular. Our truth is not contrary to the Truth with a capital T. But there is specificity: we have to seek our truth, that of our world, that of our identity. We must cut our own way through the undergrowth with a machete. It is not easy. The world is glutted with ideologies, but we must not let these ideologies become mystifying. I have always been struck by the fact that we are threatened with the very great danger of mechanically using the truth of others. I say that in the fourth world we must be lucid: select what we need and follow our own road. That is fundamental: that is what I have been trying to do ever since I was old enough to think. To seek a particular African path, at the same time

taking advantage of the contributions of the other worlds, but well knowing, fully realizing that in reality nobody has thought for us or can think for us.

The search for this underlying identity implies a revolution which is both a refusal and a desire for renewed inspiration. Marxism comes in here. It has taken hold of the fourth world and the fourth world has taken hold of it. What is your personal analysis of this phenomenon and what about the other ideologies? What, in your view, can really help to find this path of liberation and how do you rate the efficiency of our own approach?

No-one can ignore marxism, but it must be used as a tool. There is no question of making of it an ideology or a new dogma. Marxism is an extraordinary analytical tool; quite exceptional. I said just now that all mystifications must be destroyed: we must recognize that marxism has conspicuously helped us to demystify or demythify colonialism. This having been said, it is clear that marxism remains one instrument among others which are complementary to it. It would be a very bad thing if the fourth world summarily applied a number of procedures under the pretext that they are derived from marxism. It would be a primitive and impoverishing marxism. There are a host of possibilities that are not in marxism and the world is vaster than Marx. It is up to us to discover this border area and to explore it. I am thinking for example of ethnography. The knowledge of particular cultures, linguistics, even psycho-analysis, all of which are outside the province of marxism.

But it could be objected that ethnography, linguistics and psycho-analysis are matters for the élite and that the people need to eat: these famous animal needs, to remain within Marx's vocabulary. Is your personal writing, which gives predominance to the sacred oath to the people to annihilate its servitude, primarily a refusal of all new enfeoffment?

Absolutely. I reject all the Churches. It is essential to beware of all assimilationism. I believe in the primacy of identity: in the primacy of the search...

And this fear of the élite? This fear of its action which might culminate in elements apparently in contradiction to the primary needs of the people?

There you raise the whole problem of the relations between politics and culture. Here, we must have a dialectical view of things and not be in much of a hurry to simplify the problems. Firstly, I attach a great deal of importance to culture: that is what gives the overall vision of things. Politics without culture would be blind politics, groping its way, and ultimately unsubstantial. There can be no major political system not based on a conception of the world and a conception of man. Without culture, politics remains without purpose. Consequently, in the fourth world in particular, culture is fundamental. But it must culminate in action. To revert to the comparison just made, a culture without politics would be paralyzing and would lead to ossification. We must therefore do all we can to induce and

ensure the reconciliation between culture and politics. It is rather like the reconciliation of intuition and action...

Leaving all demagogy aside, is not culture the legitimate property of the people? Is it not the people which builds and maintains it? Is the people not both the beam and the structural support?

Certainly. We must at all costs resist an erudite and élitist conception of culture. The English anthropologists have clearly demonstrated it: culture springs first from the people. It is the people which creates the values and which determines them. I who am from the Antilles and you who are from Mauritius, we very well know the vast amount that has to be done to pass from culture as it was taught to us (and which, by the way, is for me not culture but instruction) to true culture. We know that this mediation can only be done by the people, which is the reservoir of the most eminent cultural values.

This brings us to the distinction that must be made as to the very function of creation in our countries. We must, then, divest man of the claim to be the message and invest him with the duty of being the messenger. In other words, he does not so much write for the people — which itself holds the eminent values — but of the people from which he derives the values in order to expound them to the wider world. His writing would then be that of the narrator. To quote yourself: « I will be the mouth of those who have no mouth... »

Yes, We are there to express, and not so much to create. To express, press out, bring out and highlight, hence to reveal and proffer a number of values which are there, but have no recognized existence precisely because they are unexpressed. One shivers when one knows that some people think that our peoples have no history simply because that history has not been written down.

On the basis of that kind of postulate which is that of serving, of promoting the general cause — a noble cause if ever there was one and which disturbs the soul — in view of what is happening in some countries of the fourth world more particularly in the areas of concern to us, we are forced to conclude that there is a flagrant crime of diversion... How was it possible to forget independence, to ignore the liberation and to bury the just establishment of the identity of the peoples, in favour of power? The intellectual and the politician and power!... What does power represent for you? What should it be used for and what are the limits of its exercise?

We must above all combat a conception according to which power carries with it its own legitimacy. It must never be more than a means. The fact that power is in the hands of a particular individual seems to me personally a secondary matter. What is important is not to hold power, but to know *what it is used for*. This brings us back to the relations between culture and politics, (for) my assessment of such power is determined by one primary criterion: tell me what you are doing with your power or what you want to do with it, and it is according to the reply that I will be able to judge whether that power is legitimate or illegitimate...

So you deplore the caricatural picture which some holders of power sometimes give of themselves and of Africa...

Yes indeed. I will not go into personalities, but it must be added in their defence that the bad examples are not confined to the fourth world. Very often what we detest and denounce, and must denounce, in the fourth world unfortunately finds more than its replica, its source, in the imitation of the worst deviations of power, as can be seen here and there in the world of today. In Africa, they are often black replicas of things which we know very precisely form elsewhere. They are for me, therefore, deviations of black power and not the actual characteristics of that power. There are some who imagine or insinuate that all black power is a bloody and arbitrary power — you know the distressing theory of the negro king — these are actually colonialist theories. Tyranny and arbitrary action are not the perquisites, of any continent or any race. But actually it is time for the responsible politicians of the fourth world to pay heed to this aspect of things and to admit that power does not bear within itself its own justification. From that point of view, I may be old-fashioned, but I am a moralist: I believe in the primacy of certain values to which power itself must be subordinated.

Let us go further, if you will... Tomorrow, in an independent Martinique, you will assume very high office which will confer on you the right of life or death in the political domain... What does Aimé Césaire do? What is the reaction of the author of « Cahier d'un retour au pays natal » to what is called reason of State ?

Really, at my age, after having made an examination of things and of myself, I can express an absolute certainty: I shall never become drunk with power. Is it that there is a proportion of scepticism in me, is it a lesson of the relativity of things? In any case I am absolutely sure that I will not change. Power is not a thing which intoxicates me and I think I will have the strength to resist its giddiness and that he whom you call Aimé Césaire will remain Aimé Césaire. I do not at all think that there will be a mutation in myself: I will remain the man I am. I cannot imagine for one second that I could renounce values which are vital for me: duty of justice, duty of truth, of a certain moral integrity, respect for others. I fervently believe in respect for others. Many people think that I am a hesitant man whereas it is simply the respect for others... In their individuality and their dignity.

This naturally brings me to ask you about emotions. We find it at every stage of your work, and no one better than you could explain its presence, without, however, giving it primacy over reason and without allowing it to take on this caricatural meaning of emotion which some circles attribute to the Black man...

First of all, there is in me an intellectual, rational, deductive side... those are things we learned in the schools of my time, we find them also in Senghor, and in our case, this is related to French culture and knowledge. Consequently I am indeed of my time, of a period, and

of a school. All that is perfectly true. But I am also fundamentally emotive. Alas, I say alas because it goes as far as anguish. It is not because I am a black man, that applies to many men, but with me, emotion is primary. It is an immediate reaction which also goes with intuition. I believe I am intuitive. Afterwards I subject things to analysis, pass them through the filter of reason, but unquestionably, my first movement is apprehension by emotion. And I never argue about that : we are as we are...

So as to grasp this spontaneity better, I suggest to you two attitudes : we have heard of a great writer belonging to the black world, landing in Africa for the first time, finds in the first black man he meets on African soil the descendant of the man who sold his ancestor : and it is said that, in the same circumstances, your reaction was different. You apparently said : « This is the grandson of the one I descend from... »

Exactly. Upon my first encounter with African earth, and this may seem stupid, I was very greatly moved : I wept. I really felt that I belonged to this land, this continent, that I was made of that clay. These are things which one cannot control, and I did not for one second think that I had been a victim of that world. Of course, I have always very deeply felt the transplantation, the deportation, the slave trade. This is nothing theoretical with me, but a deep wound, an anguish. I still feel, almost physically, the jolting of the boat. This is very strong in me. But having said that, I know very well who are those responsible. Certainly not those few Africans caught up in a terrible machine. I can locate the responsibilities and not mistake the enemy. The enemy is emerging capitalism, the slave trader, the lucre profit of the white man and of a civilization.

What, then, does the African continent mean to you ?

Ah! Africa... That is one of the factors which made me stand out among the West Indians. I was the first to talk to them of Africa. Not that I know her all that well, but I am always in the habit of saying that Africa is part of myself. I discover her in me ; she is part of the geography of my heart. I owe a great deal to Africa ; it is she who enabled me to know myself. I only understood myself when I had known Africans and only understood Martinique when I had been to Africa. One cannot understand the Antilles without Africa, and that is why it is absolutely pointless to oppose Antillanity to Negritude, because without Negritude there is no Antillanity. Of course. Martinique and the so-called French West Indies are at the crossroads of two worlds : a European world and an African world. Perhaps even of third one, an Asian one, because the Indian (from India) contribution is by no means negligible. But roughly speaking it is a meeting-ground between Africa and Europe, and the essential component, the foundation, is Africa.

What about racial mixing ?

Racial mixing is almost a law of the modern world : people meet more, there is no longer a watertight compartment, there is less and

less segregation and what remains of it is seen as a detestable anachronism. Consequently, I believe that the world is tending to racial mixing; only I say, be careful: that must not mean the elimination of differences and the disappearance of specific cultures. I am in favour of any racial mixing which brings about enrichment, but I do not want it to culminate in the negation of an identity. I speak with knowledge because precisely what is threatening Martinique is the loss of identity. That is the most horrible thing of all. And the most terrible accusation that can be made against a certain form of colonialism which prevailed in the Antilles, is the negation of identity: reducing a man, the West Indian man, to such a degree of spiritual poverty that he ends by forgetting himself or, worse still, despising himself. This is dreadful. I met a West Indian who made an apologia of the black slave trade, saying: « It's fine like that... that is what civilized us ». And there are also those who do not say it but who think it. One cannot but be appalled at system in which man is continually called upon to choose between dignity and security; between his stomach and his soul.

But the rejection of the positive aspect of racial mixing which requires above all the acceptance of what is different in the other leads us quite naturally to South Africa. To apartheid...

I consider apartheid as the survival, right in the 20th century, of the most barbaric evils that we have known, for example, in the West Indies. Everybody is convinced that slavery has disappeared, that racism is out of date — how many times in Martinique have I been reproached for always going back over the same old stories, for re-opening old wounds — well, no, gentlemen, racism is there, slavery is there: apartheid is the glaring proof of it. In my view it symbolizes hideously everything we, the coloured peoples, suffered from for century after century... Now you have Prof. Barnard who declares on television that no other part of Africa is doing to the Blacks what South Africa is doing... To that I reply: Does one weigh a man by the weight of well-being? I do not know what Prof. Barnard's conception of man is; in any case, as for me I think it is an abomination. Soweto tears me apart just as Harlem did. I find it inadmissible that an intellectual can try to find the shadow of a justification for such a system. After all, this argument of Prof. Barnard is well known: how often have I heard or read (for I am something of a historian) the apologia of slavery which says: after all they are Negroes, very poor in their country, without civilization, without culture; certainly we took them and deported them, but it was for their good. First, for the edification of their soul, we christianized them, we civilized them and at the same time we promoted their greater well-being. Today they are being bantustanized. So this is an argument as old as the world, as old as colonialism, as old as the exploitation of man by man.

Basically is not the maintenance of this state of injustice largely related to the sordid desire to ensure a supremacy of wealth? Here we

come to the relations between rich countries and poor countries. Do you believe in the famous North-South dialogue ?

In this connection the results of the last conference held in Paris are very significant. It is really the squaring of the circle. It seems obvious to me that there is no possible ground for agreement between a rich North and a poor South, since the pre-requisite for the prosperity of one side is the poverty of the other. There must be no cheating. Of course it is better to talk round a conference table, but it is clear that nothing will come of it : it is all a matter of power relationships.

You are pessimistic...

I am not pessimistic but lucid. Consequently I am highly aware of the antagonism between the interests involved. I do not at all think that there will be a sort of night of 4 August when the rich powers will abdicate their privileges and embrace the poor brothers. Moreover, the reason why we have been using the term « fourth world » from the start is that things are not that simple : are there really only two camps, the rich one and the poor one ? Must we not, within what is regarded as the third world, refine the analysis and bring out a fourth world ? It seems to me that the division of the world into two blocs is summary and does not fit in perfectly with reality. Africa, for example, has particular and specific handicaps which it is very difficult to reduce to, or to include in, a more general category. There again, I am a man concerned with the particular, but the fact is undeniable...

Is not, then, the impossibility of establishing this North-South dialogue liable to culminate in violence ?

We have to take things as they are : there is a confrontation. How it will all end I do not know. Of course we would all have hoped for an agreement, but it must be acknowledged that history is not an idyll... We are now at a time of awakening consciousness of the problems. This is salutary, and it is on that basis that we must look for solutions. The conference can only be a starting-point.

Aimé Césaire, Africa begins at the doors of the Mediterranean and ends at the Cape of Good Hope. How do you see the meeting of the black culture and the arabe culture ?

I am not in a good position to speak of it, but the Arab culture seems to me unquestionably a great culture. Certainly it is an African culture... but there is an African culture which is not Arab culture. Here we have two worlds which had contacts with each other, there was even penetration if not interpenetration, but I think that Arab culture extends beyond Africa and has therefore its specific nature, and that black culture, which also, in a way, extends beyond Africa through its diaspora, has another specific nature. The problems of the one cannot be assimilated to the problems of the other.

But the fact is that their meeting and their mutual enrichment are at the root of the whole of Africa. We cannot make of the Sahara a point of no-return, either on one side or the other.

Certainly. In the century in which we are living, this is also true for Europe. We cannot deny the action or interaction of European culture on African culture, if only through technology. It is clear that today every culture is confronted with itself, but also with the others.

Many of your books are frequently mentioned, but I should like to go back to the one which, in my view, explains you best, announces you best and which has given me something of the taste of myself: « Le Cahier d'un retour au pays natal ». I suggest this to you: you come to Africa, and a young student, like there are many, comes up to you and says that he knows by heart long extracts from this book....

Much better, indeed, than in the Antilles.

He adds: « Do you know that we recite them sometimes to reassure ourselves ». And suddenly you read in his eyes a question which is only discernible by the elder that you are. You then understand that he is the heir of this identity which you, with others, have helped to bring to light. What do you say to him?

There are two ways of behaving towards him: as a defendant or as an ancestor. I certainly do not feel myself as a defendant, I very well understand the revolts of youth, sometimes their injustice: this is natural. There are for example so many people now who are condemning negritude very vociferously and very brilliantly. I smile. This condemnation they make today, could they have made it if negritude had not come their way? This proves that we were the pioneers in very difficult conditions. We too were feeling our way. But we have the merit of having searched, of course with the risk of making mistakes. It is very easy to stay in ones ivory tower and to pronounce excommunications, maledictions etc. So we wanted to clear a path... But what do I tell him? Simply this: we all thought at the time, Senghor, Damas and I, that while there are contingencies, secondary matters, there is nevertheless one value which must be maintained and which is fundamental: the virtue of identification. To be oneself. To remain oneself. I also believe in a feeling of fidelity and solidarity. The need to pursue the quest. I do not think there is any renewal without the maintenance of these values and without a perpetual return to the source for inspiration. The fight against alienation, as is said of a continuous creation, is an evercontinuing fight, constantly to be recommenced. Alienation with respect to the values of the modern world, alienation of the ideologies: a fight which is never ended.

You mentioned fidelity: that too, with you, has no end. It starts with men like Toussaint-Louverture, like Nat Turner, and continues with Nkrumah, Cabral, Lumumba...

It is not that I indulge in hero-worship, but these men are for me men who incarnate these values that I am trying to describe here. And because they incarnate these values, they call on each of us personally. They hail us, they draw us back to ourselves. I regard them, in my pantheon, as relays of hope. And I think that, in the lives of peoples as in those of individuals, we need these relays of hope: men who show the way, men who say the essential. In the midst of

the multitude of facts and events, we may easily get lost and miss the essential. By meditating about these men whom I shall not call great men because the word is too much prostituted and has acquired an unpleasant meaning, by meditating about the lives of these men that we are brought back to what is fundamental... I do not intend to compile an honours list, but the names you have mentioned are already an excellent indication

More than once you confided to me that you had never been really fascinated by America, and yet the Antilles are in a way an extension of America. And America is also a black country...

Nothing that is negro can be alien to me. My heart bleeds in Soweto, but it also bleeds in Harlem. I owe a great deal to Africa, but Senghor and I also owe a great deal to the Black Americans. Not that I know English or the American black literature very well, since I read it only in translation, but the little I know of it has strongly marked me. The poets of the Black Renaissance like Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, James Waldon Johnson, Claude McKay and Langston Hughes are the first ones who helped us to think negro when we were haunting the Quartier Latin. We were in a French-speaking world, then dominated by frantic assimilation, and we found in that literature a splendid example of the Negro standing on his own feet.

A man who says « I am black », « Black is beautiful » and in the case of Langston Hughes « I am American too »... A man like Marcus Garvey, not that I am Garveyist, I recognize all the romanticism there was in the Black to Africa movement, but what I remember is the importance of the gesture. The importance of the approach and its purpose; the intention it reveals. So it is impossible to divide the black heritage, and that is why I believe in the world of negritude. We have there a very vast patrimony which is common to us. It is very far-reaching: there are of course the West Indies, but, beyond the archipelago, it reaches the continent, i.e. America, just as, beyond the islands of the Indian Ocean, there is Africa. In any case, my own world extends very far.

Your world extends very far, but it begins in Martinique: the native country. Let us take it to the limit: some people often reproach you because they do not quite understand your approach. They do not grasp it in all its clarity or find it contradictory. Tell us frankly what Aimé Césaire wants for this Martinique: what he is ready to fight for and even give his life for...

First I want Martinique to exist. For it does not have an existence and my problem now is the following: my country is in danger of dying before it has ever been born: I mean born as itself. That is my tragedy. This undertaking of seeing Martinique born as itself is somewhat singular because it comes in the century in which we are living, in other words in the century of levelling, of telecommunications and alienation. But I regard this undertaking which is mine as an undertaking of lifesaving in extremis. I bend all my strength to it, being very conscious of the difficulties, and I always admire the intrepidity of the people who pronounce magnificent absolute judgments without

realizing the complexity of the problems, the daily struggle for survival of a little country of a small people of 300,000 inhabitants, a small rock in the Atlantic. A small country in which the people have been subjected to a veritable policy of brainwashing and conditioning. It is for that people that I am fighting. I do not know if it is a rear-guard action, but it is certainly an essential combat. Certainly I have had a thankless role : not that I have a messianic conception of myself — I am in a way both very proud and very humble — I wanted to do something because I am lucid. I do not lie to myself. And since we deal with poetry, hence a terrain of truth, I will say that the merit that I am ready to assume was a matter of chance. Basically, this people of whom I have never despaired although the contrary might have happened, this people, in this difficult and disagreeable century, induces me finally to conclude that « I guided the long transhumance of the herd ».