The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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Will Nothing Remain Sacred?

This is politics gone mad. How can any political party worth the paper its name is written on denigrate the occasion that commemorates the martyrs of our language movement? There is no division of opinion as to the centrality of language movement in our subsequent national assertion. It is one of the few events which has not yet been taken over by the all enveloping partisanship that is eating into every aspect of our social life. We thought that at least Ekushey will remain outside the present political fray. But in a mad competition to hit at each other, even the Shaheed Minar has become a battlefield.

By all accounts it was a peaceful day. Hundreds of thousands of enthusiastic citizens - mostly young, and many under the banner of their respective schools, cultural and social organisations, and some even under the banner of their professional bodies - had gathered from the early hours to place wreaths at the Shaheed Minar. Mostly people were singing the well known special songs historically associated with this occasion. Eye witnesses confirm that representatives of the BNP and its various front organisations who had lined up since morning were chanting partisan and political slogans which did not really suit either the occasion or the mood of the processions of which they were a part. They were in a militant and strength-showing mood. Whatever may have been BNP's plan — and we are willing to give it the benefit of the doubt that such a sacrilege was not intended — the tempo and mood of militancy made the desecration almost unavoidable. Khaleda Zia's presence made the incident more unfortunate and the act so much more despicable. We unequivocally condemn this sacrilege and urge BNP to take responsibility for this outrage and immediately denounce those who were responsible for it and expel them from the party. We deplore the subsequent attack, also by BNP activists, on Prof Muntasir Mamun of DU and Ramendra Majumder of Sangskritik Jote. If it does not distance itself from these shameful occurrences, the nation will be forced to conclude that they were pre-planned and hold the incidents against it. BNP must be aware of the political consequences of such a conclusion in the public mind.

An SOS Call

The BGMEA poll inter-face has produced an impassioned call to keep the Chittagong Port smoothly operational for the next ten years. The implication is certainly not that after a decade the flood-gates would be flung open to troubles. What is being conveyed here is a sense of urgency for a turn-around, a desperate call to get something done about the frequently dysfunctional premier port of the country. As well as playing havoc with the Chittagong Port, the malady has infected our second maritime port — Mongla. So, we would like the evil to be banished once and for all rather than agree to a ten-year moratorium on it only.

More substantive sounds the diagnosis of the problem as being 'political'. Hence, a suggestion has been put forward to hold a national convention to sort it out on the basis of consensus. Theoretically, this is a correct approach given the fact that the intractability of the problem is attributable to the political party stalwarts' acting at cross-purposes in the Chittagong Port. In practical terms, however, bipartisanism has proved elusive in almost all cases. The sign of desperation is so obvious with the Forum insisting: "If port problems are not solved despite sincerity of government and opposition, then it (the port) should be leased to private sector with guidelines set by a high level advisory committee headed by the Prime Minister".

We think it is time the government issued an ultimatum to all concerned that if the management of Chittagong Port does not improve substantially with the employees' cooperation by a certain date, it would be handed over to the private sector to save the country's vital interests.

Appeal for Speedbreakers

Five persons were killed in a silly and sad traffic accident on Friday. A minibus, traveling to Aricha from Dhaka, collided head-on with a Sabhar-Ashulia tempo. The minibus, as a result of the impact, fell into a ditch. While veering offroad the mini ran over Shafiqul Islam, a student of J N University sitting still on his motorcycle. It was a bus stoppage where he was waiting. The run-over killed Shafiq while the plunge took life of four passengers. Strangely enough, there was no casualty among the tempo riders including its driver and helper. It is quite possible that the minibus tried hard to parry the collision and went out of control, causing the tempo only a brush and no loss of life. What exactly happened could come out if there was in this nation a tradition or system of thorough enquiry into road mishaps. That could help pin the blame on some party or other as also yield clues to other contributing factors.

In a country where no controls are effective on the movement of vehicles and vessels, the highway mini is the last thing one would allow to carry people. And, the tempo's high manoeuvrability in squeezing in and turning makes it an unusual denizen of the highspeed world of the highways. Let all three-wheelers, motorised and otherwise, service ways and not highways — or tributary roads between the highway and the interior.

A highway is now a seriously dangerous thing. It is on these that vehicles move at their fastest capacity. Its affairs must be seriously planned and operated. The reality is exactly the opposite in Bangladesh.

Japan's Defence Build-up

Striking a Delicate Balance

Japan's concept of defence has been 'based on prevention of armed aggression by building up a system capable of dealing with any form of aggression..."

APAN, one of the revanchist powers of the second world war proved difficult for the J allies till the last and could be humbled into submission only with the first ever use of the atomic bomb. Ever since the awe-struck nation horrified with the holocaust was baptised to a new set of ethos in international life shunning its militaristic stanch. The West's patronisation leading to her post-war prosperity tamed Japan to the extent that she became literally a pacifist nation. So much so that its constitution (Article 9) explicitly laid down that "the right of the belligerency of the state will not be recognised" but allowed for the country a Self-Defence Force (SDF) in consonance with the international law of the nations' inherent right to self-defence and a defence spending with the optimum limit of one per cent of the GNP.

This left Japan despondent in a strategic milieu emerging after the war and the United States, the sole beneficiary of the decline of Japanese power in the pacific, felt only too eager for providing conformist Japan her desperately needed security umbrella. The arrangement was subsequently formalised by the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the US and Japan.

The Soviet military threat that sustained the American-Japanese alliance throughout the cold-war period is now rusting away or being broken up for scrap. Also the countries' continuing trade war, bickering over burden-sharing for US troops stationed in Japan as well as certain lapses and ambiguities in the alliance itself already-vitiated US-Japan security understanding. The US has already ceased to consider Japan her 'unsinkable aircraft carrier' in the Far East. Japan is also no more dependent absolutely on US security guarantee except, of course, her willy

US nuclear deterrence in coping with a nuclear threat.

nilly reliance on

Nevertheless. Japan is still critically vulnerable to a number of insecurities. Although Russia is

less of threat than the former Soviet Union, the continuing stationing of Russian forces in the Far East constitutes a destabilising factor for the security of the region with Kurile Islands not yet returned to Japan. However, the possibility of conflicts in Korea peninsula worries Japanese defence planners the most. Because any conflagration there is bound to envelope Japan in its sweep

Given the animosity of DPRK, the chances of its possessing nuclear weapons and its long range missile covering Japan within their range. Japan has to determine the degree of unilateral action, she is required to take during any hostility from that quarter. Japan has territorial disputes with ROK over Takeshita island and also with PRC and Taiwan over Senkaku Islands. Of more concern to Japan is however China's growing military muscle and the latter's policy towards the multinational disputes over Spratly Islands in South China sea. Japan has considerable stake in dispute at least to ensure free passage of her shipping through the area.

An impressive array of American forces that include an infantry division, a marine division, 430 combat aircrafts and 80 ships are readily available in the region to be deployed in assistance of Japan, should she be threatened. Yet, the Japanese are increasingly sceptic in post-cold war realpolitik about America's political will to become militarily involved in Asia. The US commitment to the defence of Japan is fairly explicit on paper but has never been put to test.

Moreover, as a consequence of growing insistence in some quarters that Japan assumes greater responsibility for its own defence. Japan quietly built up her defence system over the years within the frame work of its constitutional limitations. Japan's concept of defence has been "based on prevention of armed aggression by building up a system capable of dealing with any form of aggression..." It would be pertinent to have a close look at how has that been done by now both to address adequately the country's security and remain within the parametres of constitutional restriction of the 'renunciation of war.'

One of the interesting facts about Japan's military, often hedged by her ostensible pacifism, is that she has, according to the official statistics, the highest defence spending in the world only after the US. The vastness of Japanese economy allows her to spend as huge an amount as \$ 50bn (which comes to one per cent of her GNP) for the country's military. As a result, even the growing military muscle of China, an immediate threat to Japan, is far our matched at this moment by Japan's self Defence Force at least in equipment and technology.

On the surface, Japan's defence organsiations and inventories look rather impressive. There are considerable quantities of major equip

HE guy who told me off

about seven feet tall, with

wide shoulders and a voice like

a ghetto blaster inside an

"You've got no idea what you've

elevator shaft. He was black.

just said, have you?" he asked

Sure I have. All I said is that

you should call a spade, a spade.

What's wrong with that ...?

"Plenty!" interjected a woman,

also black, kicking me under

the table. We were sitting in the

students' cafeteria at the

University of Toronto, grab-

bing a quick snack before class.

Why has she kicked me, I won-

dered to myself, staring at her

in surprise. What is the problem

with these people, these blacks,

why are they so ultra sensitive

about everything. "She doesn't

know what the word means,"

the black woman said quickly,

putting her hand on the black

guy's arm to calm him down be-

cause he was leaning forward.

looking dangerous. "The word

spade," my woman friend con-

tinued looking hard at me now,

"is slang, derogatory, it's an

abusive word for a black per-

son.." Oh. Oh dear. (I gaped at

both of them). I had no idea. You

mean spade is a derogatory

term, like, uh, nigger? The

large black man made a growl-

ing sound. I think my use of the

word nigger may have upset

him a little. And so I hastened

was a large person. Like

ment. Its force structure is flexible and balanced. SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Year Book 1995 notes that Japan produces a full range of major conventional weapons even though the country's constitution forbids the export of defence materials but it is impossible to monitor the end use of such materials.

Japan's Army at about 151,000 is the best balanced of the three services in term of the combat capability. It is equipped with tanks, having one armoured division, six armour heavy infantry divisions and two composite brigades. Japan developed her main battle tank, the latest being the Type 90 with main armament of 120mm smooth bore gun. The SDF has well over 1000 tanks with 108x Type 90 and 870x Type 74 — equally robust and reliable workhorse with 105MM gun. Japan has also produced 227 MM multiple launch rocket system and surface to air missile. Army has acquired 80 modernised AH-1s helicopters intended for anti-armour operation. It has a mix of self-propelled and towed artillery including about 380X F4-70 155mm guns indigenously manufactured.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force (MSDF has equally formidable inventory and can ensure passage of Japanese-flagged vessels throughout South China sea against existing threats. It is composed of 4x Aegis-equipped Kongo class destroyers capable of providing coordinated air defence over a wider area than other 6x Kongo class vessels with missile 5M-IMR Tartar area airdefence system. 54x Frigates in the fleet are considered adequate for convoy close protection duties. Japan's 4x re-supply ships are capable of providing replenishment at sea with skill. MSDF is well equipped for "surveillance, escorts and the defence of ports

> and harbours lts 39x Mine cle arance vessels

PERSPECTIVES and 9x counter ter squadron can by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz ore mining and clearing choke points to main land Japan from

the South. Nav-y's air arm is large indeed with Harpoon-equipped 115X P3c aircrafts. It's 2x Electronic Warfare (EW) P-3s aircrafts actually complement larger Air Force inventory of such aircrafts. MSDF is also acquiring amphibious ships of which four are already under construction. The government is likely to sanction construction of four more LST-type vessels which will be capable of carrying tanks. artillery and troops

Japan's Air Self-Defence Force (ASDF) is large and competent for its constitutional purpose of defending Japanese archipelago with the potential of expansion. After having allocated the combat helicopter role to Army and maritime reconnaissance role to the Navy the ASDF concentrates on its primary tasks; Air Defence and strike. Japan manufactured US-designed F-15 strike aircrafts of which 200 are already in service. Some sources state that Japan has had AV-8B (UK Harrier) technology supplied by the US and the establishment of three carrier based on VSTOL (Vertical and Short Takeoff and Landing) can be achieved within short time. The joint development of FS-X "next generation support fighter" aircraft, a derivative of F-16 is under way with the US. Within 30 months Japan could construct an aircraft carrier from the keel up. She possesses a network of ground and early warning radars in addition to about 140 improved patriot ground-based anti-missile system perhaps to counter possible DPRK ballistic missile attacks.

Training standard of SDF appear adequate but a major drawback is the fixed perception of "defence" not allowing the defender to bring to bear the overwhelming force on the opponent at a decisive moment and against a decisive point which is a fundamental principle of war. Nevertheless, by all reckoning Japan's defence buildup is simply formidable except its purely defensive orientation. The full potential of it to be released depends on whether and when Japan would change its posture from defensive also to offensive.

However it is a matter only of time and decision by the Japanese people. A frank public discussion of Japan's national security concerns would probably fan Japan's latent nationalism. Ambitious politicians from Japan's three centrist political parties are likely to play to this nationalism - even though cautiously - and to the potent sympathies of the Association of War bereaved families, one of the Prime Minister Hashimoto's support groups. Till then Japan would continue to strike a delicate balance between the country's constitutional obligation of opposing the resurgence of militarism and its latent desire to assert an international role commensurate with Japan's economic power, if required, also militarily.

The Make-or-Break Elections

A wide range of intellectuals and secularist forces in India seem to believe that Hinduvta will mean the collapse of India as one federal entity. Officially this is why a seemingly reluctant Sonia Gandhi was virtually compelled to enter the fray to shore up a teetering Congress.

ASISEEIT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

OR Hindu nationalists ranging from spacedout RSS leader Bal Thackeray to the more L human face of BJP's PM nominee Atal Behari Vajpayee, these elections are a make-orbreak scenario to take the veil off secularism and get acceptance from the world for their extreme right wing colours. Confronting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) juggernaut are a collection of disparate regional parties misnamed as the United Front (UF) and the once-mighty Congress, brought to its knees by internal feuding and in-fighting. Analysts earlier had pointed to an easy BJP walkover, by election day it had become a three-way horse race, a resurgent Congress brought back to life by Rajiv Gandhi s widow Sonia, rapidly closing the electoral gap, albeit most of it at the expense of the UF but poised to garner enough seats to deny BJP a chance to form the Central Government. For BJP, which had run a sophisticated sleight-of-the-hand campaign by seemingly deviating from its Hinduvta ideology (one people, one nation, one culture) to woo regional parties on one hand and the large Muslim bloc on the other, failure to acquire power may have unfortunate consequences, including possible disintegration. Laloo Prasad Yadav's alienation in Bihar and formation of another UF-clone alliance will severely cut UF seats in Parliament. Predictions were 240 seats for BJP in Parliament, almost 50 more than the last elections. Sonia Gandhi may drastically reduce BJP's original estimate to less than 215.

Given the disparate nature of the religious, sects, ethnicity communities, etc secessionist movements based on religion (Kashmir, Punjab, etc) and ethnicity (Gorkhaland, Bodoland, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam, Tripura, etc)

have proliferated. As the fabric holding the tenuous society together, secularism is being dumped by Hinduism's upper class for the m ore potent rightist ideology of Hinduvta to try

and inculcate a national spirit. Prior to the appearance of Muslims (1500 years ago) and Christians (500 years ago) to rule in succession. India was one homogenous Hindu nation with a fairly large Buddhist community. In their frustration at the never-ending problems, even people opposed to religious-based nationalism have turned to Hinduvta believing that solutions can be found by gingerly embracing nationalism. On the mass level this concept has been fairly successful, at the intellectual level secularism has still got moral force to sustain it While anything which negates equality can be said to be regressive and backward, there is a concerted effort to give it a more humane face from the intellectual plane down to the masses. Since such a premise of unequal status militates against every concept of democracy, the Hinduvta movement has no real political thought among its available literature. Intellectual mobilization is non-existent and as such the movement is sparsely served in this

One cannot have a cultural and/or political movement without an intellectual base to back up its pretensions. Lacking this, considerable money and effort is being made to make Hinduvta's past and future bright, at least in intellectual terms, appealing to the masses desperate for change in their economic lives and who are finding a new spirit in Indian nationalism. Very cleverly BJP has stoked the ambitions of the youth to mesh with the frustrations of the old, using disaffection among the electorate against long ruling Congress Party and other mainline politicians, the years of misrule having shown them up to be bankrupt of fresh ideas, vision and/or hope. For the Muslims, who have been scarred by decades of brutal behaviour by Hindu nationalism and who are well aware that it was BJP's initiative that led to the destruction of the Babri mosque, the failure of the then ruling Congress to stop the sacrilege has been cleverly exploited by the BJP. Fear of retaliation and subjugation if they did not come into the BJP fold is acting as a negative incentive for the Muslims.

Realizing that they had reached a plateau of sorts that would always give them a majority vote but would not allow them worm a government in the Centre even in a coalition, BJP, the political wing of the secretive and militant RSS, seriously started courting the regional and minority vote against the grain of their stated ideology. They set up commensurate alliances in the North-West, in the East and in the South, looking particularly to the Muslim bloc as the great swing vote. This is nothing but blatant

hypocrisy, a clear-cut politics of convenience that could backfire and is already unraveling. The party faithfuls, rank and file, are more blunt about treating the Muslims as serfs and have militated against this clear deviation from their so-called beliefs and principles. With an inclination to compromise their way to power in bringing known criminals among the legislators into the cabinet in alliances for their government formation in Uttar Pradesh (UP), BJP made a mockery of their assertions that they would never ever sacrifice principles for power. This expediency because of a taste for power has made them vulnerable. A cold blooded view recognizes that BJP represents a divisive rather than an unifying force. Unifying a broad section of Central India BJP leaves the rest in tatters. In essence BJP may act as a catalyst to the eventual break-up of India into four separate identities. A wide range of intellectuals and secularist forces in India seem to believe that Hinduvta will mean the collapse of India as one federal entity. Officially this is why a seemingly reluctant Sonia Gandhi was virtually compelled to enter the fray to shore up a teetering Congress.

The Sonia Gandhi factor was not expected to cause much of a flutter given the initial BJP lead as well as the Congress apathy but the Nehru charisma is something else and as South Asia knows, we believe in generational politics. Moreover, in South Asia, widows and daughters of dead Presidents/PMs seem to have special place of appeal to the electorate, e.g. Sirimavo Bandernaike, Chandrika Kumaratunga, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Khaleda Zia and Hasina Wajed. Instead of her Italian lineage becoming a handicap as the BJP had hoped when it attacked her on this count as a "foreigner", it was counter-

productive crowdpuller. In the eastern culture a girl is believed to be adopted by the husband's family. In their panic the BJP resorted to overkill and thus messed up in its attempts to cou-

nter the Sonia Gandhi factor, giving the minorities and regional voters a reason to rally around the Congress, something which they were finding it almost impossible to do under the present Congress President Sita Ram Kesri, a superb wheeler-dealer behind the scenes but no ball of fire as a charismatic leader in the South Asia mold. And why has Sonia Gandhi entered the cauldron? On Rajiv's death, her children Rahul and Priyanka were still young, too early to enter politics. She gambled that Congress would survive as an entity till they came of age and made their own decision to join politics or otherwise.

The prospect of being shut out by a BJP victory and a revival of the Bofors scandal galvanized her into action. Earlier she state-managed the downfall of the UF Government from behind the scenes through Sitaram Kesri in order to keep wraps on the Bofors issue. To keep it a closed matter she must ensure BJP remains out of power by emerging as a king-maker for the Coalition that comes to power.

The Sonia Gandhi factor is likely to raise Congress from its estimated count in the 130s to maybe about 180, the increases coming mostly at the cost of the United Front, significantly also some projected BJP seats. As the party getting the third place in number of seats the last time around, Congress felt compelled to support UF from outside the government, as the second largest majority they should be able to convince the UF to form a coalition government with them or give it the same support they did for the UF the last time around. BJP may be given first crack at forming the government, it is also apparent that the Congress and the UF, whatever their differences, would never allow a BJP government over their combined majority. Bihar's Laloo Prasad Yadav remains a wild card, what he does with his projected 20-25 bloc of seats may tilt the balance in BJP's favour. Pakistan would be much happier with a BJP Government, at least we would know where we stand with

Furthermore, after years of Muslims being labeled as fanatics, it would be interesting to see how the west copes with Hinduism's class-ridden viciously parochial society where human beings are not considered equal, in fact a vast majority of men and women are considered untouchable As individuals or in coalition, Congress and/or the UF victory will mean more of what Pakistan has faced for the past 50 years. A BJP Government would show the Hinduvta movement for the extremists that they are and take the camouflage off the face of rabid nationalism based on religious obduracy of the most blatant kind.

Never Call a Spade, a Spade....

Colour barriers, prejudice, discrimination and racism are all a big deal. For one thing, many of us know so little about it that we have no idea how to confront it.

We, ourselves, may be helping to perpetuate a value system which in the end, discriminates against us.

the first I've heard that spade is a word like nigger, an abusive term for blacks... "Shut up," the black guy said to me. I beg your pardon..?

"Why don't we just drop it, let's get some coffee," my newly acquired black woman friend said brightly, kicking me under the table again, and pulling at my arm to go get some coffee. I rose after her, feeling like a smelly burp rolling off a surprised tongue. Later, when I realised that the black woman had saved me from a confrontation with a key member of the black student faculty, I thanked her profusely. She, in turn, proceeded to show me a scar on her right arm where she had been knifed by a gang of white youths in the UK when she was only 14 years old. I had no idea people hated blacks so much, I told her. I like black people. "Do you," she said quietly. Of course I do. I'm not prejudiced or anything. I have an open mind about everyone. We have to judge people by their actions, not by the colour of their skin, I pronounced piously. "Would you marry a black guy?" she asked, flatly. What. Sorry. What was your question....? Didn't quite understand it. Marriage is a personal choice, it's such a gamble anyway, ha, ha, so who knows anything about that, I laughed, very

"You're no different," she

snapped. Thereafter, she

nervously.

year. But the student was forced to break off his engagement because his family, especially his mother, was violently opposed to having a black daughter-inlaw. Big deal, you might say. So what. What difference does it make to us, here, in Bangladesh, if a black girl got knifed by white youths in the UK. If a South Asian guy won't

avoided me. I discovered, even-

tually, that she had been en-

sub-continent, a South Asian-

Canadian student, for almost a

gaged to a young man from the

she can only be lovely if she is fair. That colour is everything. Beauty is skin deep, after all. discrimination and racism are

Colour barriers, prejudice, all a big deal. For one thing, many of us know so little about it that we have no idea how to confront it. "You have an interesting accent," said my white, North American boss to me soon after he had employed me. I had no idea what he meant, of course. Only later did I learn that "interesting" in the broadcast world is a polite term for

Coming Home . . . Almas Zakiuddin

marry a black woman in North "foreign". But "foreign" as opposed to what; what is the America? If black people have "norm"; and why is it the norm. to cope with racism, wherever. I never asked, and he never ex-Not our problem. If you've watched the advertisement for a plained. I managed to get plenty product called "Fair & Lovely" of work, but as an "ethnic" on television, you may find an journalist, all the same. There answer to these questions. are a host of subtle and unsubtle ways in which racism manidon't know about you, but every time I watch that ad I wonder fests itself. For instance, only what it must be like for people white races are seen to belong in who are not fair. If I had a a real or "natural" sense to the daughter who had dark skin, I western world: this not only would worry about the subtle leaves native North Americans message which ads like this unaccounted for, but also igmight be sending to her: that nores the undeniably Semitic

non-white tradition. Among white people, marriage (or its absence) are both seen as the "norm", not as manifestations of cultural or traditional pref-

erence. Violence, too, especially violence against women, is seen as an attribute of select, usually non-white cultures. Patriarchy, patrimonialism, child labour (abuse?) are regarded as inherently non-white in origin and expression. (This, in spite of the reality that in the countries of the west, child abuse has been proven to be a predominantly white, middle-class, male crime; serial killers, likewise, are by far and large male and white; and native North Americans are among the most abused and exploited people in history.)

and African heritage of Euro-

pean civilisation. Furthermore,

it reduces all non-white people

such as you and I to the status of

potential and perpetual immi-

grants. Similarly, only non-

white people are regarded to be

"ethnic" in any way - in their

customs, dress, food, beliefs or

even activities. Marriage, for

instance, is seen as a deeply

significant cultural rite in the

"I wonder," said this white colleague of mine to me once, "whether you had an arranged marriage — don't all you women have arranged marriages in Bangladesh?" No, I replied. I did not have an arranged marriage. "Really. Did you date before you

were married .. ?" No. Not officially. I used to sneak out with my flance, once in a while, with friends acting as official chaperones. "So you did have an arranged marriage. You poor thing!" Wait. Hold on. I am not a poor thing, you don't understand... "I do, please don't think I don't understand. Why do people treat women so badly in your country. I mean, that poor woman, that poet who had to run away. Women get burnt alive all the time, I see it on the news. Dowry deaths they call them. By the way, do you have to wear the hijab in Bangladesh? And then there's Salman Rushdie, too. It's really too bad, isn't it!" What is also too bad, (apart from the built-in racism which frames the terms of reference for so many people in the west) is that we, ourselves, ignore racism and how we have internalised popular myths about blacks, about nonwhites and about whites. We, ourselves, may be helping to perpetuate a value system which in the end, discriminates against us. Systemic racism is a subtle, built-in, seemingly neutral yet fundamentally discriminatory value system which ascribes sole merit to the ideals and practices of the Judeo-Christian civilisation, together with the assumption that the sole practitioners of these so called ideals are the white races of the western world. What should you and I do, therefore...?

Share our views about racism, I guess; talk about it; bring it out into the open. Refuse to believe in fair and lovely myths. And never use that phrase about a spade being a spade, ever again.

to explain to him that I did not mean to use the word nigger in a derogatory way, any more than I meant to use that harmless phrase, let's call a spade a spade, in a derogatory way. Honestly, I had no idea it was offensive to blacks. I know nigger is an awful word, but this is