



AMR News

HISTORY AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA AGAIN

Almost a year to the day that AMR held its *Horrid History* Forum (4 February 2006), the nature of History teaching in UK schools rose to the top of the ministerial, educational and news agendas.

Firstly, Radio 4's *'Today'* programme initiated a debate on the teaching of History when, like Professor Simon Schama had done the year before, St Andrew's University's Dr. Alex Woolf questioned the content of the History Curriculum used in state secondary schools. A lively debate followed to which AMR contributed on what History was relevant to multi-cultural Britain. The radio 4 programme's message board had hundreds of comments left on it by people concerned that the History curriculum did not adequately reflect the needs or interests of British children or indeed society.

Also, AMR was contacted when news emerged in *The Times Education Supplement* that the Qualification and Curriculum Authority were shelving plans to bring out a history unit for Key Stage 3 students on the *Israel-Palestine* question. The unit on Palestine had been part of a group of three units that included the history of post-war *Germany* and also *Gandhi*. The units on *Gandhi* and *Germany* were published, but it was alleged by *The TES* that the unit on Palestine was shelved due to concerns about 'extremism'. The QCA denied that this was the case and said that the unit on Palestine would be published once other priorities, specifically the new A level syllabus, had been published. An AMR spokes-person was interviewed by *Islam Channel TV* and Tariq Wilkinson, the main speaker at AMR's Forum meeting, contributed with a comment to *The TES*.

These developments come in the wake of concern that seven out of ten school children have given up studying History by the age of 14. The figures were revealed by Paul Armitage, History Adviser for the education standards watchdog Ofsted, who questioned whether the History lessons on offer were sufficiently relevant to pupils. These revelation place a question mark over whether ministers can deliver their pledge to place more emphasis on "Britishness" in the curriculum and teach the cultural history of the UK through history lessons. A public consultation began on February 5 about the final draft syllabus for 11-to-14 year-olds. There has also been a debate in the Asian press about the importance of teaching about the Empire and its impact.

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AMR News

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NEW PRESIDENT ASSUMES OFFICE

M o h a m m e d Dhalech assumed the leadership of AMR when he became its fifth President on 4th February at AMR's AGC meeting held in central London. He had been elected at the AGM held in August 2006.

At the meeting, Hajira Qureshi was also unanimously elected Trustee and will gradually assume the role of Treasurer from Tippu Sheriff who along with former President, Hashim Reza, stood down at the meeting.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for Mohammed to brief colleagues on the re-

search he had done on the options related to the Reunion (see below). The meeting heard that Llangollen in N Wales, offers access to excellent adventure activities and will allow for an expansion in the numbers who can attend. A planning meeting for the youngsters involved in organising the event, could be held at the venue.

The meeting also agreed that the AMR website should be overhauled and that AMR work with the Save Chechnya Campaign to hold a Forum on the Chechnya issue (Diary for details).

OPEN COUNTRY

Black Environment Network (BEN) is developing an exciting UK-wide project that you may wish to be involved in, called the Rainbow Countryside Scheme.

The main aim of the project is to introduce ethnic groups to countryside sites by setting higher standards.

However in order for it to succeed it is also building in training and developmental support for organisations with natural environment sites and activities in the countryside to enable them to gain the knowledge and skills to work effectively with ethnic

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BIGGER AND BETTER REUNION

Llangollen is an ancient market town situated on the banks of the beautiful River Dee under the watchful gaze of Dinas Bran Castle.

It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in North Wales, thanks in part to the Victorians who started coming to enjoy the majestic landscapes and clean air.

'I know no place in North Wales where the refined lover of the picturesque scenes, the sentimental or romantic, can give a fuller indulgence to his inclination,' said Thomas Pennant, in

the *'Pennants' Tour of Wales'*, 1778. Home to the International Musical Eisteddfod, history is everywhere, from the Iron Age and the original Dinas Bran Castle through to the Dark Ages and the legendary King Arthur. And now a new distinction: it is to be the venue for AMR's next Reunion. The venue was selected for its location, facilities and accommodation. Although it will be a little more expensive than The Wilderness Centre, has been, it is a much larger venue (so yes, your friends and rela-

tions can come this time) and it will be fully catered, so though we may lose out on the innovative cooking flare of participants, this facility will ensure there are no problems caused by people not fulfilling their duties and time-keeping should be improved with meals being served at set times and no other.

Precise details of costs and deadlines will be provided in due course. In the meantime, an indication of cost and activities available is on p7 and a view of the hostel that we will be staying at is on p8.

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NIQAB - A DEFENCE AGAINST INTRUSIVE SURVEILLANCE?

by Shoaib Qureshi

I'm starting to think that underlying the wearing of **niqab**, there is some sort of psychological statement. It's not merely to do with Islamic compliance - I think this is providing the justification for what these women deep down are wanting to express.

I'm also wondering whether there is a connection with widespread use of internet and non-face to face communication? Many people seem to love the anonymity and some sort of "safety" associated with the internet. Of course hiding your identity can be abused as well. This is the case on the internet, as well as alleged incidents of men disguised as women. Today on the radio concern was being expressed about the governments intentions to create a national interconnected database with all our personal details, to make it more convenient for service providers to deal with us. But do you really want the tax man to be able to see your medical records?

The hardware infrastructure already exists to run the big brother society. Surveillance cameras are now widespread. They are right now working on the systems to process the millions of items of data that will be generated on an hourly basis so that they can automate the job of tracking the footprints of whoever they choose, and who ever the machine chooses to be of interest. The next generation of mobile phone will have GPS as standard. Network providers will probably be forced to introduce a facility so that law enforcement can request that phones be trackable.

Youngsters have emerged with hoods, allegedly to hide their faces from surveillance as well. Hiding your appearance is assumed to have criminal connotations. Some of these youngsters are engaged in petty crime as well. However, we hear that they are not all bad. Indeed the expression "hug a hoody" has now been coined to tackle our prejudices - it also implies some sort of recognition that this is a statement too. Perhaps hoodies don't feel they are fully part of society, but more importantly, they don't want to be part of this intrusive manipulative society.

Hiding the identity is also linked with many positive role models as well - like Batman and Robin. But also security agencies want their operatives to be unknown. So, their enemies can't track them down, and they can keep the element of surprise. Interestingly security agencies grant themselves extreme exemptions from exposing who they really are. Perhaps they should now talk about the security **burkha** instead of the veil of security.

Now we are living in a society where marketing via integrated Geographical Information Systems linked no doubt with surveillance cameras may soon be automatically tracking your movements. Imagine cameras that look at what sort of clothes you wear, then automatically pop-up electronic adverts in your path, for where you can buy something like it. It is all about subtle forms of control based on intelligence gathering. You see the Big Brother society doesn't have to be overt. As consumers get

IN ANTICIPATION OF A FORUM ON A SIGNIFICANT BUT NEGLECTED MUSLIM CAUSE, HAJIRA QURESHI ASKS US TO REMEMBER CHECHNYA

Every year on February 23 the Chechens, and people of faith and no-faith mark the anniversary of the Day of the Chechen-Ingush deportations as World Chechnya Day.

On this day, 63 years ago, Josef Stalin ordered the mass deportation of the entire Chechen and Ingush population. This resulted in the death of over half the population. Today the genocide, rape, killing, kidnapping, plunder and theft continue unchecked and with impunity, in an attempt to force the population into submission.

The Chechens and their friends commemorate World Chechnya Day to remember those who died and to honour those still living and their struggle.

Today the second Chechen war is still raging. A quarter of the population has been killed and a similar number have been displaced. Seventy percent of Chechnya has been classified as an ecological disaster area; eight children out of ten are suffering from psychological

trauma and one in three is born with congenital defects. Russian forces commit an average of 109 extrajudicial executions in Chechnya each month. Villages are purged on a regular basis, supposedly of militants. Since 2000, when Russia appointed Akhmat Kadyrov head of its administration in Chechnya, Kadyrov and his successors (today Ramzan Kadyrov, his son, is president of Chechnya) have been assisting the Red Army to suppress their fellow countrymen.

This war, the second in contemporary Chechen history, started in 1999 when Putin, the then prime minister of Russia, attacked Chechnya with the objective of squashing 'terrorism'. The pretext for war this time was Basaev's incursion into Daghestan. Russian public opinion was prepared by a series of apartment bombings in Buinaksk, Volgogradsk and Moscow that were blamed on Chechen separatists.

It is suspected that the apartment bombings were actually perpetrated by the FSB (the Russian se-

cret service). The real reason for the Russo-Chechen war can be found in the Kremlin's plans to push Putin into power and to make up for the defeat suffered by the Russians in the first war. This incursion into Chechnya was in direct violation of the formal peace agreement signed by Yeltsin and Aslan Maskhadov in May 1997, at the end of the first Chechen war, which began in 1994 with the deployment of Russian troops in Chechnya to quell the independence movement in Chechnya.

In 1994 there were almost a million Chechens living in a region slightly smaller than Wales. They had spent the 37 years from 1957, when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev allowed the Chechens to return from exile, on restoring the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, rebuilding their homes and their lives, and reclaiming their homeland from the Russians who had occupied their land while they themselves were in exile. The Chechens had spent 15 years in exile (in the Central Asian states and Siberia) where no provision had been made for them and where they

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faced starvation, disease, hard manual labour, and hostility from the locals.

On Wednesday 23 February 1944, while the rest of Russia celebrated Defenders of the Fatherland Day, Stalin ordered the Red Army, encamped in the mountainous regions of Chechnya and enjoying the hospitality of the indigenous Chechens, to round up the entire Chechen and Ingush populations, numbering 478,000, and cram them into airless freight trucks for transportation to the dry plains of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Siberian taiga.

Children, women with babies, the elderly and anyone else who was deemed not worth the trouble of transporting in the Studebaker trucks, were

summarily executed. One such case was the town of Khaibakh, with a population of 700. It was burnt to the ground, populace and all. The accusation was mass collaboration with the Nazis. There has never been any proof of this and the charge was dropped in 1957, when the Chechens were allowed to return from exile. In fact many of the leading officers in the Russian Army were Chechen. It is estimated that at least half of the deportees died in the trains and the subsequent exile. And so February 23 is commemorated in many parts of the world as the Day of Deportation or World Chechnya Day.

This year Russia's efforts to silence any outcry on behalf of the Chechens have become obvious to all

who dare to look, see and understand. This year, along with the remembrance of the deportees and the Chechens barely living today, Anna Politkovskaya will also



remembered as the often solitary witness to Putin's ruthless war on the Chechens. *Insha'Allah*, we pray that the poisoning-death of Alexander Litvinenko (a revert to Islam) will not be vain. He joins the ranks of many Chechen martyrs before him.

Details of events held marking the anniversary of the Day of Deportations by friends the world over and other information, including how to get involved, can be found at www.worldchechnyaday.org



**HAVE
YOU
RENEWED?**

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more sophisticated at recognizing marketing tricks, marketeers have to get better armed to deal with clever consumers. They do this by getting more understanding of the individual. NLP (Neuro-Linguistic-Programming) is very popular now. Part of this is about reading body language. We are told 70% of communication is via body language. People are obsessed with wanting to control other people - or may be they just want control over their own lives.

I've just read that the government is proposing a scheme to charge road tax according to usage. You will have a tracking device fitted to your car, so they always know where you are. Possibly how fast you have been travelling as well, so you can get a speeding ticket with your monthly bill. The prime-minister and others talk of globalisation, by which they mean the plan to spread capitalism unhindered throughout the world. Recently a Muslim professor from Bangladesh was rewarded with a Nobel prize. His contribution was the Grameen bank, as system for bringing in the poorest into the clutches of the banking system where previously they were isolated. The reason was that conventional banks don't loan to very poor people with no assets. They wanted to find a way to get poor people to partake of *AMR News*

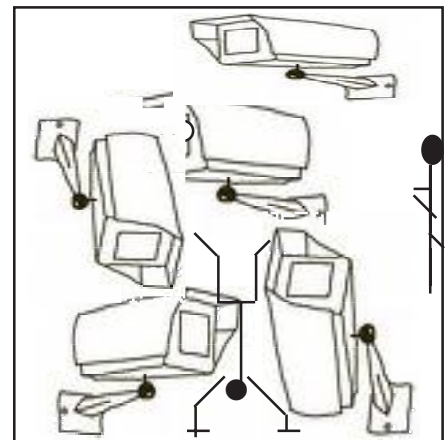
this system. So, there is no escape, for all the talk of Islamic banking it is just a side show. A tradition of the Prophet in which it is said that a time would come when **riba** (un-earned income on money) would be so prevalent that those that tried to avoid it would be overcome by its fumes.

At work the offices are becoming increasingly open plan with low walled cubicles - I heard a director comment once that he liked it because it reminded him of a production line. This is inspite of all the studies that indicate that working with constant interruption is inefficient. But now you have to be multi-tasking as well. I think it's just juggling - a juggler is just an actor.

This makes people very busy but do they have time to contemplate what they should be achieving? The freed slave Frederick Douglas said that to keep slaves under control you had to keep them busy. It might make them miserable, but they would cause trouble if they were given time to think! In hospitals they have mixed sex wards, and I've even heard that there is such a thing as mixed changing rooms. What happened to personal space?

I could go on and on in this vein. But perhaps the **niqab**, does symbol-

ise something in an invasive society, where unrestrained global capitalism, no holds barred, wants everyone ensnared. It uses obvious methods and subtle ones. Making everyone into a little marketing consumer unit. In a time where there is still starvation and poverty in the world and the gap between rich and poor is widening not narrowing. Maybe in this situation the "mask" does have a meaning. In an era of identity theft it means "you won't steal my identity". It means you don't know who I am so you can't trick me into buying something I don't want. It means my space remains private space. Where the smell of **riba** is everywhere. It is a "mark of separation" and a face mask to protect against a terrible odour. The odour of spiritual decay of humanity - gradually being robbed of its soul by the bonds of the new automated financial slavery. How about **niqabs** for men next? With turbans of course - like the Tuoreg?



March 2007



AMR members have been invited to consider taking part in an "**Imams Vs Vicars**" sports challenge, or indeed to suggest a team or individuals who would be interested in such a challenge.

Dr. Chris Hewer, Research Fellow at St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, invited participation in such an event following the formation of a Church Clergy Cricket Team. There have been football and cricket matches between Muslim and Christian religious leaders in Leicester in both soccer and cricket.

Dr. Hewer said, "The clergy in London have is-

sued a challenge to see if there would be any interest amongst Muslims in London to get together an "**Imams**" team to take them on at cricket (I think that the term "**imam**" is capable of very wide interpretation as there are no "clergy" in Islam!)."

If someone knows of a team or has an interest in the idea and could take on organising putting together a team for the event, they can get in touch with Chris. (It has also been suggested that female sporty-types might also like to have their own friendly spar!). Further information from Chris on: hewerchris@hotmail.com

Open Country cont from p2/

groups. Environmental sites that achieve a good standard will be awarded the BEN Rainbow Site Kitemark. Over the years, BEN has taken ethnic groups to wonderful places such as National Parks where they can simply walk, have a picnic with their families and relax, or do a whole range of interesting activities like canoeing, photography, cycling, camping, making lanterns or living willow sculptures. Urban groups with stressful lives felt it made a big difference to their quality of life as the enjoyment of beautiful places and physical activities improved health and well-being.

Groups involved in volunteering and other educational activities discovered that the new skills they learnt while enjoying themselves, like team work or video making, helped to build the strength of the group.

by Mohammed Dhalech

Women's Dialogue

The third Women's Dialogue took place on 10th March at St. Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. The event was part of the Islam in the West season. Around 40 women participated and very interesting discussions ensued. The theme for the dialogue was the role of women of faith in civil society and dealing with the threat to civil liberties.

March 2007

REUNION COSTS

AMR is trying to secure a grant which will help to subsidise the cost of the next Reunion. It is hoped that if such a grant is obtained, it could be used to assist the participation of those who find the cost a barrier.

Hajira Qureshi attempted to get a grant from Community Champions, a scheme which supports young people's activities, unfortunately this was not successful. Other sources are also being investigated.

Without subsidy, the fees for participation in the Reunion (full board) would be as follows:

Members: £80

Non-Members: £90

Activities available range from the usual ones members have been used to enjoying, to exciting new ones such as coast-dipping (variation on gorge walking which takes place on the coast-line). The selection of what activities is yet to be made by our young organisers' panel. Any comments on the programme and activities will be welcomed.

Members, particularly the younger members, are welcome to join the Reunion Forum. Details can be obtained by contacting us at AMR.



Llangollen Youth Hostel, Dee Valley, North Wales



Dates For Your Diary

Sunday April 8 Social Gathering, 1 pm. Picnic in the park. Gathering at Battersea Park from 1pm (Gather near the Old English Garden) Albert Gate entrance.

Saturday April 18 Forum on Chechnya Talk by Tony Wood (author, Chechnya: The case for independence) and Satanya Doran, (Medical Aid and Relief). Details tbc.

Friday 24th-Monday 27th August Bank Holiday weekend Annual Reunion. Details to be confirmed.

GOVERNING COUNCIL:

Hashim Reza, Mohammad Dhalech, Farzin Deravi, Usama Hasan, Tippu Sheriff, Mohammad Tabarra, Hajira Qureshi.

CONSULTANTS:

Imtiaz K Ahmad, Sameera T Ahmed, Mohammad Tabarra

OTHER OFFICERS:

Sarah Sheriff (Executive Administrator)

“Recommended Site-Seeing”

AMR’s Turkish-Irish IT expert, Seref O’Holik, cherry-picks some of the most interesting websites he has recently visited:

☞ Teaching the truth about history, Eastern Eye article
http://www.easterneyeuk.co.uk/frame_story.asp?NID=4509

☞ Llangollen district
www.llangollen.co.uk

☞ Site celebrating Muslim science heritage.
<http://www.muslimheritage.com/>
www.1001inventions.com

☞ Understanding the moon sighting / calculation and astronomy
www.amperspective.com

☞ Results of qualitative research into the impact of the terror legislation on communities:
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/position/2007/prisoners_terrorism