

## A Snapshot Of European Sentiment

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As Europeans try to come to terms with decades of Islamic immigration, failed integration, and the resulting convulsions of a bicultural society, change and adaptation can be seen everywhere. A brief survey of European media from the end of February gives a snapshot of various segments of the native European culture.

In Paris, the fashion world is preparing for a season that is "as somber as it is certain. It is going to be a long dark winter." Writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, Suzy Menkes ("The New Sobriety: Covering Up the Body", February 28, 2006) details the bizarre shift in fashion toward a "great coverup":

The mood is now for a chaste sobriety, with sturdy fabrics, thick leggings and even ankle-length hemlines. The world's leading designers have no doubts as to where fashion is headed as they talk about "restraint" and "sobriety." "I think 'modesty' is a beautiful word today—and a beautiful attitude," says Lanvin's Alber Elbaz, who has built his career on designing dresses with a respectful attitude to women.

On the surface, this appears to be great news for those concerned about morality and the last decade of "free-fall hipster pants, bared midriffs, [and] bras on show under sheer dresses." However, this shift in fashion appears to be a distressing reflection of the changing culture. As one designer put it, "If you read the daily papers, you are not in the mood for pink and green."

What is the source of this shift? Not a sudden interest in decency, but the acceptance and even promotion of the culture pushing at Europe:

But among themselves, thoughtful designers are putting the change of mood into a different context, as they talk about the "Muslim-ization" of fashion. They are referring both to drawing, deliberately or unconsciously, on a culture of female sobriety. In a world clearly in turmoil, cocooning clothes are a response.

It is surely not mere coincidence that the designers are producing clothing that is dark in color and goes to great lengths to cover, rather than to reveal—a motif similar to the Muslim burka.

On the same day, the *New York Times*—owner of the *International Herald Tribune*—ran a story about a new Parisian trend. Craig Smith, in the article "In France, a Meal of Intolerance," chronicles a grassroots, public demonstration aimed at offending those cultures that are becoming less welcome each day. The demonstration consists of publicly eating "pig soup"—a forbidden activity because of the "risks to public order and incitement to racial hatred." The movement actually dates back several years, beginning when a small French-nationalist movement known as the "Identity Bloc" started serving hot soup—now known as "identity soup"—to the nation's homeless.

At first . . . the group used pork simply because it was an inexpensive traditional ingredient for hearty French soup. But as the political significance of serving pork dawned on them and others, it quickly became the focus of their work. Made with

smoked bacon, and with pigs' ears, feet and tails, together with vegetables and sausages, the soup is meant to make a political statement: "Help our own before others."

The "others" . . . are non-European immigrants who . . . are sopping up scarce resources that ought to be used for descendants of the Continent's original inhabitants. In other words, the soup is meant to exclude those who do not eat pork—for the most part, Muslims and Jews.

While they are not exactly erecting barricades in the streets yet, those who are fed up with Islamists and Jews are more than willing to engage in bits of civil disobedience and "public disturbance" to make their views known.

The day before these stories were published, the *EU Observer* in Brussels reported that "EU foreign ministers . . . changed the wording of a statement on the Danish cartoon row at the insistence of Dutch foreign minister Bernard Bot, who wanted to avoid the suggestion of an EU apology towards the Muslim world" (Mark Beunderman, "Foreign Ministers Wrangle Over Cartoon Row Text"). For several weeks, the EU Council had worked on drafting a "statement" to express a unified view of the cartoon uproar.

The text in question? "The [EU] council acknowledges and regrets that these cartoons *caused offence* [sic] to Muslims across the world" was changed to "The [EU] council acknowledges and regrets that these cartoons *were considered offensive and distressing* by Muslims across the world" (emphasis ours). While some observers were encouraged that "freedom of speech has remained upright" and that no formal apology was made, critics of the Brussels bureaucracy point to this as a sublime example of why Europe is in its present condition: politicians disputing about words while cities burn around them—literally, in some cases.

Together, these vignettes expose a continent that is badly divided and deeply concerned about the trivial. While there seems to be a whiff of resistance in the air to the ongoing cultural incursion, there is still no clear leadership to pull Europe out of the mire in which she finds herself.