

For all countries of the world Sweden has been best known for its tolerance of immigration and its generous welfare programs. For the first time in its history, however, the country is expected to elect members of an anti-immigration party. In doing so Sweden is mirroring a clear trend in Western countries which have been host to large scale human inflows from Third World countries.

The party on the rise is known as the Sweden Democrats. It is running a vigorous publicity campaign in the run up to the elections pledging to cut down immigration by as far as 90 per cent. The party's political broadcasts are airing programmes dramatising the damage that immigrant ethnic persons allegedly do to Swedish society. Note the following report of the image of a political broadcast:

"An elderly Swedish woman clasps her walking frame and advances unsteadily towards the welfare payments desk.

She glances anxiously to one side as a group of women dressed in burqas and wheeling prams rushes forward to beat her to the desk.

This scene, taken from a party political broadcast, is a signal of dramatic change in Sweden. In elections overnight, the country known until now as a bastion of tolerance is expected, for the first time in its history, to elect members of an openly anti-immigrant party to parliament."

In the incident publicised the women in burqas did not fall in line with Swedish society's dominant ethos of care for the elderly and of taking one's turn in the queue. This violence to the Swedish way of life appears to be the theme of the anti-immigration campaign

As a matter of fact the collectivist egalitarian ideology for which Sweden is famous has been fading over the years. The Swiss have banned the construction of new mosques after the anti-immigrant party's referendum campaign that fea-

allowing authorities to fine and imprison illegal immigrants and to punish people who provide them with shelter.

In Austria, the far Right is on the rise and in Britain the British National Party, although badly beaten in the May general election, has gained a degree of respectability and is drawing support from Labour voters.

It is no secret that the leaders of the two main parties in Australia had been sensitive about immigration issues in their recently

entering the country.

As a dramatic illustration take the controversial burka. To Westerners this dress is plainly offensive. It is a violation of human rights. Also in the event of things like law enforcement, or interviewing for jobs it is considered very important to be able to have a clear vision of the countenance of the person being interviewed. On the other hand Muslim Sharia Law states that the exposure of the woman's body is provocative to men and would lead to temptation. The Westerner would say differently: Why should not the woman show up her attractiveness? Has she no right to do that? What about men? Why not apply a similar restriction to the latter? Isn't this practice a form of gender discrimination? The Western argument will flow in that direction.

Some time back we had reports of Muslim leaders in Sydney who were demanding that Sharia Law be applied to Muslims in Australia so that there will be actually two forms of legal systems. Now this kind of demand naturally gives rise to severe apprehension on the part of Australians and Muslims cannot, therefore blame the latter for that. The campaigns for construction of Mosques have also been aggressive in some instances. Immigrant communities must not bow beat

their way through without caring a damn for long domesticated Australians. In general terms it is important that immigrant communities should integrate into the mainstream Australian community instead of preferring a self-contained ghetto type living. The melting pot of fusion of cultures would in the end be a better result for Australia than narrow multiculturalism.



WESTERN CLOUDS OVER IMMIGRATION



Shyamon Jayasinghe

tured posters showing women in burqas next to minaret-like minarets.

The specific target group of the anti-immigration rhetoric has obviously been the Muslims. The burqua is the symbol of perceived threat to hosting societies of the West..

Similar developments are observable throughout the European Union from Belgium to Bulgaria. An unprecedented step has been taken by France - a hitherto liberal society - in banning the burqua. The burqua itself is not of a uniform design with some varieties covering more of the female body than do others. A recently conducted opinion poll has given 70 per cent support to Sarkovski for banning the offensive dress.

In Hungary, the Jobbik party - which is accused of anti-Semitism as well as being anti-Gypsy - unexpectedly won seats in parliament in the northern spring. It is the same story in Italy, where the anti-immigrant Northern League has become part of the ruling coalition of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The result is a tough new law

conducted election campaigns. Julia Gillard had pronounced that Australia has to be restricted to a "sustainable population." The meaning of that expression is clear. Leaders are compelled to tread cautiously on this issue due to increased pressure from society at large. Some years ago Pauline Hanson dramatically drew a huge following because of her strong anti-immigration campaign. She did fall from grace later but that was for different reasons. It is clear that Australia will not long be able to bear the strain of a painful immigrant presence.

In all these countries the Left is fast disappearing. Observers say it is due to their not taking a firm stand against errant immigrants.

As already suggested above the main reason for the spreading anti-immigration feeling is the insensitivity of many immigrant communities to the culture of the host country as was illustrated in the incident cited above. Invited to a meal one does not do or say things that would offend the host; one is careful to be polite. In a generalized way it is the same kind of expectation that hosting countries have about immigrant populations

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