



In the face of “fog”, science is unanimous and citizens are mobilized

Dr Bénédicte Halba, president of IRIV (www.iriv.net), May 2023

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According to Petit Robert (1990 edition), fog is “a natural phenomenon produced by extremely small drops of water that float in the air near the ground and cause intense light scattering”. The sailors feared this climatic phenomenon because they no longer knew how to orient themselves, they depended only on their compass which indicated the direction but not the possible obstacles in their path. In commerce, in the 17th century, the term was the book where we noted the operations as they were done, a kind of handout or «draft» to prepare the accounts at the end of the year. In the 19th century, the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz, a reference in the art of war, theorized the "fog" as a strategy, a blur deliberately maintained by the belligerents on their forces, positions or even objectives. For Joseph Henrotin, Research Officer at the Centre for International Risk Analysis and Forecasting, editor of the magazine “Défense & sécurité internationale”¹ “Fog is the structural condition of war. It is caused to ensure the safety of operations”. He welcomes the Ukrainian military strategy that has done wonders in this area since February 2022 in the face of the Russian attack and which is even preparing a counter-offensive in May 2023.

In France, the greatest blur, "fog," reigns over the highly sensitive issue of immigration, which loses public opinion cleverly manipulated by extremist theses. The Asylum and Immigration Law, which was to be debated in spring 2023, was finally postponed indefinitely by the government in the fall. Several texts should come to replace it. For La Cimade², an association that has been “defending the dignity and rights of refugees and migrants” for 80 years, This announcement was the only possible: in the social, political and democratic crisis we are experiencing, our society needs more than ever solidarity, cohesion, justice; certainly not more repression and stigmatization of exiles, through a bill that was carrying serious violations of rights.” The association recalls the long list of «people who died on the roads of exile» in an almost general indifference, the daily life of many migrant people in France characterized by precariousness and mistreatment, and finally the threats against the «Elected and citizen. s in favour of welcoming exiles” expressed by “extreme right-wing movements”. La Cimade continues, against all odds, to mobilize for the “regularization of all undocumented persons” and for a dignified and safe reception at our borders.

At the initiative of the association Desinfox-Migration, a collective of 400 scientists called in February 2023 for «the creation of a citizen convention on migration». They write that

¹ Cité par Cédric Pietralunga « L'Ukraine mise sur le « brouillard » pour affoler la Russie », Le Monde, 7 & 8 mai 2023

² Communiqué de presse de la Cimade- mars 2023- https://www.lacimade.org/presse/suite-aux-declarations-demmanuel-macron-la-cimade-demande-labandon-pur-et-simple-du-projet-de-loi-asile-et-immigration/?gclid=Cj0KCOjwu-KiBhCsARIsAPziUF0fWgoHQaN0QmvqJtVtq_Mqh-DumIKysA7XmkAltaU-tsjHWDq80kYaAow6EALw_wcB

it is “urgent to restore reason and democratic debate in dealing with migration issues”. They recall facts attested by all disciplines (sociology, economics, political sciences, law, history, philosophy): there is no migratory submergence, regularizations or rescues at sea have never created air calls and the «theory of replacement» is a conspiracy mystification. Yet, despite their repeated efforts, scientists find that the results of their research are ignored or worse misused in public (not contradictory) debates and political (often oriented) discourses. According to the UN, while migration is undoubtedly increasing worldwide, international migrants represent less than 4% of the world’s population in 2020. In addition, migration flows to the “global south” countries are equivalent in terms of quantity to those to developed countries.

The researchers add that France is 77th in the world for the proportion of immigrants in its population (with 10% of immigrants, some of whom are French), far behind the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, Luxembourg and Switzerland, from Canada, Australia and the USA. The authors of the forum insist on “the over-politicization” of migration and integration issues that misrepresents our representations. The general public overestimates in particular the number of foreigners in France. Encouraging sign is the tolerance index for minorities³ It tells us that prejudice has receded and tolerance for others has gained ground. The proposal of the signatories is to create a space for democratic dialogue where citizens can "make their own opinion" and express an "informed judgment" with the help of scientists. The citizen convention for the convention would be inspired by the climate convention. The authors recall that initiatives such as the International Group of Experts on Migration or the States General of Migration have laid the foundations for this democratic discussion. They suggest involving the state and the economic, social and environmental council⁴

After the November episode of the Ocean Viking, it is quite dismaying to see the exchange of bitter sweet words between the French minister of the Interior against the Italian government ⁵ who is openly hostile to asylum and immigration. Our minister does not blame his Italian counterparts for their lack of solidarity and humanity towards refugees and migrants, but the fact that their policy is not effective enough, after having made the same reproaches to his extreme right-wing political opponent. Is this a disproportionate and cynical provocation, or a political line that the Minister of the Interior is about to set up?

The «fog» is perhaps effective in Ukraine but certainly not in France and in the European Union on asylum and migration policy.

³ Established by the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights

⁴ As permitted by the organic law of 15 January 2021

⁵ Dirigé par Georgia Meloni et son parti Fratelli d’Italia