

News about a Disaster

It is eight o'clock on Monday 20th March. At least 300 people are feared to have died in a major earthquake which shook large areas of southern Italy last night. Most of the devastation has been in towns and villages outside the main cities but there has been panic in Naples too as hundreds of buildings have been destroyed. The massive rescue operation which is underway is being hampered by appalling weather conditions and a breakdown in communications.

The other headlines:

Talks are still going on in Washington in a bid to try and avert a crisis in the Middle East.

A firebomb went off in a busy shopping area in east Bombay last night killing one policeman and injuring several bystanders.

Angry teachers have voted to continue their lighting one-day strike action in Toronto as pay negotiations once more break down.

As rescue work continues in wide areas of southern Italy it is becoming increasingly more likely that the present toll of 300 dead will rise much higher. The tremors were felt all over Italy, from the French border to Sicily, but the worst damage appears to be in small towns and villages, many of them very isolated, outside Naples. Naples itself has also been badly affected. In a little village about sixty miles east of the city scores of people are thought to have died as the earthquake hit a village hospital and a local church as well as many private homes. It appears that there was an evening service going on in the church at the time.

In Naples it was the old part of the city which was worst affected -- many buildings of eight or nine storeys broke apart and collapse as the earthquake hit used around nine p.m. last night. Panic broke out in the main prison -- tear gas was used and prison officers fired machine guns into the air to try to prevent a riot. A large proportion of inhabitants spent the night in the open in the streets or squares and as smaller tremors continue more chaos has ensued as townspeople rush for the countryside, blocking roads and causing traffic jams. Telephone lines have been broken and electricity and water supplies are failing -- the fog and cold conditions are making rescue operations very difficult in some of the remoter parts of the south particularly where road conditions are not very good.

Questions:

1. What is the main news story about?
2. How many people are feared to have died in a major earthquake to southern Italy?
3. What can we learn about the massive rescue operation after the earthquake?
4. What are the casualties in the bomb attack on east Bombay?
5. What have the teachers voted to do in Toronto?
6. In which part of the country does the worst damage appear to be?
7. Which area of Naples was worst affected in earthquake?
8. Which of the following statements is NOT true about what has happened in Naples after the earthquake?

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