

## A FALSE ALARM AT POZZUOLI, ITALY

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At the beginning of December, 1971, the French press reported a panic which followed a false alarm at Pozzuoli. It was decided to undertake an inquiry on the behavior which followed this event. Because of the geological character of the region of Naples where Pozzuoli is situated and because of recent seismic events which have shaken the Mediterranean basin, it appears that a review of the observed behavior of ten years ago would still today be of some interest.

### The Situation

Pozzuoli is an agglomeration of 70,000 people situated 12 kilometers from Naples. It is subject to the phenomenon of bradyseism, a term coined by Arturo Issel to designate very slow oscillations of the soil. At Pozzuoli the earth slowly subsided between the second century B.C. and the tenth century A.D. It then rose until the 15th century after which it subsided again until 1970 at which point it started to rise again. The 24th of February, 1970, an announcement of the Ministry of Public Works reported an inversion of the bradyseism characterized by notable uplifting of the earth. Several families were evacuated as a consequence. On the third of March they decided to evacuate the Rione Terra Quarter, a decision which resulted in the spontaneous evacuation of 30 to 40,000 people. A relief plan was developed which envisioned the evacuation of the city in three days but of which the details were not made public. At the same time, 4 sirens were installed. In case of an emergency they would function in an intermittent fashion blaring six times for 20 seconds.

The population of Pozzuoli understood the general situation as well as the event of 1970 and knew that measures had been taken by the responsible authorities.

The population is in large part (69%) composed following the Italian classification of middle class, working class, lower class and housewives. That is to say individuals of a lower socio-cultural level. Furthermore, the population had the "neapolitan temperament" or according to the term of Professor Jacono, the "southern mentality" characterized by feelings of affiliation, of resignation, of futility, and of the incapacity (or the incompetence) of the authorities to handle the situation.