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An incongruous earthquake, of magnitude 5, has knocked at the door of the Le Blayais nuclear power-plant, near Bordeaux

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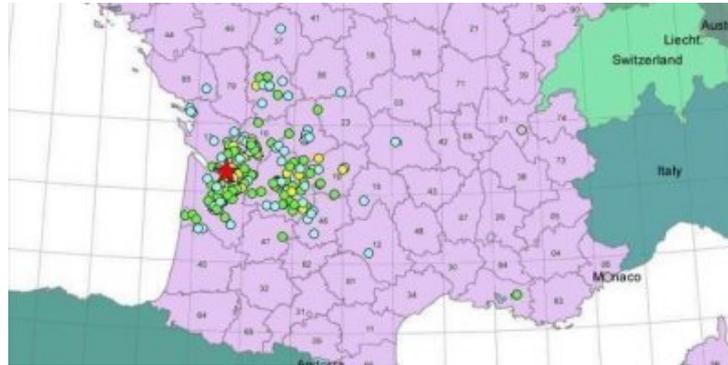
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On March 20 the newspaper Sud-Ouest devoted several articles to the quake that jolted the region that morning. They merit close attention.

At 11.07 the front page was headed by the article "[Tremblement de terre de magnitude 4,9 dans le Sud-Ouest](#)" - "Magnitude 4.9 quake in the South-West," an article updated at 3pm: There was a map:



The text said:

« L'epicentre was on the border of the Gironde, Charente and Charente-Maritime districts.

« A magnitude 4.9 quake occurred at that point on Wednesday morning at 10.56.

« Initially detected 33km from Coutras, it was then confirmed by an analyst that the National Seismic Surveillance Network, who pinpointed it at 34 km from Pauillac, 32km from Blaye, 24km from Barbezieux, 18km from Jonzac, 5 km from Montendre, and 33 km from La Roche-Chalais. At first estimated at 10km deep, it was later declared to be only 6km deep. The building of the newspaper Sud-Ouest, on the right bank of the Gironde, shook for several seconds, to general surprise.

"Relatively exceptional" in this zone

"According to maps at the Ministry of the Environment, the Gironde region is a low-risk zone, while some parts of the Charente-Maritime and the Charente stand at moderate risk.»

4.9 corresponds to the first estimate of the [Bureau central sismologique français \(BCSF\)](#). But at 12.01 the Laboratoire de Détection et de Géophysique (LDG) published its bulletin N° 266, stating the Magnitude as 5 on the Richter scale. This agency is not known for exaggerating risks.



So, 4.9 or 5 ?

In absolute terms the difference is tiny. But not in terms of psychological perception. And 5 happens to be the level above which a quake starts to be serious, rare and potentially destructive.

Another article proves this. [Carte. Où sont situées les zones sismiques en France ?](#) It shows a map of France's seismic zones.

« Some 600 quakes occur in France every year, but people feel only 10-15 and **it is rare for their magnitude to reach or exceed 5** » (our emphasis)

« Since 1967, says the BRGM, metropolitan France felt only a dozen above 5. The last one (5.2) was in the Alps in 2014. Another was in Corsica in 2011. The last lethal one, above 5, was in the Pyrenees in 1967, causing one death, several injuries and destroying 340 houses."

A third article was entitled: [Séisme : "Un événement exceptionnel" dans cette zone du Sud-Ouest, "le premier depuis 1759](#) » - Quake "exceptional in the South-West, the first since 1759."

It quotes the seismologist Jérôme Vergne, who declares:

« Wednesday's quake was probably due to a rupture of old fault-lines created millions of years ago (...) It is relatively exceptional, not so much for its intensity (frequent around the world and occurring in France every 3-4 years) but for its location."

Some hours later, the article « **Tremblement de terre de magnitude 4,9 dans le Sud-Ouest** » was illustrated by a new map:

ngruous earthquake, of magnitude 5, has knocked at the door of the Le Blayais nuclear power-plant, near



A significant omission on the map is the town of Blaye, which gave its name to the Le Blayais nuclear plant. The plant itself is halfway between Montendre and Hourtin, 25 km away from the quake's epicentre.

Two of the plant's four "units" (reactor buildings) were flooded in the storm of 27 December 1999, and almost met the fate of the Fukushima Daichi plant 12 years later. The reactors share something else with Fukushima no. 1 - they use MOX, a mixture of uranium and plutonium. The January 2011 the French corporation AREVA boasted of supplying this to Japan! Some of that plutonium (the worst of fissile materials) was then dispersed in the air and the Pacific ocean...

This time the Le Blayais plant was threatened not by water but by the earth underneath it. How dare that old fissure wake up! And could the same misadventure occur in the Bure region of Lorraine, where our enlightened nuclear elites plan to bury highly radioactive wastes? For a long long time... so provided the earth waits several decades, the men responsible will not be here to answer for their acts.

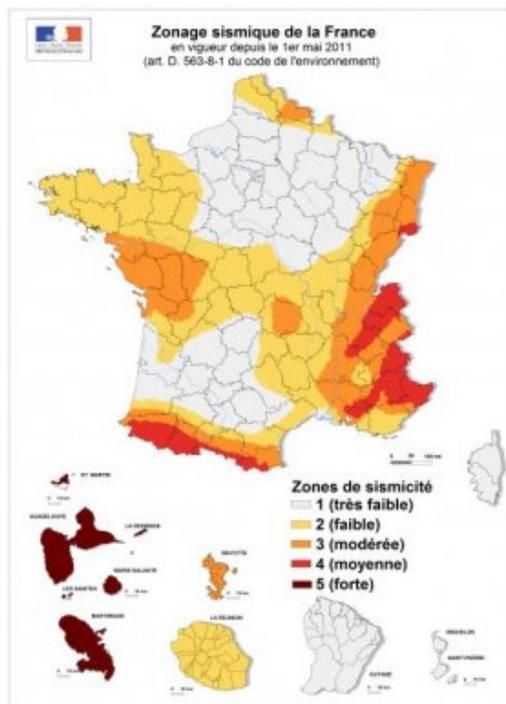
Admittedly, this time there was no damage at Le Blayais. But the BCSF received a message from Civaux: "My wooden desk moved horizontally" - so the seismic message reached another nuclear plant in the region, further NE of the epicentre. Will the bosses and the government ministers hear about that?

A friend in New Zealand, one of the most quake-prone countries, who had his house doomed by the quakes of 2010 and 2011, has this to say:

"I lived through a score of quakes above 4.5, and can confirm that they are destructive. How much depends on distance, depth and the direction of shock-waves.

"The old notion of terra firma is a lie - everywhere! The nuclear plant in question is probably fragilised - which means that now a lesser shock could cause more damage."

This event flouts all the safety predictions of EDF, AREVA-ORANO, and the government-authorized agencies. Thanks to them, we can be sure that France will perpetuate nuclear energy eternally, without the risks of catastrophes that occur in Japan, Russia, the USA or other places... that lack French know-how.



This insulting quake should not make us doubt the technology which as recently as 18 March saw reactor 4 stop operations for a day owing to an unexplained "acceleration of water rising in the steam generators »... Cf. Sud Ouest, 20/03/2019, page 11.

To conclude, the newspaper's very useful articles failed to print the headline that would have been justified:

A totally unpredicted earthquake, of magnitude 5, has knocked at the door of the Le Blayais nuclear power-plant

We must be as reassuring of the tweet sent by the Prefect of the region:

"A quake of 4.9 was felt this morning. The epicentre was 35km east of Pauillac. No deaths, no material damage reported so far. More information from <http://www.franceseisme.fr>

"Possible light damage to vulnerable buildings"

In other words: Keep sleeping, good people.

Lastly, it's the same story as for our beloved atom bomb (and those which other countries might send us it provokes them to retaliate): "Possible light damage to vulnerable buildings".

So sleep on. That's what they're telling us to do.

Jean-Marie Matagne (ACDN) with the newspaper Sud Ouest

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