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On Itzurun beach the vertical strata can be read like the pages of a book.

The cliffs in Zumaia have been declared a world geological site

A committee of international experts choose Itzurun as the best place in the world to study the Palaeocene

The cliffs at Itzurun beach in Zumaia (Gipuzkoa) have been declared the best place in the world to study a particular stage in the history of the Earth, known as the Palaeocene, between 65 and 55 million years before Christ. This decision was taken by a 32-member committee of experts from all over the world who met recently to study the rocks and strata of this area.

Pending official ratification from the International Geological Union, the cliffs that separate Zumaia from Deba are considered a "stratotype", in other words, the rocks that best summarise the characteristics of a specific era in the Earth's history. Geologists use stratotypes as a reference to compare geological formations that date from the same period all over the world.

To do this, the Zumaia flysch, as it is known scientifically, competed with similar rock formations in the Nile valley in Egypt, but the results of

studies determined that this place on the Basque coast would be chosen as a world geological site.

Like the pages of a book

A major contribution to this decision was the good accessibility of the Itzurun area, as, thanks to the geological movements that culminated in the formation of the Pyrenees, no excavations are required as the structures are vertical and can be "read" like the pages of a book. Scientists can therefore travel back in time to a period between the disappearance of dinosaurs to the first period of global warming of our planet.

For this reason, besides providing valuable information on the different stages into which the Palaeocene is divided (Danian, Selandian and Thanetian), a study of the strata of the cliffs in Zumaia can provide clues on the effects and consequences of similar

phenomena that have yet to take place.

CONTENTS

▼ END OF THE TRUCE

Ibarretxe and Zapatero analyse the situation following the end of the ceasefire.

For the government, now is the time to look beyond party interests. page 2

▼ GETTING TO KNOW THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Basque town councils are in the process of being set up by political groups with the highest number of votes.

page 3

▼ KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR...

The Basque national football team secures victory in Venezuela.

page 4

Ibarretxe and Zapatero analyse the situation following the end of the ceasefire

The Lehendakari urges Zapatero to continue searching for a peaceful solution

Lehendakari Ibarretxe and President Rodríguez Zapatero held a meeting at the Palacio de la Moncloa fifteen days after learning of the intentions of ETA to “activate all its fronts” following the end to the ceasefire. The Lehendakari considers that the efforts made until now in the search for peace have been worthwhile, despite “this unhappy conclusion” and argues that efforts should continue.

The meeting lasted for two hours, long enough to enable Ibarretxe to convey to the Spanish President “the frustration and exasperation” of the inhabitants of the Basque Country, who are concerned about the absence of agreements between political parties on “how we want to live”.

“Not everything goes”

Concerning the struggle against violence, Ibarretxe wished to make it clear to President Zapatero that the

In a communiqué published in the newspaper Berria on June 5, ETA announced a suspension of the permanent ceasefire declared on March 22 2006 and the activation of “all its fronts”. The news did not come as a great surprise among political classes and the population in general, as, in fact, the terrorist organisation had made its intentions clear when it placed a bomb at Barajas Airport on December 31 last year, causing two deaths.

In its communiqué, ETA backed up its decision by declaring that “the conditions are not appropriate for the peace process”, reproached President Zapatero for having adopted “a kind of fascism” and accused the PNV of being “traitors to the cause of the liberty of peoples”.

Two days after the announcement, through its Political Council, the Basque Government held a meeting to conduct a “serene analysis” of the situation and to convey

“Now more than ever before, we cannot sit back and do nothing”, Ibarretxe points out



Ibarretxe and Zapatero shake hands on the steps of the Palacio de la Moncloa shortly before beginning their meeting.

The Government says that the moment has arrived to look beyond party politics

posals into motion, “to look beyond party politics”, and to demand “more than ever before” talks between parties to prevent the use of violence as a weapon of confrontation. To this end, the Basque Government undertakes to foster the Peace and Coexistence Plan passed more than a year ago, which set out the two principles on which a scenario of peace must be built: recognition and solidarity with victims of terrorism in the defence of the right to life and the security of individuals; and the respect and defence of the human rights of everyone.

Basque Government is fully committed to the security and defence of the rights and liberties of those who feel threatened, but warned that it will not “support” the Spanish government in any attempt “to return to the past” – a clear allusion to the anti-terrorist agreements signed between PSOE and PP.

“If they go down that road, they should not expect our support. Because not everything goes in the struggle against terrorism, nor should there be fuzzy areas or illegal shortcuts”, he pointed out, and expressed his disagreement with the Parties Law and a human rights policy “that is not interpreted in the same way for all individuals, even though they may have committed terrible crimes”.

Ibarretxe once again insisted in Madrid that now more than ever the time has come to look beyond party interests, “because we cannot leave the control of the political agenda in the hands of ETA, nor can we sit back and do nothing”.

to Basque society a number of reflections aimed at bringing a definitive end to terrorism and a solution to the political conflict.

In spite of the exasperation and frustration that this announcement has caused in Basque society, the time has come for the government to put a number of initiatives and pro-

Basque town councils are in the process of being set up by the political groups with the highest number of votes

The handover ceremonies were tarnished by coercion from the radical left and last-minute surprises

On June 16, Basque town councils held meetings to form the new assemblies following the municipal and provincial elections of May 27. The day was marked by a general lack of surprises, as, due to an absence of any prior party agreements to form coalitions, those with the highest number of votes took possession of most of the town halls. There were also a number of isolated incidents in some locations where the lists of ANV candidates were annulled by the courts. In some of these, the pressure from the radical left was such that the town councils were not formed, as the elected councillors did not attend in order to take possession of their posts.

The complex electoral map following the May elections (see Basque News no. 101) highlighted the difficulty of reaching post-electoral agreements between the different political formations. This was due to the fact that although alliances were possible in some municipalities, in others, these were insufficient or unnecessary to constitute a majority.

In view of this situation, the parties reached a tacit agreement to respect the electoral lists with the highest votes and in general this decision was complied with in many Basque municipalities. There were a number of surprises, however, in towns such as Azpeitia, Zumaia, Gorliz, Busturia and Gautegiz-Arteaga, where, in spite of being the party with the highest number of votes, PNV were removed from control of the mayor's office due to the support given by EA and EB to other candidatures. However, EA bosses have already expressed their intention of ensuring that their elected representatives "respect the guidelines set out by the executive".

No surprises in the Basque capitals

The three capitals of the Basque Autonomous Community did not provide any last-minute surprises in the appointment of their respec-

tive Mayors.

In Bilbao, the Nationalist Iñaki Azkuna is sure of an untroubled term of office for the next four years as two EB councillors have joined the 13 PNV councillors in a repeat of the agreement of the previous legislature.

In Gasteiz, however, the Socialist Patxi Lazkoz took control of the town hall only with the votes of his own party as this gained the highest number of votes in capital of Alava. As a result, Lazkoz will have to reach agreements with other parties as his own does not have a majority in the chamber.

In Donostia, the socialist Odón Elorza won his fifth term of office, which on this occasion will be with an absolute majority thanks to the support of EB-Aralar.

In Pamplona, the decision of the socialists not to support any party that would have the support of ANV, prevented the candidate of Nafarroa Bai, Uxue Barcos, from becoming mayoress, and therefore Yolanda Barcina of UPN was elected instead with the votes of her party.

The future make-up of the Provincial Councils remains in doubt

One month following the elections, exactly who is to control the Provincial Councils and the Government of Navarre is still in doubt. Only in Bizkaia do the results obtained by the PNV give this party a clear mandate to govern in the province, although it will still need external support to reach an absolute majority. Regarding the provincial councils of other provinces, however, the political scenario is more open than ever. Although the General Councils and Parliament of Navarre have already been constituted, the deadline set for the formation of the Provincial Councils and the Government of Navarre is July 20. In Alava, support from the PSOE for the PP will give the latter control of the presidency of the General Councils. On the other hand, in Guipúzcoa and Navarre, the support of the PP for the PSOE led to two Socialists becoming presidents of the General Councils and Provincial Parliament, respectively. In Gipuzkoa, the votes of Ezker Batua were also necessary.



Ceremonies to mark the 70th anniversary of the Civil War have come to an end

The handing over by the Lehendakari Ibarretxe to the President of the General Councils of Bizkaia of the Trucíos Manifesto, drawn up in the town of the same name by Lehendakari Aguirre moments before he went into exile, marked the end of the commemorative acts on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Civil War. Standing before the bust of Lehendakari Aguirre and in the presence of his family (shown in the photograph) Ibarretxe wished to express his rejection of the Franco regime and to remember the victims of the dictatorship.

The Government will undertake a number of major cultural projects over the coming years



Next year, the Basque government intends to create a Centre for the Teaching of Dramatic Arts, a project that dance and theatre professionals have long campaigned for and one of the major projects for the period 2007-2008. This project is included within the Basque Culture Plan passed in 2004

with the aim of helping Basque culture to face the major challenges of the 21st century.

Culture ministry officials have still not decided on a location for the centre as basic aspects such as the curriculum and the linguistic teaching model have still to be determined. However, as of

the next academic year, a Masters in Dramatic Arts will be given to train the future teachers of the new centre.

Moreover, the Plan includes the creation of the Institute of Cultural Arts and Industries, which will be responsible for administering the financial aid provided and for creating a register of audiovisual companies.

From the legislative viewpoint, the next two years will also be very important as the Museums Law is expected to come into force, the Libraries Law is scheduled for debate in the Parliament and the Archives Law of the Basque Country is to be

drawn up. This legislation will lead, among other things, to the creation of the National Library of the Basque Country in the Tabacalera building in Donostia, as well as the National Historical Archives of the Basque country in the former headquarters of the Basque police in Bilbao.

Triumph of the Basque football team in Venezuela

On June 20, the Basque football team obtained an important victory by beating Venezuela by 4 goals to 3. It was the first time since 1938 that the Basque team coached by José Angel Iribar and Miguel Etxarri had played a match outside the Basque Country.

On this occasion, two goals by Etxebarria, one by Arduriz and another by Gabilondo gave the Basque team victory in a match that was more than just a sporting event as it will strengthen the demands for the Basque national team to be given official status, a long-standing aspiration of the Basque Government.

Football has recently been a source of debate and concern among Basques in view of the poor results obtained by Athletic de Bilbao and Real Sociedad throughout the league competition. In the end, the result obtained in the last game of the season enabled Athletic de Bilbao to stay in the first division. Unfortunately, Real Sociedad were not so lucky, and they were demoted to the second division for the first time in 40 years.

July rings to the sound of jazz

As happens every year in July, the best jazz in the world will be heard once again in the Basque Country thanks to the International Festivals of Getxo, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Donostia. These three major festivals have consolidated their position as leaders in the offer of Basque cultural tourism for the summer months.

This year, almost 200 concerts, many of them free, are offered in this "jazz marathon" that begins on July 4 in Getxo and ends on the 29th in Donostia.

Norah Jones, Chucho Valdés, Bryan Ferry, Chick Corea, Elvis Costello, McCoy Tyner,



Pat Metheny, Marcus Miller and Lee Konitz, will be some of the major artists to take the stage during the three festivals.