

Police: Part of Ransom of Mylonas case found

Police on Monday confiscated weapons and retrieved part of the ransom paid for the release of the president of the Federation of Industries of Northern Greece (SBBE) George Mylonas to abductors by his family in June 2006, in ongoing investigations in Thessaloniki following last week's arrest of the kidnapping's mastermind, escaped convict Vassilis Paleokostas, and seven accomplices.

Thessaloniki Security Police chief Dimitris Papadopoulos told ANA-MPA that an early-morning search of an apartment in the Peraia region of the northern Greek capital, which had been rented in recent months by the kidnapping ring and was used as one of its hideouts.

He said that 2.9 million euros in marked bills from the ransom money, four submachine guns, two pistols, two handgrenades, 1910 bullet, silencers, gas masks and other objects were found in the apartment.

The weaponry will be examined by ELAS (Greek Police) ballistics experts, while the investigations are still ongoing.



The mayor of a Crete town has grown so exasperated with the rowdy, drunken behaviour of British tourists that he has demanded action from the British government.

"They scream, they sing, they fall down, they take their clothes off, they cross-dress, they vomit," said Konstantinos Lagoudakis, the mayor of Malia, in an interview. "It's only the British people - not the Germans or the French."

His anger echoed the frustration felt by the residents of many Mediterranean resorts, who have watched helplessly while their town centres are invaded by hordes of carousing British teenagers.

"The government of Britain has to do something," Mr Lagoudakis

Crete mayor asks British government to act on drunken tourists

said. "These people are giving a bad name to their country."

Malia, on the popular northern coast of the Greek island, has attracted an increasing number of booze-fuelled package tours crammed with young people seeking a week away from the constraints of parental control.

A Foreign Office report published last month showed that between 2006-07 the number of British citizens arrested in 15 popular foreign resorts had increased by more than 15 per cent to 4,603, with many cases due to "excessive drinking".

It is not clear what action is being sought by Mr Lagoudakis, who was interviewed by the New York Times, but it is clear the British

government is already embarrassed by the behaviour of some of its citizens.

Britain's ambassador in Athens recently flew to the resort of Zakynthos to reassure local officials, who are cracking down on binge drinking. The consulate is meanwhile trying to get across the dangers of bad behaviour with a poster campaign.

For the resort towns, the money British tourists spend is offset by the added costs of public policing and the strains on health services caused by alcohol abuse and unsafe sex.

Much of the problem has been blamed on the growing number of cheap flights and the prevalence of "happy hour" deals in bars organised by British tour operators.

Gods smiling on Greek wines

IN the Nemea Valley, where Hercules came to slay the lion, the clan of Piraeus Bank boss Michalis Sallas is looking to create another Greek legend: Domaine Helios Grande Reserve Red. Not that coaxing fine-wine drinkers into believing stories about Greek grapes is a labor without problems.

"Historically, Greece hasn't offered good quality wines because the money wasn't around to make them," Sallas's daughter Myrto says of the agiorgitiko vines she helps tend for her family. "It wasn't until recently that the Greek economy was ready to make the necessary investment," she says.

The five hectares she looks after, about two hours southwest of Athens, are part of the 70,000 hectares of vineyards under cultivation in Greece. Grande Reserve makes 14,000 bottles a year, among the 300 million from Greece each year, or 3 per cent of global production, says the Agriculture Ministry.

The luxury grapevine hasn't been kind to Greek wine. Among a litany of accusations, one is that much of it is imported from Bulgaria; another is

that the stuff can be used as car polish.

Both claims are untrue. At the same time, the folks at Domaine e Helios say that resistance is mostly futile and that the Gods are smiling on their venture.

"Critics and sommeliers have strong reservations about Greek wines," says Anne Kokotos, who founded Domaine Helios in 1976 with her husband George. He is sailing the River Styx on his boat ("sorry, I can't speak, I'm going to hell," he jests in a hurried phone call) as a break from overseeing production with the Sallas banking family.

"Greece has a bad reputation to overcome," says Anne Kokotos, "and the Greek wine industry doesn't have the promotion budget to fight back."

Grand Reserve sells at 15 euros (US\$23.61) a bottle in a wine market dominated by big-ticket labels from France, Australia and the US.

"I don't think Grande Reserve sells at too cheap a price," says Sallas, 31, who studied economics and designed jewelry before taking the reigns of Domaine Helios from her father in January. "A wine doesn't need to be expensive to be prestigious."

Grande Reserve's other hurdle is the reluctance of Greeks to buy quantity and store wine, says Anne Kokotos. "It's not in the Greek character to guard wine until maturity," she says. "We are too impatient. We want to drink it now."

Sallas says Grande Reserve bottles are best stored for eight to 10 years, too

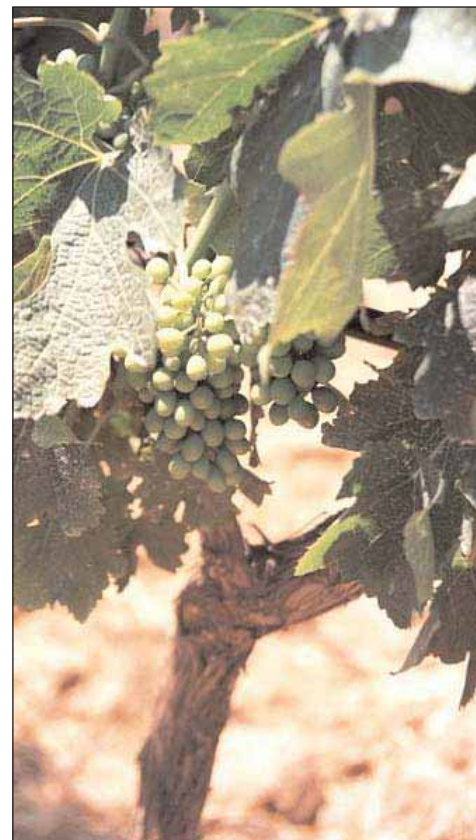
long for most taste buds and not enough time for the global wine oracles to gather and pronounce judgment on how its pedigree holds up over the years.

"We are small," Kokotos says, uncorking bottles of Grande Reserve's four vintages for a blind tasting beneath a copse of fragrant fir trees on the family vineyard. "It wasn't until the 1990s that Greece started to make some wines that could be aged."

Grande Reserve was one of the first and Sallas reckons its opportunity lies somewhere between a sommelier's own reluctance about offering a Greek wine and the deep-pocketed customer's obvious affinity for something exotic.

Grown in light soil 600 meters up the Koutsis Slopes and in a climate affected by scorching days and chilly nights, Domaine Helios is a niche player in the narrow market for Greek wine. The 2003 to 2006 vintages offer a taste of inside information that should thrill the corkscrew crowd. Grande Reserve at first blush is a peasant wine that's thick and heavy and with an aroma guaranteed to clear the most congested sinus cavity of a winter cold.

The color is so dense that it blocks the sunlight of a Greek summer, amply proving Homer's description of the Aegean as "a wine-dark sea." Yet the surprise arrives within seconds. The palate erupts with youthful signs of refreshing herbs and spices that, if



given time to mature, should go down like liquid velvet.

Grande Reserve is a modern blend of graceful tannin and balanced acidity. The footprint of greatness is here.

"Grande Reserve is made to very nicely mature," Sallas says. "It's strong and smooth, just like a Greek woman."

Niki Kitsopoulou, sommelier at the 70-year-old Athens wine-merchant Cellier, says her shop's retail price of 29 euros a bottle is too hefty for locals and visitors nourished on cheap Greek wine. "Wealthy buyers who love to drink and collect wine ask for Grande Reserve," she says.

The popularity has been such that Kitsopoulou gives the wine a marquee spot at the front of the shop. "It's still not well known," she says, "but more people are asking for it."