



Greek opposition widens lead in polls after fires

ATHENS, - Greece's opposition Socialist party has widened its lead to about 6 percentage points over the ruling conservatives after criticism of the government's handling of forest fires near Athens, polls showed on Sunday.

Wildfires tore through Athens suburbs earlier this month, destroying thousands of hectares of forest and forcing thousands to flee their homes.

Opponents say the government, likely to face voters early next year, failed to learn from Greece's worst wildfires in 2007, which killed 65 people, and had made no progress in preventing and reacting effectively to such disasters.

A nationwide survey by Marc for the daily Ethnos newspaper showed the socialists (PASOK) with 33.7 percent of support compared to 27.5 percent for the ruling New Democracy party. A survey by the same agency in July gave the socialists a 5 percentage point lead.

In another survey by Alco for the Proto Thema Sunday newspaper, the socialists had a 6 percentage point lead over the conservatives.

Both polls were conducted among 1,000 people days after the fires which raged Aug. 21-24.

Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis is clinging to a one-seat majority and the socialist opposition has made clear it will force a snap poll in March when parliament votes for a new president.

The conservatives, who are struggling with the economic crisis, social unrest and numerous scandals, lost to the socialists in June's European Parliament election.

The socialists won with 36.6 percent of the vote while the conservatives had 32.2 percent.

Santorini's winery

Grape cultivation for wine making has always been a part of life on the Greek island of Santorini. In the excavations of Akrotiri, which is speculated to be the lost city of Atlantis, burned grapevines were found and ancient clay vessels were decorated with grapes.

Today, Santorini has only one winery, SantoWines, which uses about one-third of the island's surface for vineyards. An impressive selection of wines is made from more than ten varieties of grapes.

The vineyards are not traditional, with the plants sitting directly on the soil with no visible stalk. They're planted in what looks like a haphazard fashion, but it's a way to keep the precious rain water from forming channels and draining off before it can soak into the soil. Santorini gets very little rain, so it relies heavily on the



SantoWines wine cellars with grapevines in the foreground.

late night fog and early morning dew, which is used more efficiently by the vines sitting on the ground. The volcanic eruptions made the ground porous and the soil absorbent, so even on this arid island, vineyards flourish and produce grapes of very high quality. The volcanic soil also adds a hint of smoke and minerals to the wine's

already unique flavor. There is no support system to hold the plants in place, other than the way the vines are trained to curl. The grapes grow in the center, protected from the strong winds by the vines and leaves on the outside. Each plant resembles a basket, which is pictured in the slide show.

Ancient burial site discovered in northern Greece

ATHENS, Greece — Archaeologists said they have unearthed a lavish burial site at the seat of the ancient Macedonian kings in northern Greece, heightening a 2,300-year-old mystery of murder and political intrigue.

The find in the ruins of Aigai came a few meters (yards) from last year's remarkable discovery of what could be the bones of Alexander the Great's murdered teenage son, according to one expert.

Archaeologists are puzzled because both sets of remains were buried under very unusual circumstances: Although cemeteries existed near the site, the bones were taken from an unknown first resting place and re-interred, against all ancient convention, in the heart of the city.

Excavator Chrysoula Saatsoglou-Paliadeli said in an interview that the bones found this week were inside one of two large silver vessels unearthed in the ancient city's marketplace, close to the theater where Alexander's father, King Philip II, was murdered in 336 B.C.

She said they arguably belonged to a Macedonian royal and were buried at the end of the 4th century B.C.

But it is too early to speculate on the dead person's identity, pending tests to determine the bones' sex and age, said Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, a professor of classical archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

She said one of the silver vessels is "very, very similar" to another found decades ago at a nearby royal tumulus, where one grave has been identified as belonging to Philip II.

Alexander was one of the most successful generals of all times. In a series of battles against the Persian Empire, he conquered much of the known world, reaching as far as India.

After his death in 323 B.C., at the age of 32, Alexander's empire broke up in a series of wars by his successors that saw the murder of his mother, half brother,

wife and both sons.

Archaeologist Stella Drougou said the new find is "very important, as it follows up on last year's."

"It makes things very complex," she said. "Even small details in the ancient texts can help us solve this riddle. We (now) have more information, but we lack a name."

Drougou told The Associated Press that the fact the funerary urns were not placed in a proper grave "either indicates some form of punishment, or an illegal act." "Either way, it was an exceptional event, and we know the history of the Macedonian kings is full of acts of revenge and violent succession."

Drougou, who was not involved in the discovery, is also a professor of classical archaeology at the Aristotle University.

Saatsoglou-Paliadeli

believes the teenager's bones found in 2008 may have belonged to Heracles, Alexander's illegitimate son who was murdered during the wars of succession around 309 B.C. and buried in secret. The remains had been placed in a gold jar, with an elaborate golden wreath.

"This is just a hypothesis, based on archaeological data, as there is no inscription to prove it," she said.

At a cemetery in nearby Vergina, Greek archaeologists discovered a wealth of gold and silver treasure in 1977. One opulent grave, which contained a large gold wreath of oak leaves, is generally accepted to have belonged to Philip II. The location of Alexander's tomb is one of the great mysteries of archaeology.

The sprawling remains of a large building with banquet halls and ornate mosaics at Aigai — some 190 miles (300 kilometers) north of Athens — has been identified as Philip's palace.

The city flourished in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., attracting leading Greek artists such as the poet Euripides. The Macedonian capital was moved to Pella in the 4th century B.C., and Aigai was destroyed by the Romans in 168 B.C.

