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Talks stall on choice for interim Greek leader

ATHENS

European leaders eager
to wrap up debt deal to
stave off trouble in Rome

BY NIKI KITSANTONIS
AND RACHEL DONADIO

Greece on Monday night remained in a state of political limbo as hours of negotiations between the departing prime minister, George A. Papandreou, and the leader of the main conservative opposition party, Antonis Samaras, failed to decide who would lead an interim government needed to secure European support to avoid a default.

Earlier in the day, Greek media had been reporting that the favorite for the job was Lucas Papademos, a former vice president of the European Central Bank and former Bank of Greece governor. But by late Sunday the negotiations had stalled over demands by Mr. Papademos to appoint some members of the cabinet and be given more time in office than the proposed three months.

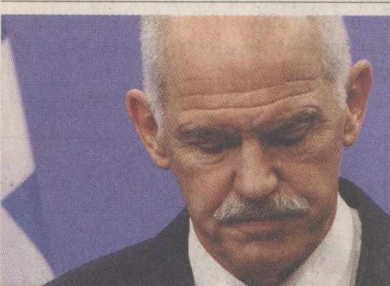
Meanwhile rumors swirled around another possible candidate, Nikiforos Diamandouros, a former academic who is currently serving as the European Ombudsman. Greek media said Mr. Papandreou's people wanted Mr. Diamandouros for the job but that Mr. Samaras and his party officials disagreed. Another name that was mentioned late Monday was Panagiotis Roumeliotis, Greece's current representative to the International Monetary Fund, one of Greece's three official foreign creditors.

Mr. Papandreou, who heads the Socialist party Pasok, and Mr. Samaras, his conservative rival, reportedly spoke several times by telephone on Monday in a bid to reach a consensus.

European leaders see the debt-relief deal struck with Greece on Oct. 26 and approved early the next day as crucial to containing the crisis in Greece and insulating Italy, a much larger economy that is struggling to deal with heavy debt.

Despite those efforts, the debt crisis appeared to be eroding support for the Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, just ahead of critical votes this month as calls for his resignation escalated.

GREECE, PAGE 3



THIERRY ROGE/REUTERS

FAMILY NAME COULDN'T SAVE PAPANDREOU
The Greek debt was too much for George Andreas Papandreou, a third-generation prime minister. PAGE 3

FRANCE MOVES TO 'NEW REALITY'

The government proposes cutting €19 billion in spending to try to preserve France's top credit rating. PAGE 14

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