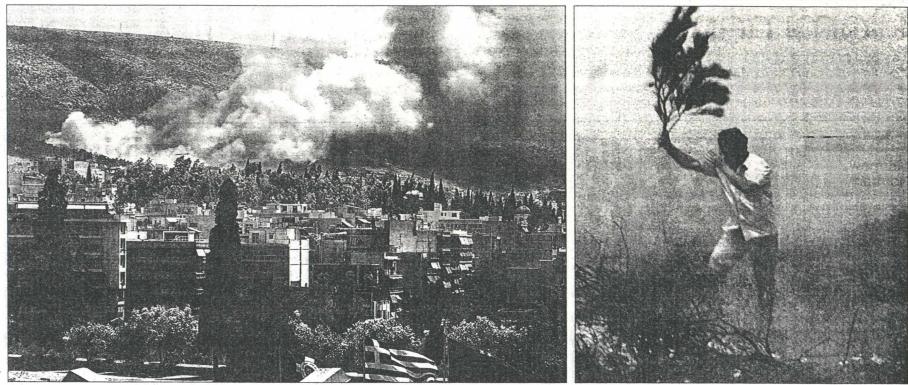
WORLD NEWS 7



Fanned by high winds, forest fires burn on the eastern edge of Athens where residents, right, turned out to help fight the blaze. Rare plants and animals are under threat from the advancing flames photographs; DIMITS MESSINISAQUES GOULAMAGO

Developers blamed for Greek fires 30.7.98 GUARDIAN THE

Helena Smith in Athens

RSON by property developers has been blamed for reinforced by the discovery of Greece's worstever forest fires. which are raging through areas Greek police said some vast areas of the country for a acres, including some of woodlands and throwing firesouthern Europe's richest coniferous forests.

"Fires have been reported

the same time and that leaves offen build on the scorched pic Games village will be exists as a result of that now ablaze." The forest is started deliberately." Mr Papageorgiou said. "The fore brigade... endemic plant species and 36 with the same time to more than 160 Greek and the value of the same time and that here to more than 160 Greek and the value of the same time and that the value of the source of the same time and that the value of the same time and that the value of the source of the same time and that the value of the same time and that the value of the valu The arson theory has been

works from their cars.

ably legalised by politicians. fireworks and sophisticated goes back to just after the ported accusations that the time bombs in remote forest second world war when forestry service has been acpeople were very poor and the "pyromaniacs" had been ardream of every Greek family second week and have al rested recently and others was to own a home," said forest areas. "They [foresters] ready devoured some 400,000 had been spotted driving into Aristotelis Papageorgiou, for are acting like a state within est officer at the Greek a state," he said branch of the World Wide But the Soci

Environmentalists say Fund for Nature. "Much of ment has also been criticised Greece's lack of forest tenure the land that is being burnt for switching the responsiat 180 spots nationwide which maps and a land registrar had now is very valuable. It's no bility for fire-fighting from is unprecedented," said whetted the appetite of arson coincidence that the moun the forestry service to the fire through the summer season, George Romalos, the public ists in the pay of property de tains around Athens have brigade in May. "These fires said Mr Papageorgiou. order minister, "Many have velopera Once cleared, land been targeted, Mount Par, testimony to, a complete "Worst of all, the black plane

erupted on several fronts at | is grabbed by speculators who | nitha is where the 2004 Olym- | lack of co-ordination that now | forest on Mount Taygetos is

The agriculture minister. "This is a phenomenon that | Stefanos Tzoumakas, has sup | fires and, my God, do we know it.* Last week three firemen tively concealing instances of and a volunteer died in a for "land grabbing" in burnt-out est fire outside Athens And this week the Temple

> to being reduced to cinders. But the Socialist govern this year than at any other

has no experience with wild internationally endangered species of fauna

Fire-fighting has been hampered by gale-force winds. With vast swathes of Greece of Apollo at Delphi came close "More land, olive groves and orchards have been burnt time and we are only half way

now a wasteland of withered trees dotted with the charred carcasses of wild animals, growing numbers of people have been forced to leave their homes. And thousands of tourists have abandoned hotels in the seaside resort of Loutraki as the inferno creeps towards the ancient ity of Corinth-

