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Women shatter a glass ceiling in Greek politics

Both daughters of powerful politicians, Dora Bakoyianni and Fofi Gennimata are politically opposed, writes **Kerin Hope**

Two women have made a breakthrough in the macho world of Greek politics by winning the high-profile posts of mayor of Athens and "super-prefect" of Attica, the region surrounding the capital, in the second round of local government elections.

Dora Bakoyianni and Fofi Gennimata represent opposing political parties but share the same kind of name recognition: their fathers were both powerful politicians who enjoyed broad-based popular support.

Mrs Bakoyianni, who served briefly as culture minister in her father's centre-right government in the early 1990s, was showered with rose petals by supporters on Sunday night after capturing a record 61 per cent of the vote in Athens in a run-off poll. She will be the capital's first woman mayor.

Leftwingers in the poorer district of Attica overlooked Mrs Gennimata's lack of political experience - she was elected to parliament

with the governing Socialists for the first time in 2000 - to give her 56 per cent of the vote.

The late Giorgos Gennimata, a lifelong Marxist who reformed Greece's health system in the 1980s, is a Socialist party icon.

The election of Mrs Bakoyianni and Mrs Gennimata allowed both the Socialists and opposition New Democrats to claim victory in the Athens area, home to almost 40 per cent of the population.

A swing to the right was more evident outside the capital area, with ND winning 30 out of 53 provincial prefects' posts, but was not marked enough to threaten the government's stability.

For the two women, victory in the capital marks a significant break with the past.

Across the political spectrum, party machines are operated by men in their 50s, who have resisted attempts by women's pressure groups to secure more candidacies



Dora Bakoyianni, left, who was elected first woman mayor of Athens, greets supporters. Right: Fofi Gennimata waves during the vote at the weekend. Mrs Gennimata garnered 56 per cent of the vote in her bid to become 'super-prefect' of greater Athens AP

at local and national elections.

This time, however, Vasso Papandreou, interior minister and the country's high-

est-ranking woman politician, stepped in. With the backing of Costas Simitis, the prime minister, she pushed through a decree set-

ting a quota of 30 per cent for women candidates at the local elections.

Both Mrs Bakoyianni and Mrs Gennimata will face

intense pressure to deliver on their campaign promises, as preparations for the 2004 Olympic games in Athens come under increasing inter-

national scrutiny. Mrs Bakoyianni has promised to ensure the completion of a heritage project she launched as culture minister in time for the Olympics - the creation of traffic-free zones and a network of pedestrian walkways linking the city's main archaeological sites.

Adopted by the Socialists, the project is under way but is running behind schedule.

Mrs Gennimata faces a more difficult and less glamorous task: to oversee dozens of small infrastructure projects that will be needed to give the extra 1.5m visitors expected for the games easy access to sports venues being constructed in the Attica area.

She will also be in the frontline of the Socialists' campaign to reduce bureaucracy and corruption at local government offices responsible for issuing building and other permits.

But, in contrast with Mrs Bakoyianni, who will have to work hard as an opposition mayor to maintain consensus with the governing Socialists, Mrs Gennimata knows she can count on their support.