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Two accused of killing British pair

Helena Smith in Athens

TWO Albanians, who confessed to killing a retired British couple on the Greek island of Cephalonia, will today be charged with murder.

The detective leading the inquiry said Lambros Pappas, aged 26, and Eduard Elmazi, 20, admitted the killings after being arrested at gunpoint on Saturday on the neighbouring island of Lefkas after a brief chase on foot.

Confessions were signed on Sunday at the police station in Lixourion, a few miles from the murder scene.

The pair have purportedly described how they stabbed Roy and Judith Eccles with a butcher's knife and pitchfork while attempting to break into their isolated village home last Thursday.

The 55-year-old former electrical engineer and his 49-year-old accountant wife from Bedford had decided to start a second life on the island last October. "They said they didn't intend to kill them but became panic-stricken when the Eccles were roused from their sleep," said Chief Inspector Dimitrios Christoforatos. "I have to say they showed little remorse."

Mr Christoforatos said the Albanians made the confession after police matched fingerprints found in the victims' home as well as blood samples on their clothes with their own.

The double murder has sent shock waves through the idyllic isle where British expatriates have been inspired to buy "dream villas" since reading the Louis de Bernières novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* which is set on the island during the second world war.

Yesterday, hundreds of outraged locals gathered outside the police station where the two were being held and vowed to "lynch" them.

"The Albanians have come here and caused nothing but trouble," said one protester.

The Eccles' fate has highlighted the issue of illicit refugees from Albania. At an emergency meeting in Athens yesterday the Greek public order minister, Giorgos Romaios, announced that draconian measures would be taken to deal with the dramatic increase in crime across Greece. Much of the surge has been blamed on Albanian drugs and arms smugglers who are believed to be targeting "rich" foreigners.