

ADDIS ABABA.

CRIMINAL 2/1917.

**MURDER
OF
ALEXANDER COMBIS.**

[And matter of his Widow's Compensation, 1929.]

**TNA (National Archives U.K.)
REFERENCE FO915/23.**

FO243 of 11/9/29 For Consulate.
CR/2/17
Copy
(J 2468/1585/1)
D 7607/F/29.

Subject: national Status of the late Alexander Koumbis.

Reference to previous correspondence: Letter to the Dominions Office of the 19th June 1929
(J1585/1585/1).

Transmitted by direction of the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

Dominions Office, Downing Street,
30th August, 1929.

Endorsed: Case now disposed of. File (originals in Legation). 9/10/29.

SECRETARY OF STATE
No. 272.

Governor's Office,
Salisbury,
Southern Rhodesia.
31st July, 1929.

My Lord,

With reference to your despatch No. 347 of the 29th June, I have the honour to inform you that there is no record of Alexander Koumbis having been naturalized as a British subject in Southern Rhodesia.

2. Letters of Naturalization were issued on the 17th March, 1905, to Alexander Coumbis, regarding whom the following particulars are recorded:

Birthplace	Nationality prior to grant Of Letters of Naturalisation	Occupation	Place of Residence in Southern Rhodesia
Cerigo, Ionian Islands, Greece.	Greek	Miner	Omtali

I have, etc.,
(sd.) C. H. Rodwell, GOVERNOR.

The Rt. Hon.
The Lord Passfield,
Dominions Office, Downing Street.

FO275 of 11/9/29 For Consulate.

J 2435/1585/1

FOREIGN OFFICE,
S. W. 1.
11th September, 1929.

Madam,

With reference to Foreign Office letter of the 19th June relative to your claim against the Abyssinian Government for compensation for the murder of your husband, I am directed by Mr. Secretary Henderson to inform you that a report has now been received from His Majesty's Minister at Addis Ababa.

2. The facts of the case seem to be as follows: In September 1917 a man was arrested and accused of the murder of your husband. The prisoner was, however, never tried for the murder, as the *danya*, or local magistrate, in whose custody he was, allowed him to escape. Subsequently, in February 1918, the case was brought before Major Dodds, His Majesty's Consul at the time and Dejamach Hulunghata, and it was decided that the *danya* who had allowed the prisoner to escape should pay a fine of nine hundred dollars, of which the Abyssinian Government were to have three hundred dollars and a brother of the deceased, Panayotis by name, six hundred dollars – within two months; in the event of the *danya* producing the prisoner within a reasonable time, the money was to be refunded to the former. No sum had been paid to Panayotis, nor had the murdered been arrested when, in March 1919, thirteen months after this decision, the case was handed over to the Greek Consul-General who had arrived in Addis Ababa shortly before.

3. Dr. Zervos, the present Greek Consul-General, has informed Sir S. Barton that searching enquiries on his part have revealed the fact that in 1919 when the case was being dealt with by the Greek Consul, Monsieur Hadjiannou, Panayotis Koumbis, who is now dead, refused to accept the six hundred dollars offered by the Ethiopian Government as compensation for the murder of his brother. Dr. Zervos can find no evidence of any money having been collected for your account and he is therefore of the opinion that the matter was allowed to drop after the refusal of Panayotis to accept the above-mentioned sum.

4. It will be seen from the above that the case passed out of the hands of His Majesty's Legation some ten years ago. In these circumstances Mr. Henderson regrets that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom cannot intervene with the Abyssinian Government on your behalf.

I am, Madam, Your obedient Servant,
(Sd.) JOHN MURRAY.

Madame Marigo Alexander Koumbis,
St. Nicholas,
Vion, Greece.

British Legation,
Addis Ababa.
August 1st, 1929.

No. 178.

Sir,

With reference to your despatch No. 204 (J1585/1585/1) of June 19th, I have the honour to report that the claim of Madame Marigo Alexander Koumbis for compensation in respect of the murder of her husband, the late Alexander Koumbis, formed the subject, some weeks ago, of an enquiry from the Greek Consul-General of Addis Ababa to His Majesty's Consul. It appeared that Madame Koumbis had approached the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in regard to her claim, and that Ministry had referred the matter to Dr. Zervos, who, at the time of his enquiry, seemed to know no more than that a sum of six hundred dollars was said to have been obtained by His Majesty's Legation from the Ethiopian Government as compensation for the murder, which sum had been paid to Monsieur Diamandara, acting Greek Consul at the time, 1918. The Greek Consul-General asked whether His Majesty's Legation had in fact obtained this compensation, and, if so, to whom the money had been paid.

2. Mr. Consul Bullard's consultation of the relevant dossier has shown the facts of this case to be as follows.

3. Alexander Koumbis, a Greek by birth, was naturalized in Rhodesia by a local certificate, on the strength of which he appears to have enjoyed the good offices of the British authorities in Abyssinia, but there being at the time no Greek consular official at Addis Ababa.

4. In September, 1917 he was murdered at Addis Ababa, some thirty miles west of the capital, by an Abyssinian, and a man was arrested and accused of the crime. The prisoner was, however, never tried for the murder, as the danya, or local magistrate, in whose custody he was allowed him to escape. Subsequently, in February, 1918, the case was brought before Major Dodds, His Majesty's Consul at the time, and Dejamach Mulugheta, and it was decided that the danya who had allowed the prisoner to escape should pay a fine of nine hundred dollars, of which the Abyssinian Govt. were to have three hundred dollars, and a brother of the deceased, Panayotis by name, six hundred dollars – within two months; in the event of the danya producing the prisoner within a reasonable time, the money was to be refunded to the former. No sum had been paid to Panayotis, nor had the murderer been arrested, when, in March, 1919, thirteen months after this decision, the case was handed over to a Greek Consul-General who had arrived shortly before.

5. As Dr. Zervos had been put by His Majesty's Consul in possession of the foregoing details, I requested him to be good enough to tell me what steps the Greek Consulate-General had taken to obtain execution of the judgment obtained by Major Dodds, and with what result. Dr. Zervos has now informed me that searching enquiries on his part have revealed the fact that in 1919, when the case was being dealt with by the Greek Consul, Monsieur Hadjiannou, Panayotis Koumbis (who is now dead) refused to accept the \$600 offered by the Ethiopian Government as compensation for the murder of his brother; there was, however,

no written record of this refusal. Dr. Servos can find no evidence of any money having been obtained for the account of the widow of the victim, and he is therefore of the opinion that the matter was allowed to drop after Panayotis' refusal to accept the sum above-mentioned. According to the Consulate-General office-keeper, Monsieur Hadjiannou had certain discussions with the Ethiopian Government in regard to the case, but no decision was reached.

5. It will be seen from all the foregoing that the case passed out of the hands of His Majesty's Legation some ten years ago, and that the Greek Consul-General appears disposed to regard it as closed by the alleged refusal of the late Panayotis Koumbis to accept the sum of six hundred dollars when it was offered him. Whatever Dr. Zervos' attitude may be, the case does not now seem to be one in which His Majesty's Legation may properly intervene; even if we could take up the case again I see no prospect of our retrieving the position that was lost when the case was handed over to the Green Consulate-General in 1919. If you share my view that action by His Majesty's Legation is not now possible, I suggest that Madame Koumbis should be informed of the position, and advised to approach the Greek Government once more.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

Sir,

&c., &c., (Signed) S. Barton.

The Right Honourable
Arthur Henderson, M.P.,
&c., Foreign Office.

Copy for Consulate File.

Légation de Grande Bretagne,
Addis Abeba,
Le 22 juillet, 1929.

Monsieur le Consul-Générale,

Me réfèrent a votre lettre Sub No. 96 en date du 18 mai au Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique relative a l'affaire Alexander Combis, j'ai l'honneur de porter a votre connaissance que d'après des informations qui me sont parvenues de Londres Madame Marigo Alexander Coumbis, la veuve du défunt, s'est adressée au Foreign Office pour solliciter l'intervention de ce dernier auprès de qui du droit en vue de lui fournir des renseignements précis sur la somme qui devait être remise a sa famille a titre de compensation pur l'assassinat de son mari, en vertu du jugement rendu au mois de février, 1918, par le Consul de Sa Majesté et le Dejamach Muklugheta.

En étudiant le dossier de l'affaire lequel vous avez restitué a Monsieur Bullard par votre lettre susmentionnée, vous vous serez compte que la Légation de sa Majesté n'a touché aucune somme comme compensation pour la mort de Monsieur Coumbis, et qu'au courant du mois de mars, 1919, l'affaire a été transférée toujours inachevée, aux moins du Consul-General de Grèce. Dans ces circonstances je vous serais reconnaissant de bien vouloir me mettre en mesure de fournir au Foreign Office un compte-rendu détaillé de

l'affaire en me faisant savoir le résultat des mesures qu'aura prises le Consulat-General de la république pour faire exécuter le susdit jugement.

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Consul-General, les assurances de ma haute considération très distinguée.

(Sd) S. Barton.

Le Docteur Zervos,
Consul at-General de Grèce,
Addis Abeba.

**CONSULAT GENERAL
HELLENIQUE.**

**ADDIS ABEBA, 18 Mai, 1929.
ETHIOPIE.**

No. 96

Monsieur le Consul,

J'ai l'honneur de vous accuser réception de votre lettre No. Cr/2/17/649 avec son contenu et je vous remercie infiniment pour les informations que vous avez bien voulu me donner dans l'affaire Alex Coumbis.

Ci inclus je vous remets le dossier de cette affaire composé de dix documents.

Tout en vous remerciant je vous prie Monsieur le Consul d'agréer l'assurance de ma haute considération

Le Consul Gl de Grèce. Zervos.

Monsieur BULLARD,
Consul de S.M. Britannique,
En Ville.
[Consular receipt stamp 20 May 1929, No. 607.]

No. Cr/2/7/649.

Consulat de S.M. Britannique,
Addis Abeba,
Le 16 mai, 1929.

Monsieur le Consul General,

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire savoir, en réponse à votre lettre No. 89, en date du 11 mai, que d'après les archives de ce Consulat, la Légation Britannique n'a jamais touché aucune somme comme compensation pour la mort d'Alexander Coumbis, bien qu'il fut question, à un moment donné, de prendre la somme de \$600 (plus \$300 pour le gouvernement Ethiopien) au danya qui aurait laissé

échapper la personne accusée d'avoir commis de meurtre. Il paraît que l'affaire fut transférée au Consulat-General de Grèce avant qu'elle fut terminée.

Je crois que je ne peux mieux faire que de vous transmettre le dossier de l'affaire. Je vous prie de me le rendre quand vous n'en aurez plus besoin.

Agréer, Monsieur le Consul General, l'expression de ma considération distinguée.

Monsieur le Consul General de Grèce,
Addis Abeba.

**CONSULAT GENERAL
HELLENIQUE.**

**ADDIS ABEBA, 11 Mai, 1929.
ETHIOPIE.**

No. 80 [C1]

Monsieur le Consul,

J'ai l'honneur de faire porter à votre connaissance qu'en 1917 a été assassiné à Addis Alam (Alam) le sujet Britannique Alexandre Coumbis originaire de Grèce. Sa veuve Marigho Al. Coumbis qui habite en Grèce actuellement et se trouve dans la pauvreté, adresse une requête au Ministère des Aff. Etrangères d'Athènes, pour laquelle elle réclame une somme de \$ 600 que la Légation Britannique avait réussi d'obtenir par le Gouvernement Ethiopien en cette époque, comme indemnité de l'assassinat.

Le Ministère m'a transmis la dite requête de la veuve Marigho Alex. Coumbis et me prie de l'informer sur le sort de cet argent. La dite dame déclare que cette somme a été versée par la Légation Britannique à Mr. B. Diamandaras suppléant au Consulat en cette époque.

Je vous serais donc bien obligé de vouloir bien m'informer où en est cette affaire, si la Légation Britannique avait obtenu cette indemnité et à qui cette somme a été versée.

Tout en vous remerciant, je vous prie, Monsieur le Consul et Cher Collègue, d'agréer l'assurance de ma plus haute considération.

Le Consul General de Grèce. Zervos.

Monsieur BULLARD,
Consul de S.M. Britannique,
E.V.

Marginal notes : Mr. Hood. Can this be traced in the Legation Archives?

H.M. Consul. No trace in Legation register for 1917 & 1918.

If you cannot trace in Consular Archives Qy ask Dr. Zervos for more definite information. 15/5/29.

Addis Ababa,
13 September 1917.

His British Majesty's Minister,
Captain the Hon. W. G. Thesiger, D.S.O.,
Addis Ababa.

Dear Sir,

I heard that my brother Alexander Coumbis was killed at Addis Alam by an Abyssinian and I left the next morning on the 3rd September for Addis Alam.

I told [Ali Rofi] one of my friends to arrange which chief of the Zabangas to place men to watch my shop but he refused to listen to such request and would not place any watch over my shop, and my shop was left without any guard.

I came back from Addis Alam on the 10th of September and found my shop broken in by thieves.

Before I opened my shop I showed the place wherein they broke in to all people both Europeans and Abyssinians and as the lock was broken and would not open I filed the lock and went into my shop.

When we went in we found that the back of my money box was broken and that I lost through the theft many goods which were in the box.

Yesterday the 12 September one Abyssinian went in to Mr. A. N. Kalor shop to sell certain paper which was belonging to us and one of Mr. Kalos servant called me and showed me the paper.

As I found that the paper belonged to us I seized the Abyssinian who came to Mr. Kalos to sell the paper and took him to the Dana [Danya] who told me to call a guarantor and I did so to appear on Friday the 14th September and also the thief called a guarantor and was let off.

In the usual way the thief was to be chained up and wait for trial day but this was quite another matter.

As I find that I am not able to resist these people without your aid I apply earnestly to you to assist me in this matter.

My brother Alexander Coumbis was a British subject and now is killed by an Abyssinian we leave the matter in your hands.

The Europeans at Addis Ababa seized the murderer and handed to the Dana [Danya] but he got loose and run away.

The Dana is responsible for this as he is the man that let him go after the prisoner have been handed to him.

I leave the whole thing in your hands to assist us in this matter as we are your subjects and cannot appeal to anybody else.

As I left for my brother's funeral at Addis Alam and in the meanwhile theft happened I appeal to you first of all for the death of my brother's case, and in the second instance for my shop was broken in and stolen.

My place is next to the Customs House and so please send some one to call on me or else for me to call on you.

Awaiting your kind and sincere reply,

I am, &c., P. Coumbis.

Addis Ababa,
22nd October 1917.

G. Campbell, Esq.,
H.B.M.'s Consul,
Addis Ababa.

Dear Sir,

I beg to bring to your notice that on the instructions of the Legation Interpreter, I called to the Court at the Ghibi on the following days, Monday, 15/10.17, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday for my brother Alexander Coumbis' case, but did not find anybody of the Legation appear for the case. As I do not know where the case should be brought up and as the matter is in the hands of the Legation, please let me know [exactly] on what day and at what time I should be at the [margin torn] for this case.

I brought this matter to your notice [margin torn] you may think that the matter is delayed on my [margin torn.]

I am, Sir, &c. P. Coumbis.

[Note beneath: **Murderer was allowed to escape.**]

Addis Ababa, le 11 decembre 1917.

Monsieur le Consul de la Grande Bretagne, En Ville.

Monsieur le Consul,

Je prends la liberté de porter à votre connaissance que le gouverneur d'Addis Alam et ses juges nous dérangent souvent et presque toujours pour l'affaire du feu M. Alexandre Coumbis qui fut assassine à Addis-Alam, il y a trois mois et demi environs.

Je vous prie par conséquent de bien vouloir avoir le nécessaire afin que les autorités d'Addis-Alam ne nous dérangent pas et nous laissent libres de travaille.

Espérant que ma demande sera d'être en considération, j'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur le Consul, avec le plus profond respect.

P. Coumbis.

Panayoti Coumbis,

Addis Ababa,
19th December 1917.

To His British Majesty's Consul,
Addis Ababa.

Dear Sir,

I beg to bring to your notice that we are three brothers here in Ethiopia, and are partners in business for a long time.

Out of us three my brother Alexander Coumbis was killed at Addis Alam and at that time I was in Hawash sick and laid up.

The matter of my brother is not yet finished and we are awaiting your honour's decision in this matter.

I have a few thousands dollars owing to me [margin torn] and my brothers in the interior.

Some of this money is for which I am a guarantor to the Bank of Abyssinia, and as the borrower is in Kaffa I request your assistance for the collection of same as I am not able to go about and collect same.

What I mean is that you get me an order from the Ethiopian Government for the payment of same.

Also there is a few francs owing to my late brother Alexander Coumbis by the Railway Company, which is also known to your honour and I request you also for the collection of same.

I await your honour's reply on the above subjects.

Thanking you in anticipation, &c., &c. Panayotis Coumbis.

**CONSULAT GENERAL DE GRECE
EN ETHIOPIE.**

Addis Ababa, le 11/24 December 1918.

Dear Mr. Dodds,

Mister P. Combis is a real Greek subject although he succeeded to obtain the English protection.

The money of his brother came to my under my capacity as General Consul for Greece. Let him appear before me and obtain what ever as Greek subject and will find any protection he desires.

You understand this is a question of principle.

With my kind regards,

Yours faithfully,

Hadjiannou.

[Note below: There were three brothers, all of Greek origin. Alexander killed at Addis Alam (local certif. of naturalization, Rhodesia). Panayotis ... D.....] 16/5/29.

Copy of a note on the file, by Major Dodds.

Case was taken by me before Dejaz Mulagedda in Feb. 1918.

It was decided that the Dania who allowed the murderer of Combis' brother to escape should pay \$900 of which \$300 to go to the Abyssinian Government, and \$600 to Combis' brother (Panayotis) – within 2 months – In the event of the dania producing the murderer within a reasonable time the money to be refunded to the dania and the trial of the actual murderer to take place.

(Signed) J. H. Dodds, Feb. 1918.

Addis Ababa 23rd Dec. 1918.

To His Britannic Majesty Consul.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform your Consulship that my brother Alexander Combis used to work at the railway Co. & he had taken a contrat from a certain man whose name is Georghis Franceskakis who he placed at the house of Messrs. Karan Kandos. The Greek Consul without asking my Consultation to the matter, has asked it directly from the house of Karan Kandos that all papers concerning the late that it should be delivered to him. I beg to inform your Consulship that my brother is a British subject & that the Greek Consul has no right whatever to take in hand the money of my brother as well as I am existed. So I should be greatly obliged if you will kindly take my consideration that the money & as well as the papers should be asked into your delivery, as the late is not one of your subjects.

I have the honour to be, &c. P. Combis.

[Note: Letter addressed to Greek General Consul given to P. Combis. JH Dodds, 21 Dec. 1918.]

Copy of a note by Major J. H. Dodds.

No further steps have been taken in the case. The murderer has not been arrested nor the money paid. (Signed) J.H. Dodds, Jan. 1919.

Addis Ababa, 11th February 1919.

Sir,

I beg to inform you, that two months ago, I have submitted to the British Legation a letter re the capital belonging to my late brother, Alexander Coumbis, and which was forfeited by the Greek Consul, who had no right whatever, as my late brother and myself are protected British subjects.

Mr. Dodds affirmed me that the capital would be asked from the Greek Consul and be sent by the Legation to my sister in law in Greece, the wife of my late brother.

I beg also to inform you, as I have done it in my previous letter, that the Greek Consul has also kept without giving any reason, a power of attorney from my sister in law on my behalf and the written decision of the Russian Legation's Court on the case of my brother against Mr. George Frangeskakis.

I shall be obliged then if you would kindly inform me what has been done on all the above namely, 1^o if the money was sent to my late brother's wife and 2^o if the above mentioned papers have been taken by the Legation from the Greek Consul and can be returned to me.

Your obedient servant, P Combis.

G. Campbell, Esq.,
H.B.M. Consul, Addis Ababa.

[Note" Write Greek Consul. This case has been done by us up till now & we may as well go on with it. The danya who let the brother's murderer escape has not yet paid up.]

{Note: Coumbis' debt with [C??] Cabri Selassie, Kaffa.]

British Legation,
Addis Ababa.
March 8, 1919.

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 11th February last I regret that it is not possible to afford you further assistance in the various matters concerning your late brother in view of the fact that there is now a Greek Consul General in Abyssinia.

As I have explained to you your brother's naturalization in Rhodesia gave him the rights of a British subject in Rhodesia, but in accordance with our regulations this naturalization does not operate beyond the limits of the colony in which it has been conferred. If there were no Greek Consul here he would then have been entitled to our good offices and, if I remember right, this was the case at the time of his death, and also at the time of the Franceskakis affair.

Should you so desire I will forward all information in my possession about his matters to the Greek Consul General, and meanwhile I return his naturalization paper and the Michaelopoulos paper.

Yours faithfully, [CAMPBELL]

Mr. D. Coumbis.

Case was taken by me before Dejaz Muluagedda in Feb. 1918.

It was decided that the dania who allowed the murderer of Combis' brother to escape should pay \$900 of which \$300 to go to the Abyssinian Government, and \$600 to Combis' brother (Panayotis) within 2 months – In the event of the dania producing the

murderer within a reasonable time the money to be refunded to the dania and the trial of the actual murderer to take place.

Feb. 1918. J.H. Dodds.

No further steps have been taken in this case. The murderer has not been arrested nor the money paid.

Jan. 1919. J.H. Dodds.