

A widow meets the man who helped save her husband in wartime

Extract from report by Bernard Orsman in the NZ Herald of 25 October 2004:

The 97-year-old widow of a New Zealand soldier who led a dramatic escape from Nazi-occupied Greece was overcome with emotion yesterday when she came face to face with the man who, as a boy, helped her husband flee.

George Bizos, the South African lawyer who rose to prominence as one of Nelson Mandela's counsel in the Rivonia treason trial, was that boy. His search for seven New Zealand soldiers he escaped with featured on the front page of the *Weekend Herald*.

Freena Lewis was one of a number of readers touched by the story and she could not settle until she met the man who helped save her husband, John, who died eight years ago.

Mrs Lewis, who was an army nurse in World War II stationed in Cairo, Egypt, said it was remarkable to meet the Greek boy her late husband had spoken so much about.

John Lewis was a member of 24 Battalion and lost his two brothers in the war. After the war the agricultural student married Freena and the couple bought a sheep and cattle farm outside Cambridge.


Their daughter, Bronwyn Lewis, said the meeting with Mr Bizos at the Stamford Plaza Hotel was 'mind-blowing and unbelievably emotional' for the family, three generations of whom were present.

After decades wondering if he would ever find the soldiers, Mr Bizos said he was certain that Mrs Lewis' husband, John, was the leader of the group he took food to in hiding and escaped with in 1941.

He recalled Mr Lewis showing leadership, insisting the boat left before dawn and speaking some Greek. 'It is a very fulfilling

moment because in the village when I got back they said, "What happened to the New Zealanders?" and "Why haven't we heard?"' Mr Bizos said.

The lawyer, who ended up in South Africa and became part of the struggle against apartheid, said it took him 32 years to get a passport to leave his adopted country and return to Greece.

He said the village would be excited at the news because the escape had become legendary. He would love the families of the New Zealand soldiers to go to Vasilitsi with him. 



George Bizos meets Freena and Bronwyn Lewis, wife and daughter of Sergeant John Lewis, whom he helped to flee from the Nazis. Picture: Brett Phibbs/New Zealand Herald

Impact of GATS on provision of foreign legal services

GATS, an extension of the General Agreement on Trade (GAT), is concerned with *trade in services*, including such services as accounting, legal matters and computers. Recently a representative of the GCB met with the representatives of the Standing Committee of the Law Society of South Africa, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, and the Department of Trade and Industry (the DTI) to discuss the issue of the provision of foreign legal services in South Africa. The following are extracts from a letter which the GCB chair, Norman Arendse SC, subsequently addressed to the Minister of Trade and Industry:

'The GCB does not support the designation of the UK in terms of sections 3(2)(a)(ii) or 5(i)(a) of the Act [Admission of Advocates Act 74 of 1964] ...

Countries that are party to GATS can make themselves party ... with or without a most favoured nation (MFN) exemption. South Africa is a signatory to GATS without a MFN exemption. This means that if South Africa makes a trade concession to any other country that is also a party to GATS without an MFN exemption, it can be compelled to make the

same concession to all other member states of GATS that have not signed MFN exemptions. Accordingly, if for example, South Africa makes a trade concession to a country such as the UK that is also a signatory to GATS, it can be compelled to make the same concession to the United States of America or the European Union.

It is also possible for member countries to enter into bilateral agreements with each other, which, if properly so designated, will not oblige the two parties to the bilateral agreements to accord the same recognition to all other signatories to GATS who have not subscribed to MFN exemptions. Accordingly, it is possible for the DTI to negotiate a bilateral agreement with a particular country that does not have overriding GATS repercussions. However, in order to avoid these types of universal consequences, it is imperative that the concessions are made in the context of *bilateral agreements* properly so designated.

During the course of the meeting [referred to above] it became apparent that South Africa's recognition of foreign qualifications outside the context of a bilateral agreement properly so designated, can have more major ramifications on pending trade negotiations with regard to the recognition of foreign qualifications by countries that do not have

such close relations with South Africa as the UK. Accordingly, we are concerned that the current framework of the Act has not been formulated with due regard to its potential impact upon South Africa's dealings with its other trading partners under GATS. Among other things, we believe that it would be in South Africa's interests not to recognise foreign legal qualifications in the future without also obtaining a report from the DTI concerning the possible impact of such recognitions upon South Africa's obligations with respect to the admission of foreign practitioners from other countries other than the countries specifically sought to be designated under section 3.

The issue of recognising foreign legal qualifications has far-reaching implications. It also has a significant potential impact on any legal practitioners' bill that may be envisaged. Recognition of the wrong country in the wrong way may ultimately end up removing from the South African government significant areas of discretion that it may have in the regulation of legal practice.

It is for this reason that we would like to engage the minister to arrive at a short and long-term solution for the problems of individual South Africans and others that have obtained foreign qualifications, and now wish to enter the South African legal system. 