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Incredible: Prosecutor's Office too weak for Lembergs

Again we have to read about Latvia, Aivars Lembergs and the strange situation in the Latvian law system.

The Baltic News Network writes in the [English version](#) of its portal on July 26, 2012:

Prosecutor General's Office too weak for Lembergs

The accused Latvian politician Aivars Lembergs seems to be gradually recovering his control over the Latvian oil business. His moves remain unnoticed and are partly approved by inactions of the Prosecutor General's Office.

Ventspils millionaires Olafs Berkis, Olegs Stepanovs, Igors Skoks and Genadijs Sevcovs have been elected into the *AS Ventspils nafta* Supervisory Council. They are all believed to have in mind one and the same thought of selling the Latvian oil business. They intend to do it bypassing the state as the potential owner of the seized Lembergs' shares.

Besides, the persons have carried out a variety of schemes that have brought the state and the company huge losses. Now there is a possibility that national oil business will simply be sold and the money will travel straight into the pockets of Lembergs and Berkis. But the Prosecutor General's Office seems not to be concerned.

The enthusiasm from 2007 about the fight against corruption has practically faded and politicians no longer fear possible punishment that much. Lembergs recently gained access to oil companies' money in cooperation with Berkis, Skoks, Sevcovs and Stepanovs, who had falsified documents and held a number of fake shareholder meetings. This makes it easier to keep bribing politicians and officials who are never tortured by their conscience.

Lembergs also benefits from Berkis's public relations campaign, where false facts cast shadows over the legitimate management of *AS Ventbunkers*.

In most cases, when they talk about the true *Ventbunkers'* majority shareholder, they choose to miss out on a crucial detail. Although they do mention the Swiss attorney Rudolf Meroni, they never say a word about the national interest of Latvia as a state.

Looking back at the events leading up to the dispute among Lembergs, Berkis and Meroni, it should be noted that back in the summer of 2005 100% of shareholders appointed the Swiss attorney as the Chairman of *AS Ventbunkers* Supervisory Council. Already back then, a fight broke out between the shareholders Berkis, Stepanovs, Skoks and Sevcovs, who could not find common ground with Lembergs. As a result, Meroni turned out to be the neutral party – later to be appointed as the custodian of the assets seized within the framework of criminal proceedings.

In 2009 it emerged that not only Lembergs had employed schemes to direct money away from *Ventbunkers*. Also Berkis and his associates had done the same via the two clients of the company – *Gunvor* and *Litasco*.

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Berkis had set up an offshore company which, in the case of *Gunvor* was supposed to get about 50% -60% of *Ventbunkers'* turnover. The offshore company without any single employee got the money, although it was *Ventbunkers* exclusively that covered all the costs and did all the work.

Speaking about *Litasco*, back in 2009 the actual tariff made up about 7.5 euro per tonne. But *Ventbunkers* got only 2.5 euro, although it did all the work and covered all the costs.

Meanwhile, Berkis and his associates from *Litasco* received around 5 euro per tonne. A total of 2.5 million tonnes were shipped, bringing the total amount flowing to the offshore company close to 12 million euro.

According to the agreement with Berkis, *Litasco* stopped paying *Ventbunkers* as soon as Meroni and his team were elected to the *Ventbunkers'* Management and Supervisory Boards.

Thus, starting from February 2010 *Litasco* did not pay *Ventbunkers* for the work done. Neither did the state receive any taxes.

To avoid termination of the agreement, services were still provided, with a hope that it will be possible to find some common ground. As of July 2010, the outstanding amount totalled 23 million euro. Only after *Litasco* was warned of a refusal to load its cargo unless an advance payment is made, the company started paying. It did not, however, agree to repay the huge debt of more than 20 million.

«When the new 2011 agreement had to be signed, we told that we would sign it only after they paid 23 million dollars. They refused. This led to a situation with them attempting to block the *Ventbunkers* terminal. In December 2010, the terminal was full. But we had already confirmed deliveries from Russia. *Litasco* had a vessel which had to ship 100 000 tons of heavy fuel oil, but the company did not let it enter the port. Consequently, around December 24 the terminal was full. But all cargoes that we had agreed to, having in mind that the ship would collect a certain amount, kept traveling to Latvia. This resulted in a huge railway jam with 1 700 wagons spread all over the Latvian Railway System. They did this to force *Ventbunkers* to sign the fuel oil contract for 2011.» Meroni explains.

Thus, Berkis' statements on losses generated under the legitimate management are pure and simple lies. The true reason for the losses are the criminal scams Berkis carried out in order to defraud *Ventbunkers* from its income and the state out of legitimate tax money.

The mentioned fraudulent schemes were carried out for many years in the past. Millions of taxes were not paid. Millions of illegal money were generated, converted into cash and used for bribes. Persons such as Berkis, Skoks, Ševcovs and Stepanovs are only saved by not being officials and having provided substantial evidence against Lembergs. Otherwise they also could be accused of tax evasion and money laundering. Still we see them giving interviews, sponsoring political parties, taking part in elite gatherings.

No comments so far have been given and no action has been taken by Prosecutor General's office. This may end up with another loss for tax payers of this country so patiently suffering and waiting for better times to come.

The original version of this rather long article can be found in [BNN News](#).

For the Latvian Version of this article please [go here](#).

This entry was posted on Friday, July 27th, 2012 at 04:52 and is filed under AS *Ventbunkers*, Dr. Rudolf Meroni, Gennady Ševcovs, Gennady Shevcovs, LITASCO, Olafs Berke, Olafs Berkis, Oleg Stepanov, Oļegs Stepanovs, Rūdolfs Meroni, Ventspils, Ventspils Nafta. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. Both comments and pings are currently closed.

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