

Czech alcohol poisoning scandal

Central Europe has been rocked recently by an alcohol poisoning scandal. The government of the Czech Republic was forced to ban the sale of hard liquor with more than 20% alcohol following the death of 17 people who drank bootleg spirits containing poisonous methanol. Hard spirits across the Czech Republic were cleared from shelves. Exports of hard liquor were also halted. Sales of Czech spirits were also banned in nearby Slovakia after some of its citizens were affected by the poisoning.

Czechs have described the poisoning as the worst in three decades. Police in the Czech Republic later charged two people suspected of being responsible for the wave of alcohol poisoning, which so far has now claimed the lives of 26 people in the country over the last two weeks. Officers believe 15,000 litres of alcohol were diluted with methanol and sold for profit.

State prosecutor Roman Kafta said the two, from the north eastern part of the country, are suspected of producing a "brutal blend" of toxic methanol with drinking alcohol, even though they had to know it could seriously threaten the lives of those who drank it. Authorities believe it is this blend that is responsible for all the deaths.

Mr Kafta said the two were working at a plant that uses methanol as an ingredient to produce windshield washer fluid. He added money was the key motivation. The suspects face up to life in prison if tried and convicted of endangering public health. Methanol is mainly used for industrial purposes but unscrupulous criminal networks sometimes use it to produce liquor because it is cheap and impossible for consumers to distinguish from drinking alcohol.

Some experts say the ban will simply cripple the legal market and further boost the black market with alcohol. Most of the fatal alcohol poisoning took place in smaller cities in northern Moravia, a region in the Czech Republic. Governments in Central Europe warned their citizens not to drink un-certificated alcohol or alcohol bought via the internet. Health authorities established special emergency lines for people to call if necessary.

Category: Czech Republic / Alcohol poisoning / Economic
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Hard liquor:** Think of three things you know about hard liquor. Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) **Discuss the article - and the latest on this story**

6. **The Czech alcohol poisoning scandal:** In pairs choose five things from the article. Then add five thoughts of your own. Write them below. Discuss together.

From the article	Your thoughts
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Let's roleplay 1: Prague FM:** In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Prague FM* radio studio in Prague. Today's interview, in English, is about: *The Czech alcohol poisoning scandal*.

1	The Czech State Prosecutor
2	A legal seller of hard liquor in the Czech Republic
3	An alcoholic who drank some of this liquor and survived
4	An ambulance person

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

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8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **alcohol**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

9. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are in a bar in the Czech Republic. Start a conversation about 'the Czech alcohol poisoning scandal'. *5-minutes*.

10. **Class survey:** As a class (aged over 18/21!!!) find out what people like to drink. Do they prefer *beer/wine/hard spirits/soft drinks*? Discuss together. Write your findings on the board.

11. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) Name the countries.
- 2) How many people are suspected?
- 3) Name the State Prosecutor.
- 4) Where has most of the fatal poisoning taken place?
- 5) What have Health Authorities done?

Student B

- 1) What have governments warned?
- 2) The suspects face what?
- 3) How many people have now died?
- 4) How many litres of alcohol were diluted with methanol?
- 5) Who has banned what and why?

12. **Hard liquor:** In pairs think of five types of hard liquor made in your country. Then add five imported hard liquors. Write them below. Discuss together. Which is best?

From your country	Imported hard liquors
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

13. **Economic situation:** In pairs. Discuss together the economic situation created by the ban on hard liquor over 20% in the Czech Republic. How might the drinks trade suffer or indeed recover in the region. What *has/might* the Czech government *done/do* to assist the trade?

14. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **The Czech alcohol poisoning scandal**.

15. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Czech alcohol _____
- b) The danger _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Have you ever tried any Czech hard liquor?
- 3) What is the latest on this story?
- 4) Do you mix your drinks?
- 5) Do you know any reformed alcoholics?
- 6) Was the Czech government right to do what it did?
- 7) What were the motives behind this poisoning in the Czech Republic?
- 8) Do you know of any other bootleg hard spirits being made?
- 9) What countries are famous for bootlegged spirits?
- 10) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) What do you like to drink?
- 3) What don't you like to drink?
- 4) Have you ever been drunk? Explain!
- 5) Have you ever been poisoned?
- 6) How bad is the poisoning in the Czech Republic?
- 7) Will you be drinking any hard liquor from the Czech Republic soon?
- 8) The Czech Republic is famous for its beers. Do you know any of the brands?
- 9) Have you ever tried any Czech beer?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's play a game: Buying a round in a pub!

Allow 10 minutes – As a class / small groups – in a circle in a clockwise direction...

I went to the bar and I bought ...

Repeat the previous things seen then add one more...

Forget one and you are eliminated!

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Czech alcohol poisoning scandal

Central Europe has been rocked recently by an alcohol poisoning (1)____. The government of the Czech Republic was forced to ban the sale of hard (2)_____ with more than 20% alcohol following the death of 17 people who drank bootleg spirits containing (3)_____ methanol. Hard spirits across the Czech Republic were cleared from shelves. Exports of hard liquor were also halted. Sales of Czech (4)_____ were also banned in nearby Slovakia after some of its (5)_____ were affected by the poisoning.

Czechs have described the poisoning as the worst in three decades. Police in the Czech Republic later charged two people suspected of being responsible for the wave of (6)_____ poisoning, which so far has now claimed the lives of 26 people in the country over the last two weeks. Officers believe 15,000 (7)_____ of alcohol were diluted with methanol and sold for (8)_____.

State prosecutor Roman Kafta said the two, from the north eastern part of the country, are suspected of producing a “brutal blend” of toxic methanol with drinking alcohol, even though they had to know it could seriously threaten the lives of those who drank it. Authorities believe it is this (1)_____ that is responsible for all the (2)_____.

Mr Kafta said the two were working at a (3)_____ that uses methanol as an ingredient to produce windshield washer fluid. He added money was the key (4)_____. The (5)_____ face up to life in (6)_____ if tried and convicted of endangering public health. Methanol is mainly used for industrial purposes but (7)_____ criminal networks sometimes use it to produce liquor because it is (8)_____ and impossible for consumers to distinguish from drinking alcohol.

litres

poisonous

profit

scandal

citizens

spirits

alcohol

liquor

motivation

prison

deaths

blend

suspects

cheap

unscrupulous

plant

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Czech alcohol poisoning scandal

Central Europe has _____ by an alcohol poisoning scandal. The government of the Czech Republic was forced to ban the sale of hard liquor with more than 20% alcohol following the death of 17 people who drank bootleg spirits containing poisonous methanol. Hard spirits across the Czech Republic were _____. Exports of hard liquor were also halted. Sales of Czech spirits were also banned in nearby Slovakia after _____ were affected by the poisoning.

Czechs have described the poisoning as the worst in three decades. Police in the Czech Republic later charged two people suspected of being responsible for the wave of alcohol poisoning, which so far has now claimed the lives of 26 people in the country over _____. Officers believe 15,000 litres of alcohol were diluted with methanol _____.

State prosecutor Roman Kafta said the two, from the north eastern part of the country, are suspected of producing a “_____” toxic methanol with drinking alcohol, even though they had to know it could seriously threaten the lives of those who drank it. Authorities believe it is this blend that is responsible _____.

Mr Kafta said the two were working at a plant that uses methanol as an ingredient to produce windshield washer fluid. He added money was the key motivation. The suspects face _____ if tried and convicted of endangering public health. Methanol is mainly used for industrial purposes but unscrupulous criminal networks sometimes use it to produce liquor because it is cheap and impossible for consumers to distinguish _____.

Some experts say the ban will simply cripple _____ further boost the black market with alcohol. Most of the fatal alcohol poisoning took place _____ northern Moravia, a region in the Czech Republic. Governments in Central Europe warned their citizens not to drink un-certificated alcohol or alcohol bought via the internet. Health authorities established special emergency lines for people _____.

GRAMMAR:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Czech alcohol poisoning scandal

Central Europe has been rocked recently by an alcohol poisoning scandal. The government of the Czech Republic was forced to ban the sale of hard liquor with (1)___ than 20% alcohol following the death of 17 people (2)___ drank bootleg spirits containing poisonous methanol. Hard spirits across the Czech Republic were cleared from shelves. Exports of hard liquor were (3)___ halted. Sales of Czech spirits were also banned in nearby Slovakia after (4)___ of its citizens were affected by the poisoning.

Czechs have described the poisoning as the worst in three decades. Police in the Czech Republic later charged two people suspected of being responsible for (5)___ wave of alcohol poisoning, (6)___ so far has now claimed the lives of 26 people in the country over the last two weeks. Officers believe 15,000 litres of alcohol were diluted (7)___ methanol and sold (8)___ profit.

State prosecutor Roman Kafta said the two, from the north eastern part of the country, are suspected of producing (1)___ "brutal blend" (2)___ toxic methanol with drinking alcohol, even though they had to know it could seriously threaten the lives of those who drank it. Authorities believe it is this blend that is responsible for all the deaths.

Mr Kafta said the two were working (3)___ a plant that uses methanol as (4)___ ingredient to produce windshield washer fluid. He added money was the key motivation. The suspects face up to life (5)___ prison (6)___ tried and convicted of endangering public health. Methanol is mainly used for industrial purposes (7)___ unscrupulous criminal networks sometimes use (8)___ to produce liquor because it is cheap and impossible for consumers to distinguish from drinking alcohol.

the
who
for
which
some
also
with
more

in
an
but
a
of
at
it
if

SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	alcohol	11	brutal
2	windshield	12	prosecutor
3	ingredient	13	scandal
4	authorities	14	government
5	toxic	15	liquor
6	methanol	16	responsible
7	poisonous	17	shelves
8	death	18	citizens
9	bootleg	19	worst
10	unscrupulous	20	motivation

LINKS

http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47641/2/czech_spirits_banned_after_poison_detected.html

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19608461>

http://praguemonitor.com/2012/09/26/bootleg-alcohol-claims-26th-victim-czech-republic?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+PragueDailyMonitor+%28Prague+Daily+Monitor+-+all+stories%29

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/24/czech-tainted-alcohol-methanol-poisoning_n_1909316.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+huffingtonpost%2FkFdd+%28The+Huffington+Post+|+Full+News+Feed%29

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Czech alcohol poisoning scandal: Central Europe has been rocked recently by an alcohol poisoning **scandal**. The government of the Czech Republic was forced to ban the sale of hard **liquor** with more than 20% alcohol following the death of 17 people who drank bootleg spirits containing **poisonous** methanol. Hard spirits across the Czech Republic were cleared from shelves. Exports of hard liquor were also halted. Sales of Czech **spirits** were also banned in nearby Slovakia after some of its **citizens** were affected by the poisoning.

Czechs have described the poisoning as the worst in three decades. Police in the Czech Republic later charged two people suspected of being responsible for the wave of **alcohol** poisoning, which so far has now claimed the lives of 26 people in the country over the last two weeks. Officers believe 15,000 **litres** of alcohol were diluted with methanol and sold for **profit**.

State prosecutor Roman Kafta said the two, from the north eastern part of the country, are suspected of producing a "brutal blend" of toxic methanol with drinking alcohol, even though they had to know it could seriously threaten the lives of those who drank it. Authorities believe it is this **blend** that is responsible for all the **deaths**.

Mr Kafta said the two were working at a **plant** that uses methanol as an ingredient to produce windshield washer fluid. He added money was the key **motivation**. The **suspects** face up to life in **prison** if tried and convicted of endangering public health. Methanol is mainly used for industrial purposes but **unscrupulous** criminal networks sometimes use it to produce liquor because it is **cheap** and impossible for consumers to distinguish from drinking alcohol. (V2)

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