

Family feud over Czech castles and palaces

An interesting article in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* recently was about a family feud between the Czech Foreign Minister and his sister for their castles and palaces in the Czech Republic. Elizabeth von Pezold is the daughter of one of Central Europe's most aristocratic families. She has begun a legal battle for the castles and palaces worth hundreds of millions of euros that were expropriated by the Czechoslovakian state in 1947. However, her adopted brother, Karl Schwarzenberg, the Czech Foreign Minister, apparently does not. The homes include the Czech Krumlov castle, a jewel in the crown of Czech tourism, which towers over an ancient town in southern Bohemia. But Mrs von Pezold claims her brother has blocked her case. She argues that the Prince of Schwarzenberg, to use his formal title, has failed to do the wishes of their father, whose will asked that his successor should fight to get the property back. "It is a question of justice," said Mrs von Pezold. "After the end of communism he kept promising that he would claim property restitution but then at the last minute he changed his mind. Maybe he thought a big restitution was incompatible with his political career."

Denied his support, Mrs von Pezold now has some 23 cases in Czech courts and faces a long lonely battle. So far, she has spent €2m on legal fees. The family's roots lie in Central Europe. The Schwarzenbergs opposed Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1938, a stance that cost them their lands. Their father Heinrich was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. But that counted for little in post-war communist Czechoslovakia. In 1947, a law was passed targeting the Schwarzenbergs specifically. The family lost everything again, and fled to Austria. It is this law, argues Mr Schwartzberg that means he can do little to help. "The law is an injustice but legally it is incontestable," he has told a Czech magazine. Complicating the issue is his legal status. He was adopted to unite the family and provide a male heir. Mrs von Pezold claims that by failing to fight for their former property, he has forfeited his right to be sole heir, and jeopardising his ownership of Austrian properties he has already inherited. The family has sometimes fallen foul of historic stereotypes portraying them as Germanic foreigners greedy for Czech land. Opinion polls show that most Czechs favour the restitution of expropriated property.

Category: Czech Republic / Castles and palaces / Restitution

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

- 1. Czech castles and palaces:** Think of three famous Czech castles and palaces? Where are they located? Go round the room swapping details with others.
- 2. Geography: Czech Republic:** Where is the Czech Republic? What is its capital? What countries surround it? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.
- 3. 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!
- 4. Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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?
- 7. Krumlov castle in the Czech Republic:** In pairs think of five reasons it should be returned to its original owners. Then add five reasons why it shouldn't. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

Reasons why it should be returned	Reasons why it shouldn't
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.

- 8. Let's print and discuss: *Teachers*** – print out some images (*see links on page 8*) of *Krumlov castle in the Czech Republic* then get the class to discuss them.
- 9. Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Property restitution**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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10. 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. Today's interview is about: *Property restitution in the Czech Republic and the Schwarzenberg family properties*. 10-20 minutes.

1	Elizabeth von Pezold	3	Czech President
2	Karl Schwarzenberg	4	An ordinary Czech citizen

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

11. Let's roleplay 2: In pairs. You are in a pub in Prague. One of you is a tourist. The other is a Czech person who is an old retired communist minister. You met by chance. The tourist has read the newspaper story about property restitution in the Czech Republic and the Schwarzenberg family. Discuss it together. 5-minutes.

12. 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 family.
- 2) Name the castle.
- 3) How many legal cases are outstanding in Czech courts?
- 4) How much has this lady spend on legal fees so far?
- 5) What happened in 1938?

Student B

- 1) What job in the Czech government does the adopted brother have?
- 2) What happened in 1947?
- 3) Why did the family adopt a boy?
- 4) Where was their father sent?
- 5) What do opinion polls now suggest?

13. Let's draw! *In pairs/small groups* on the board or on a large sheet of paper draw a castle. Label it. Discuss its features. Would you like to live there?

14. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: ***Krumlov castle in the Czech Republic***. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

15. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: ***Property restitution***. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

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

- a) The Czech Foreign Minister _____
- b) The communists _____
- c) The feud _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What three bits of advice would you offer Mrs von Pezold?
- 3) What three bits of advice would you offer the Czech government?
- 4) Is the Czech government frightened to lose one of its State crown jewels, which one of its previous communist governments stole?
- 5) Who will win this case? Why?
- 6) If you had lived in Czechoslovakia and had had property stolen would you want it back?
- 7) Do you think there might be 'darker elements' involved with the returning of properties to original owners?
- 8) If the Czech government still refuses to change the law and return the properties surely it should offer compensation?
- 9) Can the Czech government actually afford to pay compensation to owners of properties stolen by the communists?
- 10) Why is the Czech Foreign Minister blocking his sister's fight to reclaim the family properties?

Student B questions

- 1) How would you feel if your property was stolen by the State and no compensation was paid?
- 2) Is Elizabeth von Pezold right to fight for her property?
- 3) Why doesn't the Czech government simply change the law and give the property back?
- 4) If most Czech people support a change in the law of property restitution then why doesn't the Czech government introduce it as a new law?
- 5) Surely, the Czech government is elected to abide by its citizens wishes and if the majority of citizens are in favour of property restitution then the Czech law should be changed?
- 6) Should the Czech government pay the legal fees of Mrs von Pezold?
- 7) Is the Czech government frightened to change the law on property restitution? Why? Why not?
- 8) Is the Czech Republic still full of elected communists in power?
- 9) The article is about returning property to its original owners that was stolen by the communists. Surely in this day and age this should be done?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Property restitution in the Czech Republic/your country

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Property restitution in the Czech Republic / your country
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(The teacher can moderate the session)

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

An interesting article in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* recently was about a family feud between the Czech Foreign Minister and his sister for their castles and (1)_____ in the Czech Republic. Elizabeth von Pezold is the daughter of one of Central Europe's most (2)_____ families. She has begun a legal battle for the castles and palaces worth hundreds of millions of euros that were (3)_____ by the Czechoslovakian state in 1947. However, her adopted brother, Karl Schwarzenberg, the Czech Foreign Minister, apparently does not. The homes include the Czech Krumlov castle, a jewel in the crown of Czech tourism, which towers over an ancient town in southern Bohemia. But Mrs von Pezold claims her brother has blocked her case. She argues that the Prince of Schwarzenberg, to use his (4)_____ title, has failed to do the wishes of their father, whose will asked that his (5)_____ should fight to get the property back. "It is a question of justice," said Mrs von Pezold. "After the end of (6)_____ he kept promising that he would claim property (7)_____ but then at the last minute he changed his mind. Maybe he thought a big restitution was (8)_____ with his political career."

Denied his support, Mrs von Pezold now has some 23 cases in Czech (1)_____ and faces a long lonely battle. So far, she has spent €2m on legal fees. The family's roots lie in Central Europe. The Schwarzenbergs opposed Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1938, a stance that cost them their lands. Their father Heinrich was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. But that counted for little in post-war communist Czechoslovakia. In 1947, a law was passed targeting the Schwarzenbergs specifically. The family lost everything again, and fled to Austria. It is this law, argues Mr Schwarzenberg that means he can do little to help. "The law is an (2)_____ but legally it is (3)_____,", he has told a Czech magazine. Complicating the issue is his legal (4)_____. He was adopted to unite the family and provide a male (5)_____. Mrs von Pezold claims that by failing to fight for their former (6)_____, he has (7)_____ his right to be sole heir, and jeopardising his ownership of Austrian properties he has already (8)_____.

incompatible

successor

communism

formal

aristocratic

restitution

expropriated

palaces

injustice

property

heir

status

incontestable

forfeited

inherited

courts

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

An interesting article in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* recently was about a family feud between the Czech Foreign Minister and his sister for their castles and palaces in the Czech Republic. Elizabeth von Pezold is the daughter of one of Central Europe's (1)___ aristocratic families. She has begun a legal battle for the castles and palaces worth hundreds of millions of euros that were expropriated by the Czechoslovakian state in 1947. (2)___, her adopted brother, Karl Schwarzenberg, the Czech Foreign Minister, apparently does not. The homes include the Czech Krumlov castle, a jewel in the crown of Czech tourism, (3)___ towers over an ancient town in southern Bohemia. But Mrs von Pezold claims her brother has blocked her case. She argues that the Prince of Schwarzenberg, to use his formal title, has failed to do the wishes of (4)___ father, whose will asked (5)___ his successor (6)___ fight to get the property back. "It is a question of justice," said Mrs von Pezold. "After the end of communism he kept promising that he would claim property restitution but (7)___ at the last minute he changed his mind. Maybe he thought a big restitution was incompatible (8)___ his political career."

their

should

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most

which

however

then

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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	jewel	11	stereotypes
2	thought	12	injustice
3	expropriated	13	Czechoslovakia
4	opinion polls	14	successor
5	jeopardising	15	feud
6	foul	16	specifically
7	justice	17	forfeited
8	heir	18	aristocratic
9	stance	19	property
10	concentration camp	20	communist

LINKS

<http://www.discoverczech.com/cesky-krumlov/castle-complex.php4> - see page 2

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%8Cesk%C3%BD_Krumlov – see page 2

http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfukys_visit-the-krumlov-castle-in-the-czech-republic_travel - see page 2

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/czechrepublic/8684376/Czech-foreign-minister-and-sister-in-feud-over-family-castles-and-palaces.html>

<http://www.economist.com/node/648310>

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/government-offers-churches-less-money-more-land-in-property-restitution>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Family feud over Czech castles and palaces: An interesting article in Britain's *Daily Telegraph* recently was about a family feud between the Czech Foreign Minister and his sister for their castles and **palaces** in the Czech Republic. Elizabeth von Pezold is the daughter of one of Central Europe's most **aristocratic** families. She has begun a legal battle for the castles and palaces worth hundreds of millions of euros that were **expropriated** by the Czechoslovakian state in 1947. However, her adopted brother, Karl Schwarzenberg, the Czech Foreign Minister, apparently does not. The homes include the Czech Krumlov castle, a jewel in the crown of Czech tourism, which towers over an ancient town in southern Bohemia. But Mrs von Pezold claims her brother has blocked her case. She argues that the Prince of Schwarzenberg, to use his **formal** title, has failed to do the wishes of their father, whose will asked that his **successor** should fight to get the property back. "It is a question of justice," said Mrs von Pezold. "After the end of **communism** he kept promising that he would claim property **restitution** but then at the last minute he changed his mind. Maybe he thought a big restitution was **incompatible** with his political career." Denied his support, Mrs von Pezold now has some 23 cases in Czech **courts** and faces a long lonely battle. So far, she has spent €2m on legal fees. The family's roots lie in Central Europe. The Schwarzenbergs opposed Hitler's takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1938, a stance that cost them their lands. Their father Heinrich was sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. But that counted for little in post-war communist Czechoslovakia. In 1947, a law was passed targeting the Schwarzenbergs specifically. The family lost everything again, and fled to Austria. It is this law, argues Mr Schwarzenberg that means he can do little to help. "The law is an **injustice** but legally it is **incontestable**," he has told a Czech magazine. Complicating the issue is his legal **status**. He was adopted to unite the family and provide a male **heir**. Mrs von Pezold claims that by failing to fight for their former **property**, he has **forfeited** his right to be sole heir, and jeopardising his ownership of Austrian properties he has already **inherited**. (V2)

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