



The neighbourhood of Errekaleor in Vitoria-Gasteiz. See page 2 for more details.



## Weekly English Practice



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English  
Coaching  
Projects S.Coop.

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## Squatters\* occupy empty London property

*The vast £15m home, bought by Russian Andrey Goncharenko in 2014, is housing about 25 people*

**\*squatters:** people who occupy uninhabited buildings

**shelter:** a place of temporary refuge from bad weather or danger

**to sleep rough:** to sleep in uncomfortable conditions, normally outside

**figures (context):** official government statistics

**flamboyant:** attracting attention because of extravagance, exuberance, confidence or stylishness

**pipeline:** a long underground pipe conveying oil or gas

**lavish:** sumptuously rich, extravagant or luxurious

A veteran group of **squatters** has occupied an empty £15m central London property, purchased by a Russian oligarch in 2014, and opened it as a homeless **shelter**. The extensive, five-storey Eaton Square property was bought by Andrey Goncharenko, a little-known oligarch who has bought a number of luxury properties in London in recent years.

The squatters – the Autonomous Nation of Anarchist Libertarians, known as ANAL – said they entered the building through an open window on 23rd January and have accommodated about 25 homeless people so far, many of whom had been **sleeping rough** around Victoria station. Tom Fox, 23, one of the squatters, said: "It is criminal that there are so many homeless people and at the same time so many empty buildings. Our occupation is highlighting this injustice."

New rough sleeper **figures** published this week have revealed an increase of 16% from last year, to more than 4,000. More than 200,000 homes have been empty for more than six months, according to new government **figures**.

Fox said ANAL members had set up a projector so they could hold movie nights, are collecting portable cookers to provide food for homeless people and are planning to

host talks about homelessness and other issues. They have also established a free shop offering clothing.

The house is one of four purchased by Goncharenko over a three-year period, including Hanover Lodge, in Regent's Park, for which he paid £120m – making it one of the UK's most expensive homes.

The 1,329 square metre property was built in around 1825 by the Grosvenor family and was until recently the home of the Spanish cultural centre Instituto Cervantes, which has moved to The Strand. It is in the heart of Belgravia and a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace.

The businessman is "obscure" by the **flamboyant** standards of Russian oligarchs. He is described as the chief executive of a **subsidiary** of Gazprom, the country's biggest and best-connected gas company. The firm – Gazprom Invest Yug – builds gas **pipelines** and other gas transport networks.

In 2011, a gossip columnist reported that he had hosted a **lavish** party in the south of France, a favourite summer destination for Moscow's super-rich. The venue was Le Palm Beach, a casino in Cannes, and the guests were described as "secretive and completely unknown billionaires".

Adapted from: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/27/squatters-open-oligarchs-empty-london-property-as-homeless-shelter>

**"Let's chat about that!"**

Write your answers in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- What is squatting? Is it wrong? Why/not?
- How many homes do you/your family own?
- Is your mortgage fully paid off? Or does the bank own your house? How do you feel about this?
- What would you do to end homelessness?
- Should rich people pay more tax to help the poor? Why (not)?
- Should big companies/the rich be helped to avoid paying more tax?
- Is it ethically wrong to have a second home?
- If so, what should be done about it?



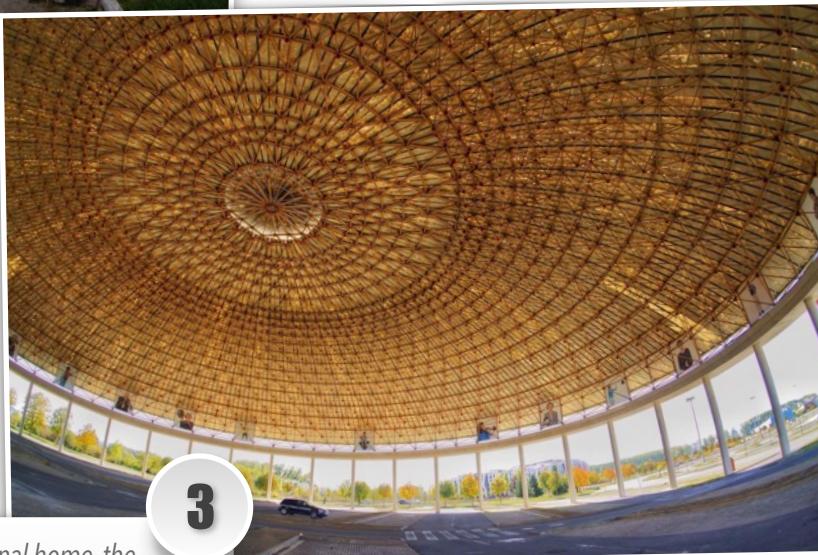
# “iLook, iThink, iSpeak”

Express yourself better!



2

The neighbourhood of Errekaleor in Vitoria-Gasteiz was built to house workers that were coming to the city in increasing numbers due to the industrial expansion that started in the 1950s. There were 192 houses organised in 16 blocks. At the start of the 21st century, however, the city council decided to demolish the ageing area and began to rehouse the inhabitants. The financial crisis meant the plans were put on hold although the compulsory purchase orders continued. In 2013, students from the UPV began to occupy the empty flats and currently there are around 120 people living in the neighbourhood.



3

This old roof structure now sits just a hundred metres from its original home, the Fernando Buesa Arena in Vitoria-Gasteiz. The building was originally a cattle market but in the early 1990s was reformed and converted into a 5,000 capacity sports arena for the city's increasingly successful basketball team Saski Baskonia. A few years later, the roof was lifted to accommodate a second ring that increased the seating capacity to 9,500. A third enlargement to 15,500 seats in 2011 required the removal of the original roof but because of its symbolism it wasn't dismantled. Instead, an enormous crane lifted it off the structure and placed it in the adjoining car park.

## WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH THESE PROPERTIES?

1



The Maunsell Sea Forts were erected near the Thames and Mersey rivers in Britain to help defend against potential German air or naval raids during WWII. After being decommissioned in 1950, they have been inhabited by various new tenants, including pirate radio operators and by the Principality of Sealand, which claims to be an independent sovereign state.



4

The Nara Dreamland park, inspired by Disneyland, was opened in 1961. In 2006, however, it was closed down. Now it is a popular destination for urban explorers, although security guards still occasionally patrol the grounds and impose fines.