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A family feud over Castel Group erupts into a cross-border legal battle

Le Monde reports that Romy Castel is battling relatives for control of the wine and beer empire in courts from France to Singapore

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A family and legal battle over control of Castel Group is shaking one of France’s leading wine businesses and a major beer company, opening a rare public struggle inside a group that has long operated with little visibility.

Le Monde reported that the conflict has been building for about a year and has spread across France, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Singapore. The newspaper described an unusually bitter fight inside the company founded by Pierre Castel, with court actions, personal attacks, lawyers, advisers and rival communications campaigns pulling the group in different directions.

The dispute centers on control of the business empire Pierre Castel built over decades. According to Le Monde, the legal fight pits Romy Castel, his only daughter, and several of her cousins from the wine side of the family against the head of DF Holding. The information available did not detail all of the claims before the courts, but the breadth of the jurisdictions involved points to a struggle reaching far beyond a simple family disagreement.

The clash has unfolded against a striking family backdrop. On October 17, a small group gathered at Pierre Castel’s home in southern Portugal to mark his 100th birthday. Le Monde said about 20 guests attended, including Romy Castel, Alain Castel and Philippe Castel, two nephews from the extended family. There were balloons, a birthday cake and a barrel engraved with the words Pierre Castel, 100 years.

Romy Castel, 52, gave Le Monde a rare interview in late October and said the event was emotional for her father. She said people around the group remained deeply grateful to him even though he is no longer active in the business. She told the newspaper that he cried during the celebration, but in what she described as a good way.

That private scene stood in sharp contrast to the fight now surrounding the group. Le Monde quoted a person with close knowledge of Castel as saying even bankers no longer know whom to trust because each side is issuing statements and counterstatements. The same person said the two camps appear to be living on different planets, a sign of how far the dispute has escalated.

The group’s internal tensions carry weight well beyond the family. Castel occupies a major place in wine and beer, and a prolonged governance conflict could influence strategy and investment decisions across its drinks business. That could affect brands, distribution networks and suppliers if decision-making slows or if outside partners grow

more cautious while the legal cases continue.

The company’s scale makes that uncertainty especially important in the beverage sector. In wine, Castel has long been a dominant force in France. In beer, it also holds significant interests. A dispute over control at that level can shape how capital is allocated, how expansion plans are handled and how management deals with trading partners in France and abroad.

Le Monde identified Gregory Clerc as the group’s chief executive, underscoring that the struggle is playing out around an operating business that still needs day-to-day management while the ownership battle unfolds. The article did not indicate that normal commercial activity had stopped, but it portrayed a company under growing strain from competing centers of influence.

Pierre Castel’s personal role adds to the sensitivity of the moment. Le Monde described him as tired and living in retirement in Portugal after having run the group with an iron hand throughout his life. In family-controlled companies, especially those built around a founder’s authority, any weakening of that central figure can expose tensions that had been contained for years. Castel now appears to be facing that kind of transition in full public view.

The case is also unusual because of the number of places where it is being fought. Proceedings and disputes spanning Europe and Asia can make any settlement harder, increase legal costs and prolong uncertainty for management and business partners. By November 22, no public resolution had emerged from the information available.