

**Outline the history of Czechoslovakia "From  
National Cleansing to Communist  
Dictatorship" using the relevant chapter  
from Mary Heimann**



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# Czechoslovakia: Before 1938

- Formed of 5 territories from the former Austro-Hungarian empire
- Multinational state: Czech, German and Slovak are the main 3 ethnic groups
- Ongoing tensions between Czech, Slovak and German populations - increased dissatisfaction from the Germans
- Pre-war Communist Party membership around 100,000



# 1938: A major turning point

- 1938 was a major socio-political turning point for the country
- Growing tensions between Czechoslovakia & German populations getting worse, especially with growing influence and threats from the Nazis
- Munich Betrayal = Czechoslovakia doesn't have a say in the annex of the Sudetenlands and are left vulnerable to Nazi Germany.
- Beneš's exile to London in October. He doesn't return until after the war.



# Expulsion of Germans

- Over 2.5 million Sudeten Germans expelled
- Germans, Hungarians, Traitors and Collaborators all named as targets during the 'Wild Transfer' (May - Aug 1945). Incredibly violent.
- Largest forced migration of group of European people at the time in history.
- Germans that remained in Czechoslovakia have to wear white armbands to identify themselves and under rigid restrictions. Heimann parallels these times to expulsion techniques to rid themselves of Jewish populations in years prior.



# Communist Dictatorship

- Communism growing increasingly popular after the war despite large losses during WW2
- Core support from the working class. Provides further advantages for these groups while silencing the middle class.
- Increasing number of Communist influence in positions of power from 1945 as well as becoming the largest Communist party later on.
- Tensions between leaders of the National Front, until many of the leaders resign in 1947. Many Communists put into power.
- Coup d'état in 1948 consolidates unchallenged power for the KSC for 40 years until the Prague Spring briefly lifts restrictions.



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What the characters in ‘The Cremator’ reflect with this history in mind?
- What is the significance of ‘fifth pillar’ figures and this relevance to Kopfrkingl?
- Could ‘The Cremator’ be considered timeless and applicable to other oppressive regimes?



# READING LIST

## I

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