

HISTORICAL EASTERN BLOC

Study Guide

Topic:

*The Aftermath of the
Chernobyl Disaster (1986)*





Aftermath of Chernobyl Disaster (1986)

MisgavIC IV

November 13, 2025



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COUNTRY MATRIX

Bulgaria
Czechoslovakia
East Germany
Hungary
Poland
Romania
Belarus SSR
Estonia SSR

Georgia SSR
Kazakhstan SSR
Latvia SSR
Lithuania SSR
Moldova SSR
Russia SFSR
Ukraine SSR

COMMITTEE DETAILS

This committee is the Historic Eastern Bloc. It is a fictional congregation of nations belonging to the political alliance of the Eastern Bloc. Though to an extent made up, this committee will deal with the real historical Chernobyl disaster.

The 15 countries of the Eastern Bloc have been called to meet and discuss the environmental and, more importantly, political implications of this disaster. In the climate of the seemingly liberalizing USSR, this disaster could pose a significant threat to Soviet power if weakness is perceived, and possibly be a turning point in its history.

It's April 28th 1986. It is up to you, as leaders of the Eastern Bloc, to pursue *your* interests (not necessarily your people's) - whether that be maintaining the Soviet status quo of repression and socialism, or leveraging this opportunity to bring about the collapse of the USSR.



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INTRODUCTION TO TOPIC

Since 1947, the USSR and the US have been caught in the midst of the Cold War. This reality brought with it immense tensions between the two superpowers, ever since the fall of Berlin. In 1986, the situation in the Soviet Union seemed to be going well. In January of that year, Gorbachev proposed a nuclear disarmament plan. In February, the idea for Glasnost emerged, and in April Gorbachev stated that he is ready to dissolve the Warsaw Pact if NATO is dissolved. Five days later - the Chernobyl disaster took place.

The Chernobyl disaster was the most deadly nuclear disaster in the history of mankind. It began on April 26th 1986, and ended on May 8 (although, at the time of the committee it is still ongoing). The Chernobyl disaster affected tens of thousands across Europe and Asia. The nuclear wasteland that was created by the disaster is uninhabitable to humankind to this day. In this historical committee, you will discuss how to solve the most deadly nuclear accident in history and contain it - environmentally and politically.

***IMPORTANT NOTE:**

You will be representing the heads of state of your countries as of April 28th 1986, NOT your people.





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KEY TERMS TO KNOW

Warsaw Pact - An alliance between the Soviet Union and the other Eastern Bloc countries, founded in 1955, primarily with the aim of countering the NATO alliance and the West.

The USSR - The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

SSR - Soviet Socialist Republic - technically independent members of the USSR, but with limited self-governance.

The Eastern Bloc - Also known as the Communist Bloc or Soviet Bloc, is a group of communist states, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe, that are aligned with the Soviet Union. For this committee's purposes, this definition includes the countries represented in it.

Liquidators - The emergency personnel initially sent to the Chernobyl Disaster site, tasked with cleaning it and containing the nuclear fallout.

IAEA - The International Atomic Energy Agency; a UN organization responsible for ensuring that countries use nuclear power peacefully, responsibly and safely.

Meltdown - A rapid and disastrous decline or collapse. In the context of the Chernobyl Disaster, it refers to the reactor core overheating and melting, releasing dangerous radiation into the environment.

Power Plant - An industrialised facility that produces energy from various sources (in this case nuclear energy), e.g. the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

Buffer States - a country situated geographically between two or more larger, potentially rival powers, acting as a buffer to prevent or lessen conflict between them.

The Cold War - a non-armed conflict that included an enormous amount of proxy wars between the Western powers and the Eastern Bloc that lasted from 1947 to 1991.

De-Stalinization - a process that Nikita Khrushchev created to reverse Stalin's actions, which included renaming Stalingrad to Volgograd, teaching about the Great Terror and taking down anything that empowered Stalin's image.

Socialism - an economic and political system where the people, typically through the state or government, collectively own and control the means of production, rather than private individuals or corporations.

Communism - a socioeconomic and political ideology that aims to establish a classless society where the major means of production are owned and controlled by the public, eliminating private property and class structures.



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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

World War II

In August 1939, one month before the outbreak of WWII, Stalin accepted Hitler's proposal for a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. This agreement established a relationship of cooperation between the two nations and divided Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence, with the USSR being guaranteed control of Eastern Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and part of Romania.

In the following month, Germany and the USSR jointly invaded Poland, causing France and the UK to declare war, thus triggering the Second World War. Over the following months, Stalin pressured Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to sign treaties of "mutual assistance," then, in mid-June 1940, when international attention was focused on the German invasion of France, Soviet troops raided border posts in the Baltic countries. Stalin claimed that the mutual assistance treaties had been violated, and gave six-hour ultimatums for new governments to be formed in each country, including lists of persons for cabinet posts provided by the Kremlin.

Elections for parliament and other offices were held with single candidates listed, the official results of which showed pro-Soviet candidates approval by 92.8% of the voters of Estonia, 97.6% of the voters in Latvia and 99.2% of the voters in Lithuania. The resulting governments immediately requested admission into the USSR, which was swiftly granted. Later that same month, the USSR annexed parts of Romania and proclaimed them to now be part of the new Moldovian SSR. This pattern of strong-arming, exerting political and economic pressure, and even annexation became trademarks of USSR policy.

By the end of the war, the map of Europe had been transformed. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the Allies agreed to divide Germany into occupation zones controlled by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, with Berlin, located deep inside the Soviet zone, also split among the three powers. Stalin secured a dominant influence over Eastern Europe, promising free elections in the countries liberated by the Soviets. In practice, however, the USSR installed pro-Soviet governments across the region, laying the foundation for the Eastern Bloc and effectively dividing the continent into Western and Soviet spheres of influence. This sparked the beginnings of the Cold War.



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The Stalin Era

Joseph Stalin was a revolutionary and the second leader of the Soviet Union. Born in 1878, he became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1924 by exploiting his position as general secretary to consolidate power. His ideology was also different from the typical Bolshevik idea of an international revolution. Instead, his vision for socialism shifted to a foremost focus on strengthening the USSR, while surrounding it with loyal, communist nations (the Eastern Bloc).

Stalin ruled with an iron fist. He often suppressed and deported political opponents. He implemented the use of secret police and conducted show trials to eliminate anyone he saw as a threat. He was a famously ruthless leader and secured the USSR's position as a powerful global leader on the world stage.

For much of his rule, the Soviet Union maintained a diplomatic relationship with the West. But after World War II, tensions escalated. In 1947, the United States announced the Truman Doctrine, promising to contain the spread of communism, and marking the beginning of the Cold War. A year later, due to the dire economic state of Europe following the war, the US launched the European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan, which aimed to revitalize the economies of Western European nations. Worried that economic aid to West Berlin would inspire the abandonment of communism for the West, Stalin tried to pressure the Allies by blocking supply routes to West Berlin, hoping to force them out and prove the strength of communism. Instead, the Allies responded with the Berlin Airlift, flying in food and supplies for nearly a year until Stalin backed down.

Stalin was the longest-serving ruler of the Soviet Union, and died in 1953 due to a stroke.

The Khrushchev Thaw

Nikita Khrushchev became leader of the Soviet Union after Stalin's death in 1953. Khrushchev openly criticized Stalin's rule, calling it a period of fear and repression. He condemned Stalin's hard-line policies and abuses of power that had defined the era. Therefore, he pushed for a policy known as de-Stalinization, which included loosening censorship and repression, releasing political prisoners, reducing the role of the secret police, renaming Stalin-affiliated locations, and removing statues of Stalin.



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On paper, Khrushchev was Stalin's polar opposite. However, his reign was far from peaceful, and resembled his predecessor's in many ways. In June 1953, workers in East Germany rose up against the hard-line communist government. Soviet tanks crushed the uprising, leaving at least 55 protesters dead. Three years later, in 1956, unrest erupted again across Eastern Europe. In Poland, the Poznań protests, sparked by poor working conditions and demands for political change, were put down by the Polish army, with dozens killed. Later that year, the Hungarian Revolution broke out when Hungarian university students called for the establishment of a more democratic government. The Soviet Union responded with a full-scale military invasion, killing thousands and forcing many more to flee into exile.

By the early 1960s, the USSR's relationship with the West reached an all-time-low. Tensions and distrust were at their highest in decades. This era was defined by events such as the Berlin Crisis of 1961, when the Berlin Wall was built, and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

To combat the Western powers, which had allied to form NATO, Khrushchev formed the Warsaw Pact. The pact was a collective defense treaty signed in Warsaw, Poland, between the Soviet Union and seven other Eastern Bloc nations. Its formation was intended to "right" the balance of power between East and West Europe, but in actuality, served as a platform for the USSR to exert political pressure over its satellite states. While Khrushchev did support a range of reforms during his reign, he also ultimately exhibited a willingness to employ Stalinist force to keep the Soviet sphere of influence intact - a policy that would come to change.

Gorbachev's Era of Reforms

Since Khrushchev, the general trend of the USSR has been towards more liberal policies. Since the appointment of Gorbachev as the General Secretary of the Soviet Union in 1985, the buffer states and in particular the Warsaw Pact have gained more independence in their actions and politics with Gorbachev's non-interventionist policies. In this reform, Gorbachev allowed the Warsaw Pact members to restructure and reform, which had been strictly forbidden beforehand - and often met with brutal crackdowns and force. Glasnost, a policy of "openness" (direct translation) adopted by Gorbachev, allowed the Soviet Union's citizens to have free speech, which was far removed from previous years' reality in the Soviet Union. This trend of liberalization has continued, and some are asking themselves whether the time to leave the USSR has come?



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CURRENT SITUATION

Chernobyl is a town located in Ukraine, about 100 kilometers north of Kyiv and about 15 kilometers south of the Ukraine-Belarusian border. The Chernobyl power plant was constructed in 1972. The plant at that time was made from four nuclear reactors. The first and second units were built between 1970 and 1977, and the third and fourth units were constructed in 1983. In 1982, nuclear plant #1 had a partial meltdown due to a faulty cooling valve remaining closed following maintenance. The plant was repaired eight months later.

Since 1983, the Central General Committee of the Soviet Union had known that the Chernobyl power plant was “one of the most dangerous plants in the USSR.” The reason for this statement was the fact that the structure of the building would allow excess heat to shift the building structure and cause the building to collapse or cause a meltdown. On 26 of April 1986 at 1:23 AM, Unit Four’s reactor malfunctioned during a safety test and exploded.

Currently, as of April 28th 1986, a graphite fire is burning which, if not contained, could cause serious damage to the natural environment and severe health problems like cancer and radiation sickness across Europe and Asia. The radiation level is 5.6 roentgens per second (20160 roentgens per hour, with a lethal dose being 100 roentgens per hour). The locals have been evacuated since yesterday (April 27th). There are approximately 200 “Liquidators” (emergency personnel), made up of civil and military personnel, currently on-site trying to contain the situation. They are doing their best, but are facing serious danger and aren’t equipped with proper nuclear protection.

Radiation levels have also set off alarms at the Forsmark Nuclear Power Plant in Sweden, over 1,000 kilometres from Chernobyl. The government of Sweden has contacted the Soviet government to inquire if there was a nuclear accident in the Soviet Union. At the moment, the USSR is denying everything.

You, as your countries’ heads of state, have three main goals:

1. **Contain the Environmental Disaster**

The explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant has unleashed stupendously dangerous levels of radiation into the air, spreading across the Soviet Union and into neighboring countries. While



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the full extent of the damage is still unclear, the environmental threat is immense. Crops, livestock, and water sources may already be contaminated, and winds risk carrying radioactive particles deep into Europe and Asia. You must coordinate a unified and effective response to limit the environmental harm. This means organizing containment and ensuring that radiation levels remain manageable.

2. **Maintain a Strong Political Image**

Beyond the physical fallout, the Chernobyl disaster threatens the image of the socialist system itself. Western governments are already spreading narratives of Soviet incompetence and secrecy, and the credibility of the Eastern Bloc is at risk. You must ensure that the public political response reflects unity, decisiveness, and control. Admitting too much could expose flaws within the system; denying too much risks appearing deceitful if the truth spreads. The task, therefore, is to strike a delicate balance - how much do you reveal to the international community and the public?

3. **Keep the Public Content**

Inside your borders, fear is growing. Citizens are hearing rumors of invisible poisons in the air and whispers of a cover-up. If left unchecked, this could spiral into anger, protest, or demands for reform. Precisely the kind of instability the regime cannot afford. Delegates must find ways to maintain calm and prevent unrest. Information must be controlled tightly, and the official narrative must emphasize order, safety, and the strength of leadership.

This is the current situation in the committee. The 15 major Eastern Bloc states have been convened and informed of the dire situation. It is your responsibility as delegates to determine how to respond to the apparent dangers that the disaster imposes, who to inform, and whether or not to ask for aid from the West. You must weigh your options carefully - how do you maintain your country's image in the face of this disaster and prevent the political collapse of the Eastern Bloc? Or alternatively, if you seek liberalization and reform, how do you sabotage the USSR, incite revolt, and possibly declare independence and bring about its end?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



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1. What immediate danger is posed to your country by the Chernobyl disaster?
2. What are your interests in regard to the political containment of the disaster from the public and the international community?
3. How can you make the most of the situation? What can you achieve by leveraging the situation and the fragility of the USSR?
4. How has your government responded in recent years to the apparent liberalization of the USSR?

RESOURCES

- ✎ [Chernobyl: Chapter 1. The site and accident sequence-NEA](#)
- ✎ [Chernobyl: Chapter 3. Reactions of national authorities-NEA](#)
- ✎ [Hiding truth at all costs: Revisiting the Chernobyl disaster-NATO](#)
- ✎ [The Chernobyl Disaster-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [International Workers Day-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [Chernobyl power plant-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [Mikhail Gorbachev-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [The Soviet Union in World War II](#)
- ✎ [IAEA Chernobyl-FAQ](#)
- ✎ [Chernobyl Liquidators-wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [1986 in the Soviet Union-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ Oversimplified The Cold War-YouTube: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)
- ✎ [Russia's Re-Stalinization-Hoover](#)
- ✎ [East German Uprising of 1953-Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [The Polish People's Republic - Wikipedia](#)
- ✎ [Why did the Soviet Union apply to join NATO? - Release Peace](#)
- ✎ [Chernobyl: Timeline of Events - Atomicarchive](#)
- ✎ [The Legasov Tapes\(text\)](#)