

In September 2020, our team was formed in the second meeting of our school's history club. One of our team members had recently watched the HBO documentary on Chernobyl and we were intrigued by it. We discussed the miscommunication between the local government in Chernobyl and the citizens. We saw similarities relating to the COVID-19 response because of the miscommunication that initially came out from governments including the United States.

Beginning in September 2020, we utilized books, web articles, reports, letters, and videos to conduct our research. One key primary source was a letter from the Deputy Minister of Health of the USSR, Oleg Schepen, to the people of the USSR. We collectively shared our findings in Google Docs to communicate our research and met via Zoom to share and build on each others' ideas. Some of the most helpful websites were Greenfacts, The Wilson Center, and the Library of Congress. Our school's History Day club met every other week and we tried to meet on the off weeks.

In December, we consulted a former National History Day participant for advice on our bibliography and thesis formation. In November we had about 30 sources, but by the conclusion of December, we surpassed 60 sources.

Our last step in January, we began to create our website after some education by one of our fathers. Our team had to learn a new skill to build the website. We created a google document called "Mock Website" which is where we put all our website text. That included text, photos, and captions. Then we proceeded to create the actual website after the text was edited under 1200 words.

Our project relates to the theme of this year's NHD theme, *Communication in History - The Key to Understanding*, as the disorganized and ineffective evacuation after the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown happened because of the miscommunication between the Soviet government and the people of the USSR. The local government did not have the best public health procedures to ensure the peoples' safety. So when the Chernobyl accident happened it was a catastrophic disaster.

Our historical thesis on Chernobyl miscommunication: the Soviet government seriously downplayed information that all people deserved to know and in doing so killed or negatively affected countless people. The ambition of the government was the reason for the miscommunication because they wanted the nuclear monopoly and did not care or think about the significance of the event. Eventually, this incident led to the fall of the USSR and led to changes made to the requirements to build a nuclear factory and required public health and safety. The incident confirmed and demonstrates the long-lasting effects of radiation poisoning. The Chernobyl accident provided lessons that would help prevent further damage from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and to the land around Ōkuma, Fukushima Prefecture, Japan. We can see parallels between Covid-19 disinformation between countries and their people and the disinformation of the USSR and their people. Chernobyl was a disaster forged by miscommunication of the Soviet government.