

Data Biography

Our dataset consists of 31 declassified government documents related to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster: 16 Soviet documents and 15 Western documents. Materials were obtained from three primary sources: the National Security Archive at George Washington University, the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Historian (Foreign Relations of the United States series), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). One Soviet document was obtained from the Internet Archive. Documents were manually downloaded in PDF format between November 2024 and December 2024.

Soviet documents include internal Politburo session notes, government commission reports, diary entries from high-ranking officials, and internal ministry correspondence dating from April 26, 1986 through July 1986. Western documents include CIA intelligence assessments, State Department cables, National Security Council memoranda, diplomatic correspondence, and IAEA technical reports from U.S. government agencies during the same timeframe. Each document was converted from PDF to plain text format using manual extraction to preserve accuracy, then saved as .txt files for computational analysis.

All documents in our dataset are declassified government records that have been officially released to the public domain. Since these materials are 35+ years old and have undergone formal declassification review by their respective governments, there are no privacy concerns regarding individuals mentioned. We did not collect any private communications, personal data, or materials that could identify living individuals in vulnerable positions. Our analysis focuses on institutional language and framing rather than personal information about specific individuals.

We acknowledge that some Soviet documents may be translations from Russian, which introduces potential biases in sentiment analysis and word choice. We made no modifications to document content and preserved all materials in their published form to maintain research integrity.

Replication Instructions

To replicate our data collection: (1) Access the National Security Archive's Chernobyl collection at <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu>, the U.S. Department of State's Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1981-88 Volume V collection at <https://history.state.gov>, the IAEA publication library, and the Internet Archive; (2) Download all documents listed in our Sources section below; (3) Convert PDFs to plain text format; (4) Separate documents into two CSV files based on origin (Soviet vs. Western); (5) Include document title and source URL in each CSV entry. Our processed CSV files contain two columns: "Document" (full text) and "Link" (source URL). No additional tools beyond manual PDF-to-text conversion were used in data preparation.

Soviet Documents

"About the situation among international public, anti-Soviet actions, and imperialistic propaganda related to the accident at the Chernobyl Atomic Energy Station." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16753-document-03-cc-cpsu-reference-about-situation>

"CC CPSU Politburo Session, June 5, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16756-document-06-cc-cpsu-politburo-session-june-5>

"CC CPSU Politburo Session, July 3, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16754-document-04-cc-cpsu-politburo-session-july-3>

"Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo Session." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16755-document-05-1986-july-03-chernyaev-s-notes>

"Discusión del Politburó del CC CPSU sobre el accidente de la central nuclear de Chernobyl. Ultra secreto." *Internet Archive*.

[https://archive.org/details/chernobyl-ultrasecreto-el-desastre-nuclear-a-traves-de-los-ojos-del-politburo-so/01.-%20Discusi%C3%B3n%20del%20Politbur%C3%B3%20del%20CC%20CPSU%20sobre%20el%20accidente%20de%20la%20central%20nuclear%20de%20Chernobyl.%20Ultra%20secreto.%20S%C3%B3lo%20copia./page/n3\(mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/chernobyl-ultrasecreto-el-desastre-nuclear-a-traves-de-los-ojos-del-politburo-so/01.-%20Discusi%C3%B3n%20del%20Politbur%C3%B3%20del%20CC%20CPSU%20sobre%20el%20accidente%20de%20la%20central%20nuclear%20de%20Chernobyl.%20Ultra%20secreto.%20S%C3%B3lo%20copia./page/n3(mode/2up)

"Extraordinary Session of the CC CPSU Politburo, April 28, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16767-document-16-extraordinary-session-cc-cpsu>

"First Deputy Minister of Energy and Electrification of the Ukrainian SSR." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16766-document-15-first-deputy-minister-energy>

"First Deputy Minister of Energy and Electrification of the Ukrainian SSR to CC CPU, May 4-9, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16757-document-07-cc-cpsu-first-deputy-minister>

"From the Diary of Vitaly I. Vorotnikov, April 26, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16765-document-14-april-26-1986-diary-vitaly-i>

"Letter from General Director of Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Energy." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16762-document-11-most-esteemed-mikhail-sergeyevich-i>

"Materials obtained from the following organizations." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16760-document-09-materials-obtained-following>

"Mikhail Gorbachev's Address to the Soviet Nation, May 14, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16758-document-08-mikhail-gorbachev-s-address-soviet>

"Politburo Session Notes, April 29, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16752-document-02-april-29-1986-politburo-session>

"Report of the Government Commission for Investigation of the Causes of the Accident at Chernobyl, 1986." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16751-document-01-report-government-commission>

"RESOLUTION OF THE CC CPSU on letter from General Director of Kurchatov Institute." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16763-document-12-resolution-cc-cpsu-letter-comrade>

"Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16761-document-10-secretary-central-committee>

Western Documents

"FOREWORD by the Director General." *International Atomic Energy Agency*.

https://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/Pub913e_web.pdf

"Meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh, May 2, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 222. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d222>

"Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Poindexter) to President Reagan, May 2, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 223. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d223>

"To the readers of CHERNOBYL - ITS IMPACT ON SWEDEN." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 224. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d224>

"NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM, May 2, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 225. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d225>

"STATEMENT ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT, May 1, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 226. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d226>

"TO THE SECRETARY FROM INR, April 28, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 227. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d227>

"IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR ACCIDENT, April 29, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 233. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d233>

"Washington cable regarding Chernobyl developments, April 30, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 234. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d234>

"Washington cable regarding Chernobyl implications, May 3, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 236. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d236>

"Moscow cable regarding Chernobyl, May 5, 1986." *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1981-88, Volume V, Document 237. Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1981-88v05/d237>

"Chernobyl: Its Impact on Sweden." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University. <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/20277-national-security-archive-doc-03-chernobyl-its>

"National Security Decision Directive, Draft." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/6279555/National-Security-Archive-Doc-11-National.pdf>

"Draft National Security Decision Directive on U.S. Policy Toward the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/6279043/National-Security-Archive-Doc-10-Draft.pdf>

"INR Information Memo: Implications of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident." *National Security Archive*, George Washington University.

<https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/6279042/National-Security-Archive-Doc-9-INR-Information.pdf>