

SEMINARIO CTS:
CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA EN LA GUERRA FRÍA,
ESTADOS UNIDOS Y MÉXICO

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Sala José Gaos

Learning to lie

Susan Lindee

Department of History and Sociology of Science, Universidad de Pensilvania

In his interview with the psychologist Ann Roe Simpson in December 1962, the paleobotanist Ralph Works Chaney (1890-1971) told her that his education as a scientist during World War II had included learning to lie: “At that time I learned to lie in that I regularly told people and advised our staff to tell people that they were doing things other than what they were doing. I, for example, was concerned with radar, which anyone in the world would have known was a lie because that was left to MIT, but even so most people didn’t know and I was talking just the night before last to a man who had a high position in the laboratory, he told me that he didn’t know what we were doing.” Chaney’s education in the worlds of technical expertise thus included an education in the opposite of truth-telling, the opposite of the stated norms and value of science. In this paper, I try to explore the social consequences—for experts—of the large-scale militarization of knowledge in the United States in the twentieth century. It is an effort to capture the everyday, common sense strategies of middling experts in the middle of the complex. I consider what experts had to learn (how to lie, how to burn records, how to use the words intermittent, professional, now ended in a security clearance hearing). I also consider how militarization made scientists vulnerable in multiple ways: to science swerved by defense interests, to the threat of withdrawal of security clearance, to possible prosecution or fines, and to the skepticism of their peers, either because their peers believed them to be disloyal/socialist, or because their peers viewed them as intellectual slaves of the security state. I also notice how angry experts became around these issues (it would be difficult to miss, though many historians seem to have done so). Participating or failing to participate in military projects could both provoke professional retribution or censure. I suggest that the anger indexes the centrality of the threat: The relevance of science to the state’s monopoly on violence genuinely threatened the status and autonomy and culture of expertise. Scientists were angry for a reason. What can their management skills, everyday strategies, and public struggles help us understand about twentieth century science?

Tensiones entre ser nuclear y promover la desnuclearización: La política nuclear mexicana entre 1950 y 1970.

Gisela Mateos

Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades,
UNAM

Esta plática tiene como objetivo mostrar y contextualizar el crecimiento y las tensiones entre la física nuclear y el proyecto nuclear en México en el contexto de la Guerra Fría, durante el periodo 1950-1975. Lo nuclear está inserto en la construcción de la modernización, para la cual la ciencia y la tecnología jugaron un papel fundamental, y el nacionalismo, y refleja la intensa colaboración internacional en ciencia durante el periodo, así como las tensiones entre las políticas nacionales e internacionales en torno a los usos pacíficos de la energía atómica.

Durante el periodo que se estudia, la energía nuclear en México jugó un papel importante en la construcción del discurso del estado mexicano, que estaba caracterizado por un discurso centrado en la modernidad nacional y la industrialización. En los años 60, hubo un cambio en la política del estado mexicano en torno a lo nuclear. México promovió en Latinoamérica una política antinuclear focalizada en la desnuclearización de la región, lo cual culminó en 1968, con la firma del Tratado de prohibición de armas nucleares en América Latina y el Caribe, conocido como el Tratado de Tlatelolco, posicionando al país como un actor geopolítico fundamental en la región. . Como consecuencia de esta política de desnuclearización, durante los setenta el gobierno mexicano brindó poco apoyo a la física nuclear y prácticamente anuló la posibilidad de tener un proyecto nuclear.