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Audra J. Wolfe. *Freedom's Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. x + 302 pp. $29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4214-2673-0.

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In 1981, a career diplomat, Joseph V. Montville, publicized the phrase "track two diplomacy"—unofficial, unstructured interactions that seldom make the news but have an important role in complementing and reinforcing the formal negotiations between nations conducted by professional diplomats ("track one diplomacy").[1] Montville's deliberations on the key role of back-channel, or citizen, diplomacy were prompted by his involvement in the launch of a Soviet-American exchange program at perhaps the least probable place for such an initiative: the Esalen Institute, a hippy communitarian retreat secluded in the cliffs of Big Sur in Southern California. Esalen is better known for its hot tubs, stunning coastal views, the lively workshops in Gestalt therapy, psychological and spiritual exploration, and other exotics of the human potential movement in the countercultural 1960s. Since 1980, however, Esalen ventured into the business of diplomacy, holding annual symposia and conferences featuring officials from the Soviet government and scientists from the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Soviet Ministry of Health. Montville, then an employee of the US State Department, participated in the first defining meeting of the Esalen Soviet-American Exchange Program and became the chairman of its board. Over the years, the program's highlights included the first Soviet-American spacebridges and satellite teleconferences; regular high- and not-so-high-profile conferences and symposia; and arranged meetings between American and Soviet political leaders, cultural figures, and scientific experts in various fields. In 2004, Esalen's Russian-American Center changed its name to TRACK TWO: An Institute for Citizen Diplomacy. Today, Esalen congratulates itself with pioneering citizen diplomacy through political, cultural, and scientific initiatives.[2] Cold War science diplomacy, however, has longer roots and a fascinating history in its own right.

Audra J. Wolfe's ***Freedom's Laboratory*** offers a first historical account of US science diplomacy during the Cold War. Meticulously researched and engagingly written, ***Freedom's Laboratory*** tells a revealing story of the efforts of US politicians, diplomats, and scientists to mobilize science as a tool of diplomacy since the onset of the Cold War. The value of science as a political tool has been well understood and was promoted by various "citizen diplomats" in different periods and political contexts. Since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, as historians of science have well documented, science and scientific values served as bridges across political divides. For this very reason, science has always been a tool of soft political power. Notably, in the decade preceding the First World War, many German academics

mobilized themselves to advance Germany's political and economic status through the "spiritual export of knowledge," a practice they dubbed "cultural foreign politics" (***Auswärtige Kulturpolitik***).[3] As Wolfe demonstrates, however, during the Cold War the efforts to mobilize science (and scientists) for political and diplomatic ends became manifested in particular, and often peculiar, ways distinctive to the period profoundly affected by the political and ideological standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The event that sets the stage for Wolfe's narrative is the political campaign against genetics in the Soviet Union that coincided with the beginning of the Cold War. In 1948, the agronomist Trofim Lysenko, who advocated his own homegrown theories of inheritance and attacked the science of genetics as early as the 1930s, received a crucial endorsement from Joseph Stalin. The scientific debate was settled by the Community Party's resolution. The teaching of genetics was officially banned in the Soviet Union; genetic laboratories closed down, Soviet geneticists lost their jobs, and some lost their lives. In the West, "Lysenkoism" became a key event that was used to launch a major cultural Cold War propaganda campaign on its own. Using Lysenkoism as a foil, scientific and political elites in the US and Western Europe embraced the language of "apolitical science" to distinguish the "free world" from the communist world. When the paradigmatic cultural Cold War organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), was inaugurated in 1950 in Berlin, the issue of the politicization of science under totalitarianism took center stage. As Wolfe shows, the CCF's use of science as ideological weapon made the organization itself an avenue for politicization of science, all of this, ironically, in the name of the defense of "apolitical science" of the "free world."

The case of the CCF illustrates another feature common for groups and organizations that engaged in the cultural Cold War through citizen diplomacy. While presenting itself as an independent organization of private citizens, the CCF was (secretly) supported by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). While the story of the CCF serving as one of the CIA's front organizations in the cultural Cold War is well known, the book reveals the extent to which the CIA, as well as other governmental agencies, was inclined to use science and scientists as a tool of back-channel diplomacy, political propaganda, and intelligence gathering, oftentimes all at once. The officially independent group of nuclear scientists who formed the international Pugwash organization to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament cooperated with and was supported by the US State Department. While initially suspicious of the organization, members of the US foreign policy establishment came to see the organization as "a reliable backchannel for diplomats and intelligence officers in both the United States and the Soviet Union" (p. 133). As Wolfe points out, "while influential citizens have always engaged in freelance diplomacy, in the early 1960s the State Department was beginning to embrace a more explicit role for private citizens as government negotiators, a technique now known as Track Two diplomacy" (p. 126).

Reversely, the most straightforward effort to use science as a tool of diplomacy—the attempt to deploy scientific attachés in European consulates to gather intelligence and to promote the "American way of life"—was the least successful. After the program floundered, the US State Department reverted to more effective informal diplomacy, using existing practices of scientific exchange and international collaboration to the same ends. American scientists traveling abroad were encouraged to share their travel plans in advance, and were debriefed about their trips shortly after their return. These developments were driven by scientists willing to cooperate themselves. Revealingly, as Wolfe points out, a number of American scientists did not see any contradiction between a sincere belief that science should be conducted

openly and an engagement in collecting scientific intelligence on Soviet activities. Ultimately, while attempts to use scientific channels to gather actionable scientific intelligence failed, these programs showed most promise as a vehicle of science diplomacy.

Not surprisingly, one of the most successful programs of Cold War science diplomacy was the most benign. In one of her revealing case studies, Wolfe describes the use of biology textbooks as a propaganda tool intended to lure third world countries away from communism. In the early 1960s, the CIA front organization the Asia Foundation supported the high-school Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS), a program of adaptation of biology textbooks that taught students to make conclusions based on their own observations rather than on authoritative knowledge. BSCS textbooks were translated and distributed in more than thirty-five countries, effectively conveying the US approach to science while "defin[ing] American science through the foil of Communist science" (p. 2). "Lysenko's name is never stated explicitly in these texts," Wolfe notes, yet the implicit juxtaposition between "good" (in other words, objective, free, and apolitical) American science and its compromised Soviet counterpart ran throughout the program (p. 144).

By revealing the concerted efforts of the US governmental agencies, both overt and covert, private organizations, and citizens to extend Cold War cultural diplomacy into the world of science and knowledge, ***Freedom's Laboratory*** makes an invaluable reading for anyone who is interested in the intertwined histories of Cold War science and citizen diplomacy and the legacy of this important and heretofore understudied nexus in the contemporary world.

Notes

[1]. William D. Davidson and Joseph V. Montville, "Foreign Policy according to Freud," ***Foreign Policy*** 45 (1981): 145-57.

[2]. Esalen Center for Theory and Research, https://www.esalen.org/ctr/pioneering-accomplishments-citizen-diplomacy (accessed August 29, 2019).

[3]. Gregory Paschalidis, "Exporting National Culture: Histories of Cultural Institutes Abroad," ***International Journal of Cultural Policy*** 15, no. 3 (2009): 279.

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