

A Courageous Double Agent & the FBI Agent Who Recruited Him

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Very few Americans know about Morris Childs — the courageous FBI double agent during the Cold War who successfully penetrated the Soviet Union's political leadership for almost 25 years (from 1958 to 1982). Childs' service to the United States has been elaborated in only one book, *Operation SOLO*. Additionally, the declassified documents detailing his exploits from 1958 to 1960 were just released by the FBI in 2010. From this limited number of sources, it is clear that Childs' efforts greatly contributed to the national security and diplomatic success of the United States during the Cold War.



Morris Childs

Code Name SOLO

In 1956, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover informed the White House and the Pentagon that, "the FBI's 'most important goal' was the 'development of good double agents' to penetrate the Soviet leadership at the highest levels and gain knowledge of the Kremlin's intentions and capabilities." All documents pertaining to the operation, code named SOLO, received a top-secret designation and were transmitted primarily from the FBI to the Secretary of State and Vice President Richard Nixon. Through counterintelligence, the United States would penetrate the Soviet and Chinese political leadership to verify and determine the extent of a Sino-Soviet Split, among other objectives.

Robert Bowie, director of policy planning during Eisenhower's first term (1953-1957) and later a CIA operative, described the promising effects of the "wedge strategy" enacted by the Eisenhower Administration: "The Eisenhower policy was to try to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and China over time," he said, "while the Chinese and Soviets were closely working together because of common

interests and ideology ... there were really nevertheless deep, deep differences of real interests between them."

Morris Childs became a significant player in the counterintelligence portion of the "wedge strategy" during the end of Eisenhower's Presidency. Prior to working for the FBI, Childs was a loyal and devoted member of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) for 20 years. He attended the Lenin School (1929-1932) as one of its top students and was chosen by the party to run for the U.S. Senate in Illinois in 1940. Because of the genocidal effects of Stalinism, Childs eventually became disillusioned by his efforts to mobilize the party for which he had worked so hard. After his expulsion from the party leadership without recognition or compensation, Childs' health declined.

Recruiting a Spy

The FBI decided to send in Special Agent Carl Freyman (1942-1965) in what can only be described as an attempt to miraculously recruit a hardened communist to the side of the FBI. In reality, Childs was lonely and bitter and he needed a psychological connection with someone. With the help of Jack Childs, Morris' brother, Freyman successfully recruited Morris to conduct espionage on the Soviets and the Chinese. Morris successfully re-gained the trust of the CPUSA and convinced the party that he was a loyal member. Rising to the high position of Party Treasurer, Morris transferred an estimated \$30 million over 25 years from the Soviet Union to the United States, while spying on the highest leaders in the China and the Kremlin including Mao Tse-Tung and Nikita Khrushchev.



Carl Freyman

What Nixon Knew & When He Knew It

The information from Childs' trips indicated that the Soviet Union and China were resentful of each other diplomatically and that a Sino-Soviet split was actually occur-

ring. The origins of détente, therefore, did not begin in the early 1970s with President Nixon's visit to China. Détente between the United States and China was a bold diplomatic move predicated on the knowledge that then Vice President Nixon had about the extent of the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s.

Fully aware that the split was real and not a deception, Nixon was able to exploit it by effectively pitting the entire industrialized world and China against the Soviet Union and therefore hastening the decline of the Soviet

Union. Operation SOLO, for all intents and purposes, was one of the greatest counterintelligence operations in history and had an incredible impact on the national security and diplomatic success of the United States. In 1987, President Reagan ordered that Childs be secretly awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his heroic service as a spy for the United States — a well-deserved award.

Carl Freyman was a Society member from 1966 until his death in June 2001.