

\$250,000 FBI ^{P.8} Offer Reported

Chapel Hill, N.C.

The author of a book exposing a major FBI undercover operation against the American Communist Party says the FBI threatened him with lawsuits and offered him \$250,000 to drop the project.

David Garrow, a professor of political science at the University of North Carolina, reported earlier this month that two Chicago brothers operating under the code name "Solo" provided the FBI with information on Communist activities for more than 25 years.

In his book, "The FBI and Dr. Martin Luther King," Garrow identified the men as Morris and Jack Childs.

Garrow, 28, set out to write about the FBI's surveillance of King's civil rights activities during the 1960s, but in his research he learned of the existence of Solo and identified the Childs brothers.

"They (the FBI) have continued to make vague legal threats toward me," Garrow said. "I don't think they were so upset about Solo, but I think they had a much broader worry about what a comprehensive investigation of their surveillance of King would do to their public image."

Garrow, a Massachusetts native, identified the Childs brothers as the Solo team in August 1980. Jack Childs died a few weeks before his discovery, but Morris is reportedly in ill health and living under constant FBI protection.

"I had tried to get in touch with Morris," Garrow said. "I called the Communist Party office in Chicago, and I think the FBI had the phone tapped."

"A week later I got a call from a retired FBI man who said the bureau had found out that I had these names and they were kind of upset. The next afternoon this guy from the regional office showed up and stayed here for two days verbally fencing with me trying to get me not to publish the book," he said.

Later, Garrow said an agent who identified himself as Michael J. Steinbeck, director of the FBI's foreign counterintelligence unit, offered him money not to publish the book.

"He asked me what I would say if he told me he had a letter authorizing him to give me \$100,000 if I would forget the whole thing," Garrow said.

"I just kind of giggled. I think he thought my laughter meant I didn't think the money was high enough. He asked me what I would say if he said \$250,000."

"I was kind of surprised by the money thing. I've never been convinced whether he was serious or whether it was just some elaborate joke. But it seems to me it could have been a pretty dangerous joke," Garrow said.

An FBI spokesman in Washington, reached by the Greensboro Daily News, would neither confirm nor deny Garrow's statements about Steinbeck.