

Joel Barr, aka Iosif Veniaminovich Berg

Born 1916; US citizen who emigrated to the Soviet Union and became one of the fathers of Soviet microelectronics.

After a long search following his graduation from the City College of New York, Barr's career finally took off thanks to America's World War II industrialization. But after the war he was fired from a high-paying job at Sperry Gyroscope, a defense contractor, when it was learned that he was a member of the Communist Party.

He later traveled to Europe, first to Paris, and then to Prague, where he got a glimpse of socialism in action.

In Czechoslovakia, he was joined by a friend and former colleague, Alfred Sarant. By now calling himself Joseph Berg from Johannesburg, South Africa, Barr married a Czech woman and started a family. He kept his real identity secret even from his wife, Vera, who learned the truth only after 20 years of marriage.

Then-Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev invited the two American engineers to Russia in 1956 and set them up in their institute in Leningrad. Russian colleagues credit Barr and Sarant with being the fathers of Soviet microelectronics, which enabled the regime to compete in the Cold War arms race and thereby strengthen its position at home.¹

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical

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UPDATES

Joel Barr died Moscow 1 August 1998. (MRW, 2012)

¹From Shogren, 1991.