

by Dick Russell

"The Man Who Knew 'Too Much'" (Richard Case Nagell, Carroll & Graf) HW 12/12/92

The title fits neither the author nor his impossible, irrational hero. Neither knows a damned thing that is relevant in the first 10% of this overly-large book of 800pp with much that I've seen mere padding. And all of it depends on Nagell's unsupported word. Russell's conviction that Nagell was telling the truth comes from his misinterpretation of one of four pages of a military intelligence record, its second page. When that report repeats what Nagell said, as the first page always makes clear, Russell chooses to misinterpret it as recounting what military intelligence said. I am inclined to believe this comes from Russell's ignorance of such matters rather than intended dishonesty. His ignorance is apparent in many areas but in common with most if not all of those who exploit conspiracy theories he assumes that his dime-novel concepts are the reality. Thus he has just about everyone having any kind of alleged connection with the CIA as CIA agents. They are not. And what he is talking about comes from the fake book Farewell America in any event. He plays it and all such trash as real and dependable.

His foreword is by another college-educated ignoramus, Carl Oglesby, and it, too, is trash.

He begins with page after page of names briefly identified, some misidentified. I did not read them all because almost all appear to have no relevance to the JFK assassination or its investigations.

He even inflates the work he did by classifying such things as telephone chitchat as formal interviews. When he phoned me to ask me about a few irrelevant records that becomes an interview in his inflation.

His case is so diaphanous a whisper can demolish it: if Nagell or the nuts like Fensterwald say it it is true and relevant as it never is,

I may continue into the book to get to the supposed meat but if I do it will be a waste of time. The Nagell story is impossible and if it were not it would not be reasonable. His supposed CIA connection was to keep tabs on Marina, etc., for it. For that the CIA had no need of outsiders. Nor would it have run any such risk, that kind of work being precluded for it. The story appears to be that Nagell was hired by the CIA to kill Oswald in advance of the assassination. That also makes no sense. Nor does it that if the CIA had any such intent it would have hired one like Nagell for it. There are professional shooters and any check by it on Nagell would have disclosed immediately that he suffered brain damage when he survived the plane wreck near Baltimore years earlier. No spywork would risk using such a person for such a mission. The danger would have been too great.

His cited sources, even on documents, is other published work. Or, he has not made any real use of the available documents. Perhaps he lacked the time, the book having taken, he says, only 17 years. And what books they are!

Richard Case Nagell was caught robbing a bank in Texas. He claimed he robbed the bank so that he would be in jail when JFK was assassinated, claiming prior knowledge of such a plot and attributing it to the CIA. There are some indications that he may have had such a connection but I am not aware of any proof of it. After his release from jail he was arrested in East Germany. His release and return then were handled by a Washington lawyer, Nicey New.

I believe the first alleged connection with the assassination attributed to Nagell was by Ramparts, whose records on the JFK assassination is of irresponsibility and sensationalism.

Thereafter he was interviewed ^{as} I recall often, from the Garrison office ^{by} an assistant DA Bill Martin and perhaps others. I am sure that Bud Fensterwald did and went for Nagell's story, perhaps Mark Lane also. ^{Of} maybe he was from Garrison when he did.

Nagell did survive the disintegration of an Electra plane near Baltimore, surviving as I recall a free fall of about 10,000 feet.

"Jim Rose" was involved in accrediting and feeding a fake book by SDECE, the French counterpart of the CIA, that Garrison originally understood was coming to him from the KGB. In fact, Garrison's activist supporters in the Los Angeles area had a code name for this deal, "the San Diego radio station." KGB was the call letters of the CBS affiliate there. I appeared on it.

(Garrison loved the book, an obvious fake having virtually nothing at all in it about the assassination. He persuaded the Frenchman who used the name Herve Lamarre and was in charge of that project to retitle it from "L'Amérique Brule" to "Farewell America.")

Dick Russell was one of the earlier conspiracy-theorist writers, I do not now recall whether on The Village Voice, free-lancing or both. Years ago he was here but I have no recollection of his visit or what he then was writing. Or, with any clarity, what he had by then written.

He now claims to have substantiation for Nagell's story that I do not believe. ^{and that Bill Martin was CIA.} He read from notes, roughly some of what I say in the memo he asked me to send him. Because that memo was to Garrison he could have gotten it from innumerable sources, Garrison's files were that open to anyone at all.

The Oswald part of what he is working on is that Oswald made an earlier trip to Mexico than in late September, 1963. Russell says it was in July or August. When I asked him if he was confusing this with a trip there by Kerry Thornley, who knew Oswald briefly when they were in the Marines, he said not.

Russell says his book will be published this fall by Carroll & Graf. Its most recent JFK assassination book is Harry Livingstone's High Treason. It also published Jim Marris Crossfire, a compendium of all the nutty theories and one of the books used by Oliver Stone on his movie JFK.