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BRAND
November 15/60

On August 5/60, at 7 a.m., Brand made contact with Emilio Rodriguez. Brand told E.R. that he wanted to see Amparo (Plinio's wife), in order to debrief her on the actual situation of OA's groups. That same afternoon Brand saw Amparo. Amparo informed Brand of all the arrests that had taken place after Plinio's escape from El Escambray. In regard to OA's groups in Havana, Amparo told Brand that Efre Rodriguez, member of the Executive Committee of the OA, was in a safe house in Havana, and was the man who could brief Brand on OA's situation.

On August 6/60, Brand saw Efren Rodriguez. Efren informed Brand that, on account of Abay and Penela's asylum at the Embassy of Brasil, contacts had been lost with the action groups of OA. Efren was completely out of money. Brand gave him \$130.00 and instructed him to establish contact with OA's action groups. Efren agreed to do this.

Brand had to remain in his safe house for the next ten days, because no glue or moustaches had been sent to him, and he had no materials for his disguise. Meanwhile, Plinio had arrived to Havana, and had established contact with Efren and other members of the underground.

Emilio Rodriguez gave Brand a man to be used as a driver or as a cut-out. This man is named Montes. After receiving the disguise materials, Brand established contact with Jesus Iglesias, former member of Triple A, and Brand's fellow conspirator for many years. Iglesias owned a 50 ft. yacht. Brand asked Iglesias's help to use his yacht to smuggle weapons into Cuba. Iglesias was in very low spirits. He said that it was useless for the cubans to fight Fidel, since Fidel had a powerful base from the Soviet Union, and that unless the U.S. decided to do something about it, their efforts were doomed to failure. In short, Iglesias refused to help.

Next, Brand established contact with Cesar Lancia Brayo. Cesar agreed to help Brand instructed Cesar to start looking for D.Zs. and L.Zs. Besides, Cesar was to start organizing laborers in the different Unions, and to try to gather information from all of them. Cesar also volunteered to make contacts with policemen in the patrol cars, in order to find out the codes they were using in their radio communications. He also promised to start a search for safe houses and store houses and to start checking Fidel through the members of the Sindicato Gastronomico. At that first meeting, Brand gave Cesar one thousand pesos, to be used for expense for the renting of houses.

Next, Brand made contact with Benito Fernandez. Benito said that he was eager for help and that all of us had to give our best to overcome our country's situation. Benito offered his efforts to try to find D.Zs. and L.Zs. Besides, he volunteered to do some recruiting. Benito informed Brand that he had an action group of about fifteen men, already armed.

Contact was made with Dr. Helio Nardo Baez. Nardo informed Brand that he had already been approached by people from MRR and by Lomberto Diaz, acting the latter as representative from Tony Varona's group. Nardo had refused to work with them. Brand asked Nardo to take care of the Province of Pinar del Rio as a leader of a new underground group, of which he was going to be one of the leaders. Nardo agreed to this, and promised to start looking for D.Zs. and L.Zs. and also promised to take care of the recruiting of people in the Province of Pinar del Rio. He mentioned that he had a friend who had been a lieutenant in the rebel army, and who had given up his position because of the communist tendencies of the Government. He told Brand that this ex-lieutenant could become a valuable asset if won to our side. He said he was going to try to bring this man to talk with Brand. Brand gave Nardo five hundred pesos, for expenses.

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At the first meeting with Benito Fernandez, Brand also saw Nelson Iglesias, University student, and son of Jesus Iglesias. Brand instructed Nelson to start making some recruitings at the University. Brand also instructed Nelson Iglesias to make the necessary arrangements so Brand could have a meeting with Jose Fernandez Planas and Eddy Crews, members of the Catholic Youth, students at the University of Havana and members of MRR (Artime's faction). Brand gave Nelson one hundred pesos for expenses.

A week after their first meeting, Brand saw Cesar Lancis again. Cesar said he had been making some contacts with different unions. He also explained that up to that time he had been working with Tony Varona's group, named "Rescate". He expressed his concern about the double role he was playing, working with Rescate at the same time that he was working with Brand. Lancis said that in due course he could bring his friends in Rescate to Brand's organization. Brand said that a week had elapsed and no results had been attained and that he wanted results. Lancis said that he was going to have results for the next meeting.

Through Nelson Iglesias, Brand had a meeting with Jose Fernandez Planas and Eddy Crews. The meeting took place at Fernandez Planas's home in Vedado, Havana. Brand asked Fernandez Planas's help in order to get D.Zs. and L.Zs. and safe houses. Though Fernandez Planas agreed to help, he was a little bit reluctant because of his connections with MRR. He said he was going to talk things over with his friends and promised to give me an answer in a few days. Nevertheless, he accepted four hundred pesos to be used in the renting of safe houses. Brand also asked about the possibility of creating some disturbances at Havana University on the 30th of September, anniversary of Trejo's death. They said their chances were slight, because they could not burn the people they had at the University in that kind of action. He said that in the event of a riot at the University, they would be crushed by the communists and militia, already well trained, equipped and organized.

In his next meeting with Brand, Nardo brought along a man by the name of Francisco Robayna Dominguez, ex-lieutenant of the Rebel Army. Robayna had been a member of the American Army, at Fort Dix, New Jersey. He had been to Europe as a member of the American Army. He deserted to go to Cuba and join the forces fighting Batista. He became a member of Faure Chapon's guerrillas in the mountains of Las Villas. Robayna said that he was willing to join Nardo and Brand's efforts. He said that he had already been working in the recruiting of people. He assured Brand that he could count with a force of 150 men. He also said that he was going to get D.Zs. Robayna was to work under the orders of Nardo.

In his next meeting with Brand, Fernandez Planas returned the four hundred pesos he had previously received. He said he could not take care of the renting of safe houses, because the people they could use for that, were needed at the MRR. However, since Brand had promised him weapons, he said he would keep trying to get D.Zs. and L.Zs. He said he wanted to see Brand again.

Benito Fernandez saw Brand again. He said that he had talked with his brother who had been a Mayor in Santiago de Cuba. He had also talked with Luis Casero G. who had also been a Mayor in Santiago de Cuba. They both promised him to start searching for D.Zs. and L.Zs. in the southern coast of the Province of Oriente.

Brand also saw Nelson Iglesias again. He said it had been difficult to recruit people at the University, because everyone seemed to belong already to one organization or another. Nevertheless, he said, he had a group of around ten students who were willing to work with him, though some of them already belonged to Rescate. He was in contact with a boy named Solis, who was heading Rescate's group at the University.

Around these days, Joe, a member of the Company whom Brand had met in Washington, came to visit Brand at Brand's safehouse. He said that they weren't interested anymore in getting people out of Cuba to be properly trained. He promised to give Brand some contacts which would help Brand in his activities. These promises were kept, and Brand made some contacts which will be referred to in due course.

Brand had been asking to see Plinio. Plinio also had been asking to see Brand. Amparo knew about one of Brand's safehouses. She came one day and told Brand that Plinio needed to see him. Next day, Brand went to see Plinio. At Plinio's safe Brand also met a man named Juan Mendez, also known as George the Pilot or Jose Casanova. Mendez was the head of a group named MAR (Movimiento Anticomunista Revolucionario). Plinio told Brand of his efforts and how pleased he was with the way things were going on. Plinio also talked about his plans for the immediate future and the meetings he was expecting to have in the days to come. In return, Brand said that he was also pleased with the way things were developing.

In his next meeting with Brand, Robayna brought a map pointing out a D.Z. This was the first D.Z. that Brand got. Brand gave Robayna a lensatic compass so Robayna could give the exact location of the next D.Zs. he was trying to get. Robayna was full of enthusiasm with the outcome of his efforts. All his men were anxious to go into battle. Robayna gave Brand an estimate of the weapons he needed for his 1st Company. That list of weapons was given to the Company in Havana. Robayna also informed Brand that in the Province of Pinar del Rio, a majority of the population was in favor of an uprising against Castro.

--- It should be said by now that all the meetings held by Brand were reported to the Company in Havana, almost immediately after they took place. Brand had been instructed in Washington to give a report each week. Actually, reports were given in many occasions twice and thrice a week. ---

By this time, Brand had met with Efren Rodriguez in several occasions. Efren Rodriguez was contacting and organizing action groups to be used in Havana, in the City as well as in the Province. A man by the name of Rutilio Ramos had been contacted by him. This man was to lead the men we were planning to use in an attempt against Fidel's life. Efren Rodriguez had also met people who gave him detailed information on the Government forces in Isle of Pines. Rutilio Ramos also made some reports to Brand. Contacts were made by Efren Rodriguez with action groups in San Jose de Lajas.

Joe sent Brand some instructions that enabled Brand to make contact with a man named Alberto Jorge Losada Fernandez, who worked at the Compania de Electricidad. This Losada was one of the leaders of an organization called "Resistencia Agraria". Though they had men all around the island, their main force seemed to be in the Province of Pinar del Rio. And what seemed most important of all, they had a group of fifty men already in the mountains in Pinar del Rio, in a place named Rio Hondo. In the first meeting with Losada, Brand gave him 500 pesos to be used in the purchase of supplies for the men already in the mountains. Brand also instructed Losada to try to organize groups at the Compania de Electricidad. These groups were to be used in sabotage at the Electric Company. Losada agreed to send word to the leader of the group at the mountains to come to Havana to have a meeting with Brand. Losada also agreed to try to find some D.Zs. or L.Zs. From that day on, Losada's meetings with Brand would take place in two houses he indicated, and which Brand promptly approved.

Joe sent Brand some instructions that enabled Brand to make contact with a man named Vidal Morales, who was to provide the goons that were promised to Brand by Jim Bowdin. Brand instructed Vidal to organize his men and have them ready for action to be used when required. Brand also instructed Vidal to start checking up on Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, a well known communist, and also to give all the information he could gather about the top communists in Cuba. Vidal agreed to this.

In a meeting with Losada, he informed Brand that the leader of the group at Rio Hondo, a man by the name of Lazaro Santos Abreu, had been killed in his way to Havana to see Brand. Brand then told Losada to make arrangements so Brand could have a meeting with the man who had substituted Lazaro Santos.

Brand had a meeting with Cesar Lancis and Losada, so both men would get in touch and work together in all the future.

instructed Losada not to talk with Lancis about the people in the mountains. He wanted to talk with Lancis only about the laborers at the Electric Company, because he wanted Lancis to organize the labor section of Cuba Libre.

In his next meeting with Brand, Lancis refused to have anything to do with him. He gave Brand a written report about Losada and Losada's brother, also working at the Electric Company. The report said that Losada had been a well known baptistian that he had been suspected of being an informer for Batista's security forces. The report also said that Losada was suspected of being a fairy. The same report said that Losada's brother was a drug addict and a "pusher". Brand then asked Lancis if there were any doubts about Losada's attitude against the present Cuban Government. Lancis said that Losada and his brother were considered Fidel's enemies, without question. Lancis informed Brand that a former major of the army, named Manuel Jesus Hernandez, had been commissioned by Lancis to establish a net of informers. Lancis also said that he had received several thousand pesos from Rescate and he was willing to return the thousand pesos that Brand had given him. To this Brand answered nothing.

Around the fifteenth of September, Brand thought he had noticed certain unusual things around Potin's building, where Brand's safehouse was located. One day, when Brand was entering the building, he heard a man asking about the people who were living at the penthouse of the building. This confirmed Brand's suspicions that something wrong was going on. Brand left the building and never came back. It was not until three weeks later that Brand found out, through Augusto Casamayor, the man who had provided the safe house, that a tenant of the penthouse, who lived in the penthouse of Brand's apartment, had been the victim of an extortion. This had been the unusual atmosphere that Brand had noticed around the building, because that tenant had been under surveillance by the people who submitted him to extortion.

Brand went to live for some days at Juan Mendez's place. At this safehouse, he met a man named Jorge Espino, who worked with Mendez at MAR. Brand put Espino in contact with Nardo, so Espino's people in Pinar del Rio would work under the guidance of Robayna. Espino's military chief in Pinar del Rio was a young man by the name Barrios. Brand met Barrios and introduced him to Robayna. From then on, Barrios was in contact with Robayna, and working under his command.

Around these days, Brand heard that Mendez was going to have an interview with a Priest named Las Heras. Brand went to that meeting and asked this priest to go to Artemisa, in the Province of Pinar del Rio, and contact Nardo, so he would provide Nardo with all the help that the priesthood could afford to give in the Province of Pinar del Rio. Brand saw Nardo and arrangements were made in such a way that Brand did not see Father Las Heras. From then on, it was their business to keep in touch. At the meeting with Father Las Heras, Brand met a physician named Dr. Leon Lemus. He identified himself as a delegate from Organizacion Occidental Anticomunista (OOA). A few days later, Brand introduced Nardo to Dr. Leon Lemus, so Leon would help Nardo in the Province of Pinar del Rio. Later on, Brand introduced Leon Lemus to Robayna, OOA's military chief in the Province of Pinar del Rio was a young man named Cruz Blanco. This Cruz Blanco was introduced to Robayna by Leon Lemus. From then on, Cruz Blanco was to work under the orders of Robayna. It is on account of all these contacts that were given to Robayna, that in the last message that Robayna sent to Brand through Nardo, he claimed to have six hundred men under his command. And he said that this figure was a conservative figure. Nardo commented that in order to make this figure more conservative, he would say that Robayna had five hundred men under his command. This figure is accepted by Brand as good.

By the first days of September Brand had met Dr. Rodolfo Henriquez Lauranzo, a well known Cuban dentist. This dentist lent his house many times so that it be used for Brand's meetings with Benito Fernandez. Brand also used Henriquez as treasurer. Whenever Brand received money from the Company, he took it to Henriquez in order to avoid a heavy loss of money if Brand was captured. In one of the meetings with Benito Fernandez, Brand met a man named Jose Cabañas, who had been a stockholder at the Cooperativa de Omnibus Aliados. This Cabañas had hundreds of friends and drivers and conductors of busses in Havana. Cabañas promised to get safehouses and storehouses. He also promised to organize groups among the drivers and conductors in Havana. He also said that he was going to give Brand a driver. Brand gave Cabañas 620 pesos.

A few days later Brand met Luis Alvarez, a former bus driver, and who from later events proved to be Brand's driver. This Luis Alvarez had been recommended by Cabañas and proved to be a courageous, dedicated and faithful companion.

In a new meeting with Jose Fernandez Planas, Brand met a young physician known as Anselmo. In this meeting they said they had found a D.Z. and that they were going to give Brand a map pointing out the exact location of the place. They asked which weapons could Brand provide. Brand mentioned all the weapons he had had been provided and committed himself to deliver certain amount of those weapons fifteen days after the map had reached his hands. The boys promised to give the map in short notice. These boys also wanted to establish contact with Brand's people in Pinar del Rio.

Some days later Brand received a very detailed map of a L.Z. in the southern coast of the Province of Pinar del Rio. It was sent to the Company right away.

By this time Robaynas had sent Brand the location of another D.Z. By then, Brand kept asking about the weapons, and he kept saying that his men were anxious to get the equipment and start fighting.

Through Emilio Rodriguez Brand met an American known as William Webster. This was to put Brand in contact with a group of a friend of Brand who had gone to Miami named Mario Massip. Through Webster, Brand met a man already known to him for many years. This man's name is Simon Yabre. Simon Yabre was to put Brand in contact with Mario Massip's group. By this time Brand had become a little bit uneasy about the lack of news from Jim Bowdin, and kept asking Emilio Rodriguez about the delivery of weapons. Emilio Rodriguez always answered that he knew nothing about it, that he always delivered my reports but could not tell me what the policies of the Company were in that respect.

Through Webster, Brand made contact with a wealthy and very well known Cuban Silvio de Cardenas. Silvio de Cardenas said that he was one of the leaders of a group headed by Jose Ignacio Rivero and Antonio Rubio Padilla. He said, and Brand believed to be the exact truth, that they had connections along the whole island with well known and respected people. That they could provide finances and transportation. What they wanted was weapons and guidance. Brand promised both. Through the Company, a few days later, Silvio de Cardenas provided two D.Zs. Brand met Silvio de Cardenas five times more. Cardenas gave a list of the weapons his friends needed. Brand committed himself to deliver the weapons in due course.

One day Brand got word that there was going to be a meeting at Plinio's safe house. People from the Front were supposed to go to that meeting. Brand was invited to go. Brand sent word saying he saw no reason why he had to go to that meeting, but Plinio insisted on Brand's attendance. Brand went to the meeting. There he saw Plinio, Efren Rodriguez, Jorge Espino, Francisco Santiago, Juan Mendez and Joe. Plans were set to coordinate the CA and the Front's efforts to help Plinio in the mountains. It was established also that Brand would coordinate his men in Pinar del Rio with the men the Front could provide.

Through Emilio Rodriguez, Brand met a man named Alfredo Izaguirre Rivas. This man told Brand that he had been trained in sabotage and that he had around 200 men organized in the City and Province of Havana. Brand told him that in due course weapons and sabotage and incendiary materials would be provided and that all he had to do was to keep their men organized and ready to enter into action when required.

By this time, Brand had met a man known as Roberto Alvarez, who had a red ~~hair~~ and who said he had been trained in intelligence work, and that he had been in ~~the~~ for several years. This man was introduced to Brand by Emilio Rodriguez. Roberto was to help Brand in anything Brand would require of him. Brand found that Roberto was available only after 5 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays. Brand found this Alvarez to be a sensible, educated and calm individual. Brand told this man he would find something for him to do.

Cabañas had given by now four safehouses. These safehouses were already inhabited but the families living there were to receive anyone in need of a safehouse. One of those houses Brand lived for two weeks. Another of those houses was used as a safehouse for meetings.

Through Cabañas and Benito Fernandez, Brand met a man named Oscar Rodriguez. This man claimed to be one of the leaders of an organization in the Province of Oriente. They were willing to work provided they were supplied with weapons. Brand found the man to be honest, but dumb and unexperienced. Nevertheless, Brand instructed -- this man to keep in touch with Cabañas.

By this time, Brand had become a little bit uneasy about his disguise. During his perambulations around town, Brand had met by chance with many old friends. None of them recognized Brand. One day, however, a boy named Nodal, member of Triple A, saw Brand in a drugstore and recognized him. When Brand went out, Brand noticed that two men in a car were watching him. The car went around the block and started to follow Brand. When the car approached Brand saw Nodal and Silvio Martinez, member of Triple A. Silvio called Brand and insisted on having a meeting with Brand. Brand was mad to see how irresponsible and indiscreet these fellows were. Brand gave them an appointment, but Brand didn't attend to it. Brand had become uneasy about the disguise because, although Brand was using a second hairpiece, it looked awful. It was bad, and many friends had warned Brand that the hairpiece looked a fake from a distance. They also said that the moustache looked too dark. Brand's conclusion about this is what follows: 1) The disguise was very good, but hairpieces don't last long in Cuba's climate. If one wears them daily, as Brand did, they are not good for more than twelve or fifteen days. 2) The disguise was good as long as it made Brand a different man, but it was bad because it had too distinctive features, that is, that if the police radioed a description of a man with very dark hair, very dark moustache, and a pair of somehow unusual glasses, it is sure enough that Brand was going to be caught. It is Brand's opinion that if a man is to wear a disguise for a long period of time, this disguise should not have distinctive features. It should be difficult to describe the man in disguise. This is why from the very first in September Brand kept asking Jim to send Karl to Cuba. Brand wanted to be disguised in a different way. Another thing about disguises: the person in disguise should always have enough materials at hand. In many occasions the replacements for moustaches took too long to arrive to Cuba. The last ten moustaches were received in very bad shape and were so bad that Brand thought they had not been made by Karl, or that Karl had made them in a hurry.

By this time Brand had already met Mario Escoto a known conspirator and old friend of Brand. Escoto was Aureliano's representative in Cuba, and the man in charge of Triple A. Brand offered weapons to Escoto, provided Escoto gave Brand a D.Z. Escoto said he had to consult this with Aureliano, but nevertheless, he said he was going to send Brand a map with the exact location of a D.Z. Brand also offered Escoto any money he might need, but Escoto said he didn't need money. He implied that he had been provided with all the money he needed for his activities.

By this time, Brand had notified the Company that all his men were to work under the name of "Cuba Libre", and that this Organization was going to be led by Benito Fernandez, Jose Cabañas, Helio Nardo, Alfredo Izaguirre, and Brand.

