

The Santiago Conference

THE Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the twenty-one member republics of the Organization of American States (OAS) took place in Santiago, Chile, from August 12 to August 18, 1959, to consider the international tension in the Caribbean area.

Meetings of Consultation are held in accordance with articles 39-47 inclusive of the Charter of the OAS, which provide *inter alia* that any member state may call for such a meeting to be held "to consider problems of an urgent nature and of common interest to the American states." The urgency of the Caribbean situation in the eyes of the American republics is indicated by the fact that Meetings of Consultation are held only rarely and that it was the only one of the five meetings held since 1939 to study a problem involving only the members of the OAS. Previous meetings had considered world-wide questions:

1. The Panama City meeting of September 1939 considered the ways and means of maintaining the neutrality of the American Continent in the light of the war which had just broken out in Europe.
2. The Havana meeting in July 1940 looked into the consequences of the possible transfer of European possessions in America to another non-American power in view of the German occupation of France and The Netherlands.
3. The third meeting, in Rio de Janeiro, in January 1942, was called to adopt measures for the defence of the Western Hemisphere following the Japanese attack against the United States in December 1941.
4. In Washington in 1951, the fourth meeting devised the co-ordination of common measures for resisting the aggressive activities of international communism, in the light of the aggression in Korea.

Background of Events

The Caribbean region has been in a state of extreme tension most of this year due to rumours and threats of impending invasions against one country or another. Beginning in late April, three countries — Panama, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic — stated that they had been invaded by small groups of "revolutionaries", many of whom appeared to be soldiers of fortune and nationals of countries other than the one being invaded. In the first two cases, meeting with little local support, the invaders soon surrendered to government forces.

The third invasion, which took place in the Dominican Republic in mid-June, was put down by Government forces within a few days. The Dominican Government claimed that this invasion was of an "international character" and called upon the Organization of American States to condemn Cuba and Venezuela for alleged moral encouragement and provision of military equipment to the invaders. The Cuban and Venezuelan Governments argued that this invasion was a purely Dominican affair, beyond the scope of the OAS, and stated that they would not permit the OAS to investigate their alleged complicity in the incident. The Rio Treaty (Inter-American Treaty of Reci-