

principal systems of forced labour existing in the world today; one as punishment for holding certain political views and the other for important economic purposes. The Soviet Union and its satellites were found by the Committee to be the chief offenders. The issue was discussed at the eighth session of the General Assembly in 1953 where a warm exchange took place principally between the Soviet Union and the United States on the existence of forced labour in the Soviet bloc countries. The matter was also considered by ECOSOC in April 1954 and a resolution was passed which condemned systems of forced labour, appealed to all governments to examine their views and practices in this field and asked the ILO to continue its efforts to seek the abolition of forced labour.

In the debate during the General Assembly's session in 1954 the Soviet Representative avoided the issue by describing the general progress made by the Soviet Union since 1917. In reply the United States Representative pointed to the forced labour situation in Communist China, Albania and in the Soviet Union. The Canadian Representative expressed the concern of the Canadian Government regarding the existence of forced labour and emphasized the fact that the evidence contained in the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report had not been refuted. A resolution was passed, which Canada co-sponsored, similar to that adopted by ECOSOC in April 1954. The matter was also mentioned briefly at the tenth session. In November 1954 the Governing Body of the ILO placed this question on the agenda of the thirty-ninth International Labour Conference to be held in 1956 and drew up a list of points for submission to member governments of the ILO which would form the basis for a proposed new instrument on forced labour. It was pointed out that this would not prejudice the possibility of revising at some future date the Forced Labour Convention of 1930. In June 1955, the Governing Body established an independent *ad hoc* committee which will submit its conclusions to the Director-General for transmission to the Governing Body and for inclusion in his reports to the 1956 and 1957 sessions of the International Labour Conference.

## Refugees

The United Nations defines refugees as those persons who have left the country of their normal residence because of fear of persecution. With the termination of the activities of the International Refugee Organization in 1952, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, created in 1950, became the principal United Nations body concerned with the refugee problem. The High Commissioner, Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart, has under his mandate a total of 2,200,000 persons<sup>1</sup>; of these, however, 1,200,000 have been resettled in other countries while another 750,000 are more or less established in the countries of their first asylum. He is therefore primarily concerned with the remaining 250,000 in Europe and the Middle East, and 70,000 of these refugees are still living in camps. In addition, 14,000 refugees of European origin in China also come under his mandate.

The High Commissioner for Refugees is responsible for providing legal and political protection for refugees and for promoting permanent solutions to their problems. He does not engage directly in operational activities but aids refugees by providing voluntary agencies and governments with advice and funds to assist in carrying out such projects as housing, hospitalization and vocational training for refugees.

<sup>1</sup>He is not responsible for the Palestine Arab refugees whose welfare is the concern of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.