

AGAPE
and
its work

To the Presbyterian Church USA, which not only helped us during the difficult years when we were building, but in full understanding and brotherly love still continues to help us — indeed, works together with us.

agape

The aim of this small publication is to give our friends, who have helped us in the past and continue to help us even now, a bird's-eye view of the full variety of work now being carried out at Agape. After the service of Dedication on 12th August 1951, we immediately began with Agape's true task of working on behalf of young people from every Church and from every sector of human life. What is written here is not a complete catalogue because many undertakings — and sometimes the most important ones — are liable not to fit into any scheme of classification of our activities. All the same, the reader will be able to see, at least in part, the mansideneess and richness of the work which the Lord grants us to accomplish. What can never be said enough, and yet is as true as can be, is that the Lord is perpetually giving us visible signs of His Grace in such a way that we can confess without hesitation that this is a work of His. His, because it is He who gives us day by day a programme of activity, Himself confronting us with the tasks which He has prepared for us to perform; His, because He drives our brothers from all places to come here; His, because it is He who directs an effective call to the hearts of men when He compels us to speak with them; and His, lastly, because His power shows itself in its perfection in and through our human nothingness. We mention these things freely because our desire is to give the honour and glory to Him who alone is worthy to receive them now and forevermore.



For about six months in the year, Agape provides a home for camps and conferences as well as for various meetings that last for only a day or a week-end. Each year about 2,000 young people attend these camps and other activities. The camps become more and more ecumenical and more and more international every year. Almost all the countries in Western Europe are represented in addition to many in other continents. For instance, the number of campers from the United States of America is interesting. This year there were about 70. These camps offer a wonderful opportunity for spreading the ecumenical idea, for proclaiming the necessity of a richer community life, and above all, for preaching Christ to all these young people. From this work every year a harvest is reaped of good fruit abounding to the glory of the Lord. Many young people at Agape have found a new sense of purpose and a new aim in their lives.



A group of young people discussing a lecture, at one of the international camps last summer. Those taking part were from 13 different countries.



A group of workers sharing ideas and experiences during the « International Holiday Camp for Workers », a successful experiment staged for the first time this year.



In addition to sponsoring camps, Agape acts as host to various meetings of shorter duration which follow out their programmes in its peaceful surroundings, and are thereby so greatly helped in their meditation. To these meetings, too, we always preach the message of the love of Christ, not only in words but also by offering our service. In the picture we show a meeting of mothers from the Waldensian Valleys; — the young people wanted to express their gratitude to them. There are 265 of them gathered together in Agape's open-air church.



In winter, too, there are «ski» camps. Skiing takes place, but the main activity is always study and reflection on the Word of God. At the entrance of Agape there stands a cross. It proclaims to all that here, it is in the name of Christ that we come together and live together.



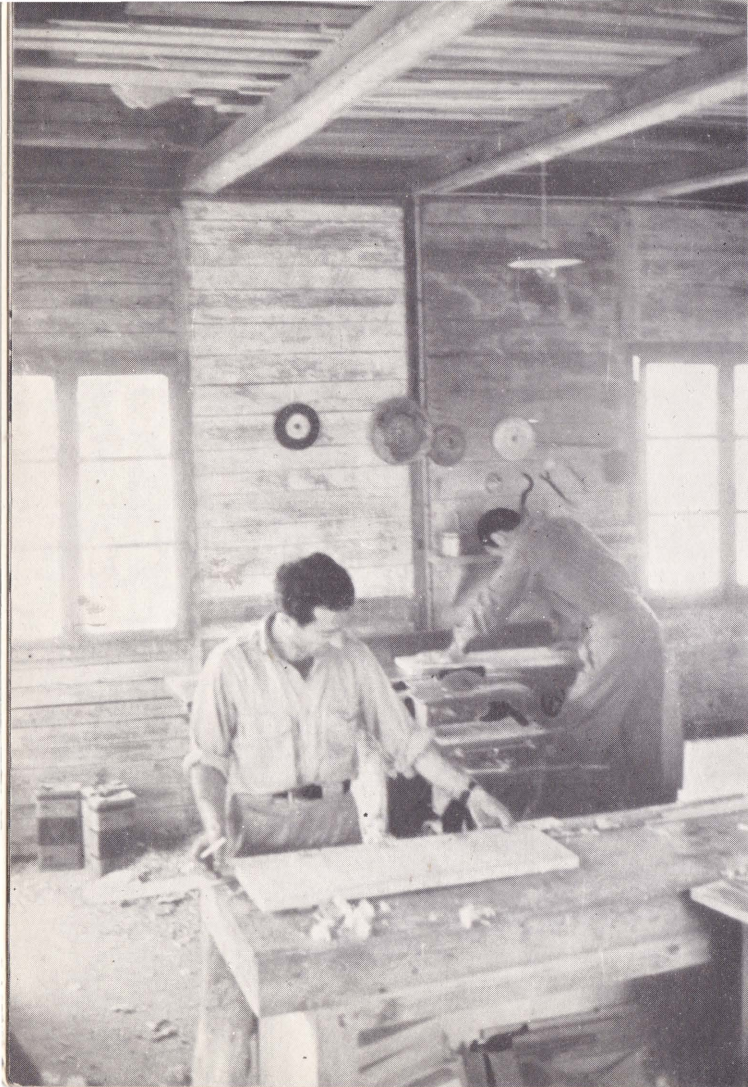
In the month of June the camps are usually for young boys and girls. In Italy these youngsters wait impatiently for the day when they will be old enough to come to the camps at Agape. Then their greatest ambition will be to join the volunteer work camp when they are 17. Here, a camp group of young boys and girls takes a hike in the mountains surrounding Agape.



The work-camp at Agape has its own special character. Here, work is love translated into action. Through the work-camp we try to bear witness to Christ's love by serving our brothers. Work moreover is a prayer shaped by our hands, and this camp, in its work, expresses its faith and adoration. It was by work-camps that Agape was built; but even now, when it is functioning fully with other camps and conferences, the work-camp still continues by its service to follow these developments and to minister to the needs of these other activities. In the picture, some young people are seen engaged in the construction of the bell-tower that will complete Agape's open-air church.



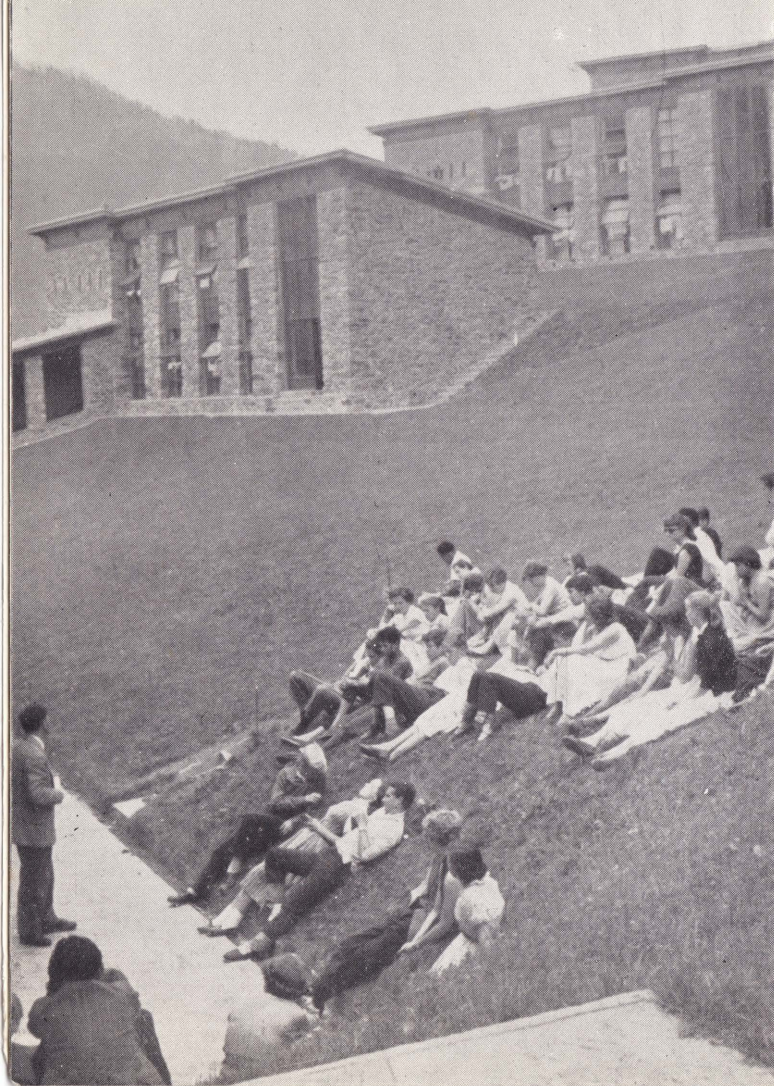
The Community is the life and soul of all Agape's work. It is formed of a certain number of people who have come to feel, as a specific determination of their Christian calling, that they should serve the Lord in this work. One group of the Community, seven in number, lives permanently at Agape. It is this group which acts as host to the camps and provides a certain atmosphere in which they can work. Each member of it is entrusted with a certain sector of the service that is required. When no camps are being held, this resident group tries to fulfill its Christian calling by serving in various forms of activity both in and outside Agape, either in order to help the upkeep of the village or in the fulfillment of its own special mission.



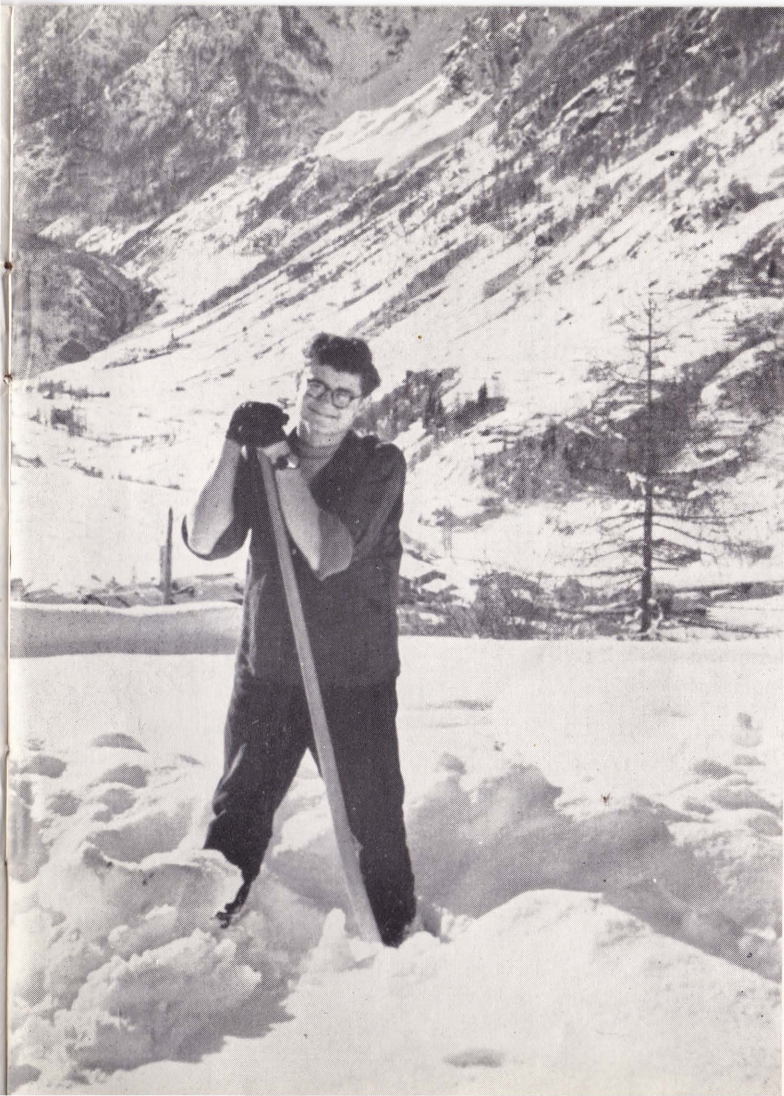
In the work-shop two members of the Community are engaged in making furniture or whatever is necessary for the upkeep of the village or the work-camp. Here, one of them is working with the electric plane, and the other at the carpenter's bench.



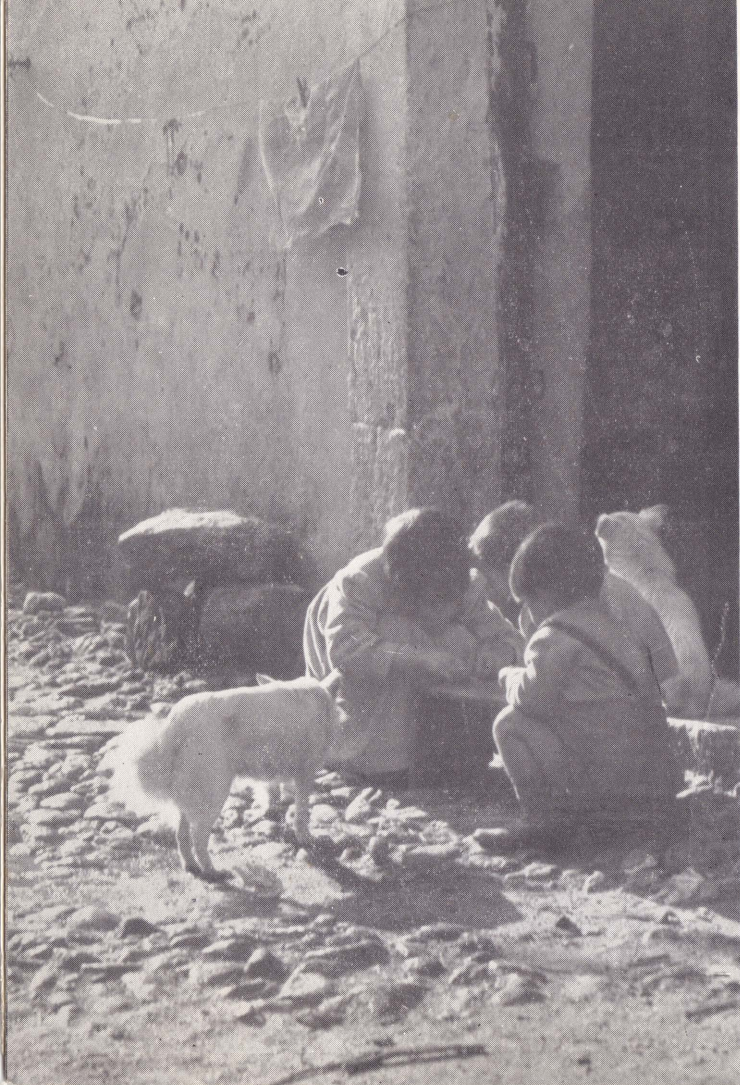
Three members of the Community work in Agape's administrative office. Here they deal with the vast amounts of correspondence involved in preparing the programmes for coming camps. They also maintain ecumenical contacts with former and prospective campers in many countries and carry on, through these contacts with young people throughout the world, a Christian ministry of education and help.



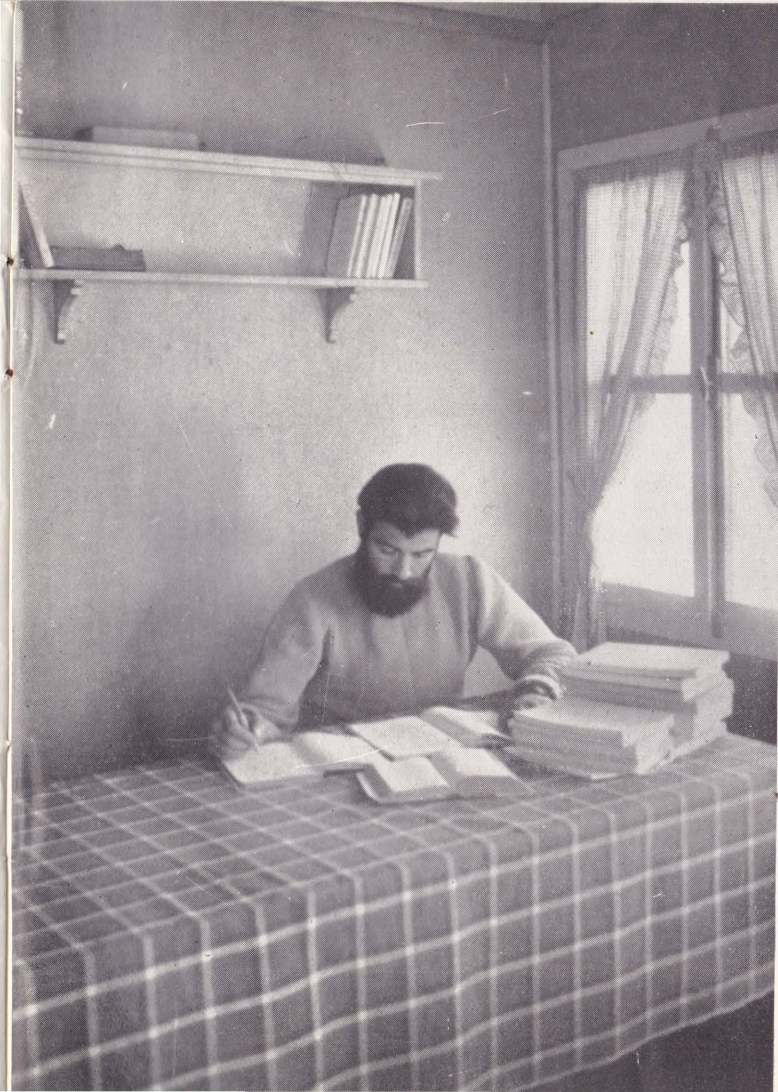
An important activity is that of looking after visitors. Numerous are those who come to visit Agape on holidays all round the year and on every day during the summer. In summer they often number between 100 and 200 each day. To all of them we proclaim not the human activity that is this present Agape, but the true Agape, the true love which is that of Christ. By means of this contact there is a wide evangelistic opportunity on a popular level. In the picture a member of the Community is seen talking to a group of visitors.



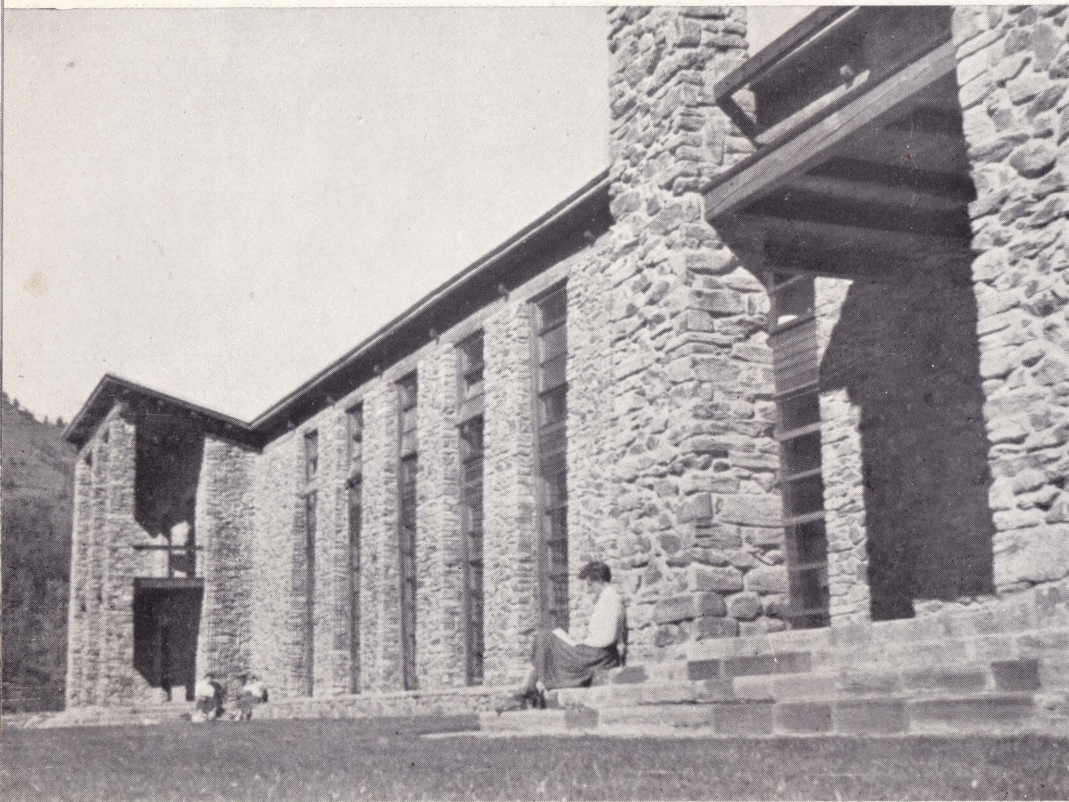
In the periods when no camps are being held, the Community receives and looks after certain « special cases » sent to us by pastors. They are people who need special care either physically or spiritually. Sometimes they are people whom no one else either would or could take in, but for them, too, Agape's doors must always be open. This often becomes a mission towards the miserable and abandoned persons of this world. In the picture, a young man from Belgium, whom we looked after because he had received a severe psychological shock, is seen happily working in the snow. During the winter we always have such guests, sometimes two or three of them at the same time.



One member of the Agape Community is on mission to Trappeto in Sicily where hunger and poverty are particularly acute. His work is among the children from the streets. The Community keeps him there so that with these children, who are often completely abandoned, he offers the care that the love of Christ, and Christian understanding, can bring. In the picture you see a group of these Sicilian children in their usual environment.



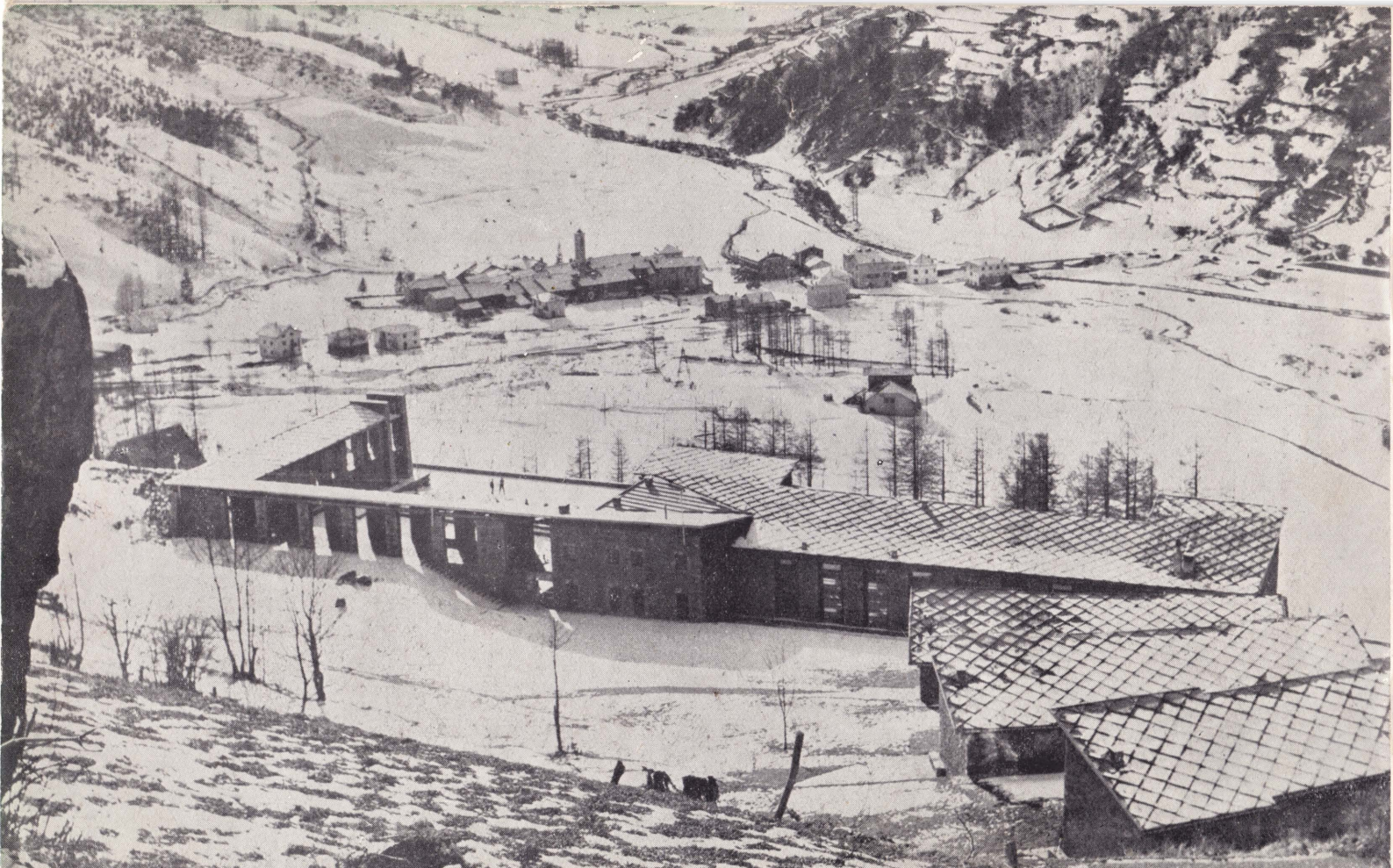
One member of the Community is studying to become an itinerant preacher. He began his work in November 1955, going from house to house to bring the message of Christ and to spread copies of the Holy Scriptures. Through his work the Agape Community will try to regain contact with many who have forgotten their Christian calling in the strains and worries of this world. Agape contemplates his work both now and in the future in complete trust knowing that He who calls is also He who gives us day by day the work that we should perform. He renews in us, by his Holy Spirit, our understanding of that brotherly service to which we are called.



Partial view of the façade of
the main building.

Tip. B. Coppini & C. - Firenze

Agape, March 1956



comunità di Agape - prati di porcino (torino) - italia