

JOSE FEDERICO FINO
(1907-1977)

SHORTLY before Christmas 1977 the Instituto de Estudios sobre Armas Antiguas and GLADIUS received the very sad news that one of its most appreciated and loyal collaborators through more than 12 years J. F. Finó had ceased to be. His death came suddenly and as a terrible shock to his many friends and colleagues in the learned



world. The erudite librarian, archivist and historian, specialized in medieval military archaeology, castellology and art of war, particularly in regard to France, with detailed knowledge about Italy, Spain and the Near East, died in full activity preparing an arms dictionary and various articles for European and Argentine periodicals for future publication. Loaded with a rich material from archives, museums and libraries he had just returned to Buenos Aires from a prolonged

stay in France and Italy in order to prepare his contributions to an important work published by the Centre of Medieval Archaeology in Strassbourg.

Finó was born in Santa Fe in Argentine in July 1907 but he came to spend childhood and great part of his youth in France, particularly in Paris together with his parents. In France he studied science and philosophy at various universities and learned academies, particularly in Chartres and Paris where he passed his academic degrees. When he in 1930 returned to Argentine he completed his studies at the university of Buenos Aires and dedicated himself to libraries and archives. After his graduations here he was appointed director of the bibliographical department of the National Library of Buenos Aires. At the same time he was made director of the library of Unión Industrial Argentina. He too worked as a professor at the Argentine Academy of Libraries at the faculty of letter and philosophy. With the university of Córdoba, Argentina, he had very close contacts and he acted in several periods as a professor giving lectures in medieval archaeology of Europe. In the publication-series of this university he published several articles about these topics as well as a book: «Castillos y Armaduras de la Francia Feudal (1960)». Many articles were written by him for Argentine and French periodicals and news-papers during these years. To Medellín (Colombia) and Dakar he was called to give lectures on bibliography.

In 1952 he was called to UNESCO in Paris in his capacity as a specialist in organization of libraries and archives. This appointment gave him rich possibilities for travelling in many European countries and to visit scientific libraries and archives. For his personal interests and his investigations he collected a lot of material for future books. His prolonged stay in France and the many travels of investigation increased his interests and enthusiasm for the medieval archaeology and castellology. He soon became one of the finest specialists in military architecture of France from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. He traversed France in all directions and mapped almost all castles and ruins of castles, investigated their architecture, their history and development through the centuries into all details. Returning to Paris he investigated libraries and archives in order to find documentation and information about as many castles as possible. His many and thorough examinations further gave him a great knowledge about the history of France and its neighbouring countries. He mastered several modern languages, as well as Latin, so that the investigation of ancient sources and manuscripts was no problem to him. On various travels he examined castles of England, Italy and Spain and he participated in numerous congresses about medieval

archaeology, history and civilization. At the centre for medieval studies in Spoleto in Italy he was a frequent guest.

Finó was a very busy person, always engaged with investigation and writing books and articles, results from his studies of ancient manuscripts on art of war, military architecture and armament. Beside the various books and manuals about bibliology such as for instance: «Elementos de Bibliología» (Buenos Aires), and other books about bibliological topics his main production concentrated about the military matters of the Middle Ages. His first book about the topics was the above mentioned publication from the university of Córdoba, Argentina. His main work, however, was the important manual about French medieval castles: *FORTERESSES DE LA FRANCE MÉDIÉVALE, Construction, Attaque, Défense*, published at A. et J. Picard, Paris in 1967. This comprehensive and erudite book, an indispensable manual to all who wish to study military archaeology, soon came out of print. In 1970 a new, revised and augmented edition was issued by the same editors in Paris; this one soon came out of print too. Shortly before his death he had the great pleasure to see the third edition, once more revised and augmented. It is an enormous achievement, a book with more than 500 pages and a multitude of excellent illustrations. It is a comprehensive book with maps, elaborate lists of almost all castles in France, their history and the existing literature about each of the castles, bibliography and documentation, indices and appendices. The author treats the ancient castles from the 3rd cent. up to the 15th cent., their construction, fortification, strategical situation, armament, effectivity, sieges, engines of war, military fire, men etc. etc.

He was one of the collaborators of the: *ATLAS DES CHÂTEAUX FORTS EN FRANCE*, published by the «Centre Archéologique Médiévale» in Strassbourg, directed by Dr. Charles Salch and in collaboration with Dr. Joëlle Burnouf. At his death he was about to prepare a new work: «Dictionnaire des armes médiévales».

Since 1964 he had been collaborator of *Gladius* with an article almost every year, and with numerous reviews of books about castellology and art of war. His last reviews are published in this present tomo of *Gladius*. A few days before his death he sent to *Gladius* a new article: «De Pierrefonds à Vauban,» to be published in tomo XV.

For his many merits in France the French government in 1961 honoured him with the academic order: Chevalier, Ordre des Arts et Lettres, and in 1969 he was honoured with the «Legion of Honour».

Finó was not only the learned librarian and investigator, writing books and articles about art of war and military matters. In his scarce leisure time he was an eager sports man. His speciality was moun-

taineering and he was a skilled alpinist and andinist. Since his youth he had been a member of the French Alpinist Club and had climbed the French and Swiss Alpes several times. In the Argentine Andes-ranges he and his wife investigated—for scientific purposes—several of the mountain peaks. He got fame for his andinism and was for many years delegate for the Argentine Commission of Turism and Andinism. Through the years he wrote several books particularly about the andinism in Argentina, not least about the famous Bariloche peaks, investigated by him and his wife.

Finó was a charming personality, an excellent letter-writer, a loyal friend, always prepared with good advices, ready to help, where he could. He was a many-sided gifted person with a wide field of interests and knowledge, immensely active into his last moments, always studying in his library, where he felt well among his books and documents. He leaves behind him a great void, not only to his wife, who was his loyal companion on most of his travels and in the mountains, but even among his many friends and collaborators and he will be highly missed. To Gladius his death is an irreparable loss. He will be missed in future, but never forgotten.

All honour to his memory.

A. BR. H.