

INTERVIEWS: EFD

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Italian Institute of Historical
StudiesProfessor Federico Chabod

Rome

April 29, 1948

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Chabod is Professor of Modern History at the University of Rome and spends three days a week there. The remainder of his time is spent in Naples where he is Director of the Istituto Italiano di Studi Storici (see separate interview). In addition, Chabod is Director of the Institute of Modern History in Rome, editor of the Rivista Storica Italiana, and Italian delegate to the International Committee of Historical Sciences. By birth Chabod is a native of the Val d'Aosta near the French border where he took a prominent part in the Resistance Movement and was named Acting President after the expulsion of the Fascists until a permanent government could be established.

Chabod spoke in optimistic terms of historical studies in Italy at the present time. The five Historical Institutes under the directorship of Gaetano DeSanctis are active and producing excellent materials. The academies, regional as well as national, are severely handicapped by lack of funds for publication but some good work is being done in connection with them. Chabod felt that it is important for Italians to write up the history of the past thirty years while the memories of Fascism are still vivid and their accounts of contemporary events will constitute a valuable source for modern history. Before Italian historians can really resume their place with historians of other nationalities, however, it will be necessary to encourage contacts between Italians and foreigners and particularly to assimilate the changing points of view which have obtained outside Italy during the past few decades.

Because of illness, Chabod was unable to attend the recent meeting of the International Committee of Historical Sciences in Paris and had not yet obtained a full report from his colleague who was present. It was Chabod's opinion that things were going well with the International Committee as far as he could tell but he stressed the desirability of putting more responsibility upon the National Committees. Particularly is this true in the preparation of the annual international bibliographies. Chabod had heard of Woodward's resignation but was not inclined to attach much importance to it. Because of Chabod's acquaintance with the French language, he is better informed and more interested in current French historical studies than in those of other areas.

In commenting on the number of publications -- scholarly, semi-scholarly, and popular -- which appeared in Italy at the end of the war, Chabod brought out an interesting point. Because of the

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division of Italy between German and allied forces during the latter part of the war, communication between the Northern and Southern parts of the country was practically impossible. Hence there was little knowledge in Rome, for example, of what had been published in Milan and vice versa. Consequently, many of the publications which appeared would have been unnecessary if this knowledge had been available and if it had been possible to circulate publications which had already appeared in one part of Italy. From this point of view, the diminution in the number of periodicals within the last year is not to be regarded as a loss of intellectual vigor or as a serious detriment to Italian intellectual life.

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