

# UNB history professor publishes book

Peter C. Kent, chairman of the UNB history department, has had an interest in Italian diplomatic relations since the days when, as a master's student at the London School of Economics, he studied the language of that country.

His new book, recently published by MacMillan Press of London, England, is about the early relations between Benito Mussolini, prime minister of Italy, and Pope Pius XI, both of whom assumed their respective offices in 1922. Entitled *The Pope And The Duce: The International Impact of The Lateran Agreements*, the book focuses on the period between 1929 and 1935, an era which has been virtually unexplored by English-speaking scholars of Italian history.

When the Pope and the Duce came into power, a conflict over the powers of church and state had existed for almost 60 years. By the time Pius XI and Mussolini signed the Lateran Accords, settling the domestic dispute, in February 1929, both leaders had come to a workable, if uneasy, agreement on their mutual goals for Italy.

Both men wished to return Italy to its previous dominance within the European community, the Pope in the interests of spreading and uniting Catholicism, and the Duce in the interests of gaining political and territorial supremacy. Pius XI and Mussolini sometimes supported, but more often did not interfere with each

other's foreign policy as they pursued their quests for control in central Europe, Greece, and parts of Africa.

Dr. Kent's book is unique in its attention to the international situation which surrounded and followed the signing of the Lateran Accords. Two threats were growing: Germany's Nazis and Russia's communists, and both Italian leaders viewed communism as the more dangerous. In 1933, the four great powers of Europe, Britain, France, Italy and Germany signed the Four-Power Pact which was designed to create a peaceful balance of power in the European system. Soon after, though, when Hitler became chancellor of Germany, the Pope and the Duce grew disturbed with Nazi aggression and the violation of several treaties. Then Italy allied itself more closely with France uniting Catholic Europe and creating a resistance to the German invasion of Austria.

This arrangement was ideal, until, with France's blessing, Mussolini invaded Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October, 1935. Britain objected to this manoeuvre, and forced France to choose between an alliance with her and the one with Italy. France chose Britain, and they in turn chose "Moscow and the Popular Front movement as the best defence against Hitler". Left out in the cold, "Mussolini was backed into the same corner as the Nazi dictator," writes Dr. Kent at the conclusion of the book.

in researching his book,

Dr. Kent had to rely primarily on British documents from the Public Records Office because, in 1974, when he began his study, Vatican documents were closed for the years following the 1870's. Dr. Kent was also able to gain access to the papers of Mussolini's Private Secretariat.

During the preparation of his book Dr. Kent had several interesting experiences. He met Miss Mabel Strickland, daughter of Lord Strickland who governed Malta during the 1920s and 30s when it was a colony of Britain. Lord Strickland's outspoken anti-clerical and anti-Italian policies caused considerable friction between the two countries at that time.

Dr. Kent corresponded with Otto von Habsburg, who, in 1918 as a young boy, lost his chance to become Archduke of Austria. Dr. Kent queried him about the rumor circulating in 1931 that von Habsburg was engaged to the youngest daughter of the King of Italy. Von Habsburg replied that not only was the rumour un-

founded, but also that he had never even met the woman! The rumor was part of speculation then that Mussolini might restore the Austrian monarchy.

Dr. Kent spoke with Renzo de Felice, Mussolini's Italian biographer who has published four volumes to date on the Duce's life. Dr. Kent found that he and de Felice had a reasonably similar interpretation of the period, 1929-36. There are two schools of thought on Mussolini's behavior as a leader. One postulates that he was really a buffoon and a headline hunter. The second, to which de Felice and Dr. Kent subscribe, suggests that there was a method in his madness. They find support for this theory in that Mussolini opened up and pursued only certain lines of action; he did not exploit all available crises to his own ends.

*The Pope And The Duce* is reading recommended for those interested in the history of the Catholic Church and Italian diplomacy. For North American audiences the



Peter C. Kent

book provides a unique look at the Papacy.

Dr. Kent, who received a BA from UNB in history and political science and an MS and PhD from the University of London, plans articles on the Abyssinian War and the Spanish Civil War as sequels to his book. Then he plans to write a book on the post-World War II history of the Vatican.

## Future of Creation Aquinas lecture topic

Rev. Dr. Christopher Mooney, S.J., Academic Vice President of Fairfield University, Fairfield, Connecticut will deliver the annual Aquinas Lecture at St. Thomas University, Thursday, January 28 in the Edmund Casey Auditorium at 8:00 p.m. Dr. Mooney, a recognized authority on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,

will deliver a lecture entitled, "The future of Creation." The public is invited to attend.

The Aquinas Lecture is held each year on the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of the university. St. Thomas, a priest of the dominican order, flourished in the thirteenth century, and is regarded as one of the great lights of the Church.

His writings in philosophy and theology have had a profound influence on thinkers, even to our own day. His chief work, *Summa Theologica*, is known by scholars and still quoted.

To mark the feast day the University will celebrate a special mass at 10:30 a.m. in the University Chapel.

The Brunswickan  
would like  
to thank all  
those who contributed  
to our Christmas  
Social

Victory Meats      Scholten's  
Brunswick Bottling      Bun King  
Kentucky Fried Chicken      Captain Submarine  
Wendy's Old-Fashioned Hamburgers      McKay's Dairies

Two Deputy Returning Officers are needed in upcoming Spring Election.

If you are interested, stop by the SRC Office and leave your name and number as soon as possible.