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On 13 August 1988 John Holmes, a preeminent figure in both the study of Canadian political and foreign affairs and in formulation of foreign policy, died at the age of seventy-eight. King Gordon was a long-time friend of Holmes and worked for the United Nations in various capacities including that of Director of the UN Information Centre for the Middle East during the Suez Crisis in 1956.

BY KING GORDON

JOHN HOLMES' MAJOR WRITTEN work appeared in two volumes under the title: *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957*. It is a brilliant piece of writing based on scrupulous research covering many events in which John Holmes had participated. I recently read his gripping account of those tense days when Pearson and Hammarskjöld together produced the formula that brought into being the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) which effectively ended the Suez Crisis. And I was taken back to Cairo and the long night in which a group of us tried to follow those events on radio. In the morning we came out and against a bright blue sky a British Canberra bomber was describing a figure eight but no bombs were being dropped. Ten days later I was establishing the information office of the UNEF HQ camp at El Balah on the Suez Canal and beginning a seven-month assignment to report on the successful operation of the United Nations' peacekeeping force. *The Shaping of Peace*, should be required reading for every politician, teacher and community leader in Canada.

John Wendell Holmes was born in 1910. After his graduation from the University of Western Ontario, he took his M.A. degree at the University of Toronto. He taught for several years at a progressive boys school, Pickering College, and proceeded to the University of London for further graduate studies. The war came and he returned to Canada. Discovering that the Canadian Institute of International Affairs (CIIA) was looking for a National Secretary, he applied for the job and, somewhat to his surprise, was accepted.

John Holmes discovered that a prevailing theme of CIIA discussions – Canada's status as a Commonwealth and North American nation – had now been rendered more specific: Canada in a post-war world. It also prepared John for the job he was handed when in

1943 he was asked to join the Department of External Affairs. That job was as Secretary of the Working Commission on Post-Hostilities Planning.

Two events sharpened the focus of the planners. In October 1943, representatives of four great powers in the wartime alliance – the US, the USSR, Great Britain and China – met in Moscow to set in motion a plan to create a post-war international organization to guarantee the peace. The following year the Dumbarton Oaks Conference met in Washington. Representatives of the US, the USSR and Great Britain reached agreement on a draft text of a constitution for the United Nations Organization. It is important to note that the distinctively big-power document that came from Dumbarton Oaks underwent significant change at the subsequent San Francisco Conference. A Charter with an almost exclusive emphasis on the collective responsibility of the great powers to maintain the peace, was broadened to assert the concern of the new world organization to promote and protect human rights, foster programmes to promote more just economic and social development and initiate a cooperative effort to replace a colonial system with free and independent states. In producing these fundamental changes, Canada and other Commonwealth countries had exerted a decisive influence.

In 1948, John Holmes attended the Third Session of the United Nations General Assembly in Paris. He was then posted to Ottawa to head the United Nations Division of the Department of External Affairs. Far from confining his activities to Ottawa, the new position brought him into direct involvement with UN activities in New York: twice as acting head of the Canadian Permanent Mission to the UN, active on numerous Canadian delegations in UN sessions and frequent advisor to Canadian officials, including Lester Pearson, then Secretary of State for External Affairs.

When John Holmes retired from External Affairs in 1960, to become President and then Director General of the CIIA, he carried with him certain firm ideas about Canada's position in the post-war world and the foreign policy that would make that position clear and effective.

In the first place he believed that Canada's security must be sought and found in a secure international community. A threat to Canadian security called for combined action to resolve conflict through mediatory or peacekeeping measures. The alternative, which Holmes rejected, is an extended version of the medieval armed city state, where the prince, sheltered behind fortified walls, guarantees security to all within range of his artillery. The concept has carried over into the nuclear age; Reagan and Bush refer to it as "peace through strength."

Secondly, in an international community, Canada has a special role to play as a middle power. It is not sufficient to shelter under the protection of a great power nor to make futile attempts to match its strength. But Canada has resources which exceed those of the majority of other states that can be applied to achieve effective results. In the third place, the UN must be seen as occupying a key role in Canada's post-war position in the international order.

These were the ideas John Holmes' life gave testimony to during the last three decades in the CIIA and as a teacher, writer and consultant to government and non-government organizations. He had a literal belief – perhaps the adjective should be "realistic" – in the first seven words of the UN Charter: "We the peoples of the United Nations..." Not just governments but peoples, who have a direct interest in a just and peaceful community, have an important role in bringing it into being.

When I think of John Holmes, I think of the words of Dag Hammarskjöld in his Swedish Academy lecture on Linnaeus:

Only those who do not want to see can deny that we are moving these days in the direction of a new community of nations, however far away we may be from its full realization, however often we may seem to have chosen the wrong path, however numerous the setbacks and disappointments have been. Could it be otherwise, when no other road appears to open out of the dangers a new era has created?

John Holmes was so contemporary, so sensitive to the important changes in the pattern of the global society. Just the other evening I mentioned his name to a visiting Soviet scholar. His eyes lit up. "John Holmes!" he said. "He spent a week with me in Moscow just a year ago. He was so excited, so happy!" New hope in a new age. □