

Captain Tom Bringing Our Nation Together

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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Thank you, Sir Tom.

News this week has not all been cheerful. The army in Burma, Myanmar, tipped out the government that recently won 80 percent of the popular vote.

The excuse was familiar. The general claimed 'election fraud'. Heard that elsewhere recently? The real reason: was he apprehensive about a possible war trial at the Hague court on charges related to the appalling treatment of the Rohingyas? Sadly, expect the Chinese and the Russians to block effective action by the Security Council of the United Nations.

A Russian court imprisons Alexei Navalny for breaking the conditions of a previous suspended sentence. He had failed to report to court. Was this when he was in Germany recovering from poisoning attributed to allies of President Putin?

China was praised for dumping the Gang of Four's policies of national destruction. Leaders developed the cycle of passing control to successors after ten years. The extension of personal power by their present leader is bad news for the Uighurs to the far west of China.

In Europe people watch Poland and Hungary, wondering how tempted political leaders are by the strong-leader approach to politics.

At the EU 27, our former partners, the Commission announced action that threatened every good thing created by good work and goodwill as Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain found constructive ways to come to terms with history. Dublin, Belfast and London reacted fast, effectively and mostly with moderation.

I support Lord Hannay in helping peers and elected members in Parliament consider issues of global security and the work of the United Nations with its agencies. The recent obituary of the great Sir Brian Urquhart aged 101 covered several lifetimes of service, like Captain Sir Tom Moore, a younger 100.

David Hannay was the United Kingdom representative at the United Nations in New York. Previously, my father was UKREP at the UN in Geneva. David could have become the permanent head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Risking a second message from the reader who asked me not to go back in history, I recall sharing a physics lesson with Sir Brian's son when in the Congo Katangan troops abducted his father before beating him and threatening to end his life. He has been the second UN employee in 1945. He set up the UN peacekeepers after the Suez crisis in 1956. Touchingly, after 57 years of marriage, his second wife died the day after him.

Captain Tom for 64 years organised the annual reunion of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment. He joined them in 1940. Across our country are others, including Worthing's Janet Goldsborough-Jones and her great local colleagues who bring us together at memorials and Services of Commitment.

Sir Tom brought forward the goodness of many more. He did the walking. Others made the money available. The over £30 million will grow, in tribute following his death. His fund-raising for NHS Charities Together was named "Tom's 100th Birthday Walk for the NHS". The target of £1,000 became £5,000, then £500,000.

I thank and I congratulate all the fine people here and in other countries who contributed. Like Sir Tom, no one in the NHS should have to walk alone.

An experienced nurse told me this week that the responsibilities and the physical effort required in NHS C-19 intensive care wards are greater than ever before. Captain Sir Tom Moore cared for the staff teams. Let us honour him by caring too.