



*"Without fear and without favour"*

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# Expediency is an integral part of the diplomatic process

*From Mr Samuel Passow.*

Sir, Philippe Sands' article "Peace deals made threadbare when their secrets unravel" (Comment, March 1) reaffirms the observation made by Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*: "We are not the first/Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst". Mr Sands rightly observes that on a personal level, the interests and needs of victims and their families should "have a special place" when amnesties are considered, if our faith in the rule of law is to be maintained.

However, history teaches us that expediency is an integral part of successful diplomacy and justice, unfortunately, is often a mere calculation of circumstances made in the trade-off process. A lack of transparency is essential to dealmaking as it provides plausible deniability for politicians prepared to make necessary, but unpopular choices, in order to get the approval of their constituencies. It is the nature of making peace through compromise.

At the end of the second world war, short of the high-profile trials of Nuremberg and Tokyo, many German and Japanese who either committed or actively aided and abetted horrendous war crimes went unpunished as the allied powers suppressed information that could have led to their convictions as they rebuilt those nations as bulwarks to the rising threat of global communism. Looking back now, and recognising the role those two nations have played in contributing to the peace and prosperity in their regions of the world, should we still question whether secret deals are a price worth paying in seeking a solution to intractable conflict?

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