

RUTH ELLIS.

On June the twenty-first, Ruth Ellis was found guilty of murder at the Old Bailey, and sentenced to death in accordance with the law. On July the thirteenth she was executed, in accordance with the law. But Britain's conscience was uneasy.

During those three weeks, while public controversy mounted, one man had a terrible decision to make - Home Secretary Gwilym Lloyd George. As he went about his public duties, he had to decide whether or not to write the grim words - "The law must take its course". But in the end he had no choice. As the law stands, and as precedent dictates, Ruth Ellis had to die.

For the hundreds who waited at Holloway Jail on execution morning, and for the millions who stayed away, three questions remain. Should a woman hang? Should anyone hang at all? Or should there be degrees of murder?

Millions are asking: Is it civilised to kill by law? Does it really act as a deterrent? Is it right to ask any human being to carry out the killing? And if the law says that it is, should it be set aside merely because the murderer is a woman?

This was the law of the centuries gone by. Should it remain the law of the twentieth?