

The Sirhan Verdict

Justice was on trial with Sirhan B. Sirhan. Now that the jury has returned its verdict of murder in the first degree, after a long and careful trial, it can be said that justice has been served.

The verdict makes Sirhan liable to die in the gas chamber, but it would be an act of archaic savagery, not justice, to exact that penalty. No one in the United States has been executed by court decree in more than a year. It is not the aim of justice to exact blood but to determine truth—and to deter future assassinations and crimes.

In the course of the trial, the jury and the attentive public were subjected to a great amount of confusing and conflicting psychological interpretation about Sirhan's early life, deprivations, dreams and fantasies. The psychiatrists made little useful contribution to public respect for their inexact science or their own abilities to uncover hidden motives.

The jury was rightly unpersuaded that Sirhan pulled the trigger of death simply because he was a problem child in a troubled, fatherless family. Nor could it accept as a rationale Sirhan's self-image as an avenger representing the Arab world in retribution against Robert F. Kennedy for his opinions on the Mideast.

To consider this case as an ordinary courtroom case would be to overlook the national and international

implications. The Superior Court's special precautions in barring anyone connected with the case from discussing it outside were warranted. The public at home and abroad may never know what goes on inside the twisted mind of an assassin. But, at least, it has been able to see an open trial fairly conducted.