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Let Us Be Thankful We Have Our Courts

The United States Court of Appeals in Washington has upheld the conviction of Oscar Collazo, the Puerto Rican Nationalist, for murder of a White House guard during an attempt to assassinate President Truman. The man may now appeal to the Supreme Court or seek clemency from the President.

Although his slain companion actually did the killing, Collazo's intention as coconspirator makes him equally guilty under the law. The court's ruling said:

"The law permits purposeful killing for certain carefully limited reasons, or motives, principal among them being self-defense. But, if a killing is intended and none of the established legal excuses for purposed killing is pleaded, the motive of the killer is wholly immaterial."

How carefully do we preserve our court procedures! How careful are we to protect the guaranteed rights of men, even assassins as Callazo, and archtraitors as Julius and Anna Rosenberg! Costly, perhaps, but worth it. A human being is entitled to certain "inalienable rights," no matter how great be the appearance of guilt. Give them all the benefits of civilized procedure and let justice prevail!

How many times in history has the entire course of mankind's progress been changed by an assassination! How widely is government by murder, liquidation of entire population groups without trial, practiced today! Western civilization, thank God, has rejected these methods and today in the United States a would-be assassin of the President himself has recourse to all the courts of the land. The cost of freedom is great, but a threat to one man, even an archcriminal, endangers it.