

LIKE THE TREMORS of a strong earthquake felt across oceans and continents, the case of Angela Davis shakes the tallest towers. On the political scale this is a city buster with no foreseeable end to the consequences as they will be exploited for partisan ends.

Miss Davis, 26 years old, is a Communist and a black militant. She taught philosophy at the University of California in Los Angeles. Whether she should be allowed to continue to teach became such a hot issue that it took up two stormy meetings in May and June of the Board of Regents of the University system with its nine campuses. Chancellor Charles Young of UCLA had recommended approval for another teaching year for Miss Davis.

By successive votes of 16 to 6 the regents rejected Young's recommendation. Miss Davis could lecture, but students attending her lectures would receive no course credits. Six weeks after the June 19 meeting of the regents Miss Davis was named in a monstrous crime, and she is today on the FBI's 10 most-wanted list.

This places the six regents who voted for her, including President Charles Hitch of the university system, an ex-officio regent, in a difficult position. It is important, in the view of this observer, to put in perspective what they were voting for in a case that seems likely to become a watershed in the whole profoundly troubled issue of Communism versus freedom.

THEY WERE VOTING, first of all, for the right of Chancellor Young to determine who should and who should not teach in the university he headed. This was a right beyond political interference by the regents. It was certain that Gov. Ronald Reagan and the other public members, together with the Reagan appointees, would vote against Young and Miss Davis.

But there was another and more subtle issue. Does freedom even for the thought we hate, in Oliver Wendell Holmes' phrase, including the right of a Communist to

teach Marxist philosophy with its core of belief that the capitalist system is doomed and must be overthrown? This gets down to whether words—in effect, the advocacy of the overthrow of the government by force and violence—is in itself a crime, as contrasted with an overt act such as the planting of a bomb in a public building. It is here that the Davis case is likely to have its most-enduring consequences.

The crime in the Marin County Courthouse in San Rafael near San Francisco was a shock even in this age of violence. A 17-year-old black, Jonathan Jackson, smuggled four guns into the courtroom where three San Quentin convicts were present, one of them on trial for assaulting a guard. Jackson managed to give the guns to the three and they, with Jackson also armed, took five hostages, including Judge Harold J. Daley and two women jurors, and ordered them into the panel truck Jackson had rented.

BEFORE THE TRUCK could leave the courthouse area shooting broke out, allegedly started by a San Quentin guard. When it ended four in the panel truck were dead, Judge Daley and three blacks, and two hostages were wounded.

Not long afterward purchase of the four guns was traced to Miss Davis, one of them bought only a few days before the Marin County shoot-out. Thus far, apart from rumor, it is her only direct connection with the crime. But it was sufficient for the issuance of a warrant charging her with murder and kidnaping.

Extraordinary as the crime itself was the heroes' funeral given the three kidnapers in an Episcopal church in Oakland. The Black Panthers, in uniform with clenched fists, formed a guard of honor as the coffins were carried into the church. Huey Newton, the Panther leader just freed on bond to await a new trial in the killing of a policeman, was one of several who delivered eulogies for the martyrs as advance soldiers of the revolution.

So much of hatred and

hostility lie behind the black militancy. There is the conviction that the black man cannot get justice in American courts and that he is subject to abuse and mistreatment in American prisons. And then there is the sheer madness of a crime like that in the San Rafael courtroom.

A campaign of calculated terror—witness the recent wave of bombings—has, in the view of this observer, one predictable end. It will bring on not a revolution of the left but a repression more drastic than this country has ever known. That is the consequence of a nihilism that can only be self-destructive.

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The Angela Davis Case