

USIA Portrays Davis Trial As Democracy at Work

Associated Press

The United States has quietly mounted a worldwide campaign to portray the murder conspiracy trial of Angela Davis as an example of democracy at work, and to counter claims she is being persecuted because she is a black and a Communist.

The United States Information Agency has sent packages of background information and detailed instructions, some of them classified, to its 106 posts overseas on how the story should be played.

"As soon as this broke, I knew it would be a cause celebre around the world," said Ken Towery, USIA policy chief. "That's the way the Commies operate."

"Our only goal here is to see the U.S. get a fair trial overseas," said Joseph Glazer, a labor economist who heads a 20-member, all-white agency task force to handle the Davis case.

Besides its instructions and background information, the agency last year notified its posts in a classified circular that they could order up to three copies of the grand jury proceedings that led to Miss Davis' indictment on charges of murder, kidnaping and conspiracy.

Miss Davis, an avowed Communist who was dismissed from the University of California faculty, is accused of supplying guns used in a 1970 shootout at the Marin County, Calif., courthouse. Three black convicts and a judge were killed.

In San Jose, Calif., Miss Davis' trial is in the jury-selection phase. She maintains that she is innocent and claims she is being persecuted because she is black a woman and a Communist.

Twenty-five USIA posts ordered copies of the grand jury transcript, which presents only the state's side of the case.

Lule D. Copmann, chief of

USIA's Overseas Press Service, said mailing of the transcripts drew a complaint from an agency official in Brazil that the move was unusual and possibly illegal since such proceedings usually are kept secret.

Copmann said, however, that the agency's legal department had ruled there was nothing wrong with the action since the transcript already had been made public in this country and did not violate California law.

Asked why the agency had classified its circular that the transcript was available, Copmann replied, "Well, you know, it was a sensitive subject."

The agency also classified its initial policy guide, sent out Jan. 21, 1971, with a 16-page analysis of the case by the legal department.

A revised policy paper, called an "infoguide," was issued last month. It is almost identical to the first one but it is not classified.

"The charge is made constantly that she is a 'political prisoner,' that the state is persecuting her because of her color," the guide says. "Such

accounts are inclined to treat the actual crimes charged, murder, kidnaping and conspiracy, as well as the grand jury's basis for indictment, less intensely."

Under a heading "Treatment," USIA officials are told to "explain to all audiences, especially influential opinion molders how the Anglo-American judicial processes differ — sometimes sharply — from the judicial processes in other countries."

Among other points officials are told to emphasize: Miss Davis is innocent until proven guilty, the trial is open, and "Free Angela Davis Committees" are operating freely across the country to raise defense funds.

What, in fact, the impact has been of the USIA's campaign is difficult to gauge, especially in the Soviet Union.

A recent confidential memo from the USIA office in Oslo, Norway, however, thanked Washington for the "stream" of information, saying it has "done a great deal to prevent the local media from being taken in by the distortions being peddled by the far left, old and new."