

Miss Davis Tells of Buying Guns but Denies Plot Role

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SAN JOSE, Calif., March 29—Angela Davis, in an emotional declaration of her innocence, said today that she had purchased some guns but vigorously denied that she had given them to a group that tried to free George Jackson from prison.

In a move that came as a surprise, Miss Davis rose in the tiny courtroom here this morning to deliver the opening statement in her own defense.

"You may be sure," she told the jury of eight women and four men, "that at no time will you hear evidence that a gun was bought by me for any criminal intent or purpose."

The purchase of guns, she said, was for her own protec-

tion because she had been under threat from extremists.

The prosecution charges that Miss Davis bought them as part of a plot to take hostages from the Marin County Civic Center as ransom for the release of Jackson and other convicts.

"I needed some kind of protection if I was to live out my years," Miss Davis said, referring to the purchase of the guns. "You will understand," she said at another point, "that for a black person who grew up in the South guns were a normal fact of life."

She said that she had a deep love for George Jackson but dismissed as "utterly fantastic, utterly absurd" the prosecu-

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MISS DAVIS SAYS SHE BOUGHT GUNS

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tion's contention that this had driven her to join the alleged conspiracy.

Miss Davis talked for nearly two hours, often with great emotion. She told the jurors that once they had heard all of the evidence in the case, they would, she was confident, bring in a verdict of not guilty.

But before Miss Davis spoke, the trial was delayed for more than an hour while Judge Richard E. Arnason attempted to gauge what effect, if any, yesterday's attempted jailbreak had had on the jury.

The escape attempt took place in a building adjacent to the courthouse where Miss Davis is being tried. A number of the jurors were arriving at the courthouse when the attempted break was under way. Judge Arnason questioned each of the jurors separately this morning, and after each had said that the events of yesterday would not interfere with this case, the trial of Miss Davis was resumed.

The unexpected decision by

dant make her own opening statement appeared to irk Albert Harris Jr., the prosecutor.

Twice in the first few minutes of Miss Davis's remarks he was on his feet making objections. Finally, the defendant turned to the judge and requested that he "ask the prosecutor not to interfere." She said, "We sat here four hours while he said things that were not appropriate, and now we ask him not to interrupt."

Charge Called Absurd

Miss Davis, a 28-year-old black woman who says that she is a member of the Communist party, attacked the state particularly for its contention that it was passion that had driven her to join in a conspiracy to free George Jackson from prison.

"This is utterly fantastic, utterly absurd," Miss Davis said. "The prosecution would like to take advantage of the fact that I am a woman, for in this society women are supposed to act only at the dictate of their passion. Clearly, this is evidence of the male chauvinism that prevades this society."

On Monday, in his opening statement, the prosecutor said that the hostages taken from

the Marin County Courthouse on Aug. 7, 1970, were seized as part of a plan to bargain for the freedom of the Soledad Brothers.

Two of the three black convicts known as the Soledad Brothers stood trial in San Francisco and were acquitted on Monday of murder charges in the slaying of a white guard at Soledad State Prison.

George Jackson, the third and perhaps best known of the three, was shot and killed last August at San Quentin Prison in what the authorities called an escape attempt. The prosecution maintains that Miss Davis was so in love with him that she helped to conspire to free him from prison.

The Soledad Brothers, at the time of the shootout at the Marin County Courthouse, were inmates at San Quentin.

Miss Davis ridiculed the prosecution's description of her affection.

Mr. Harris, she said, "would show me as a pitiful creature pushed to the brink of disaster by ungovernable passions." In fact, she said, her affection for George Jackson deepened only when "I was arrested and was a political prisoner like him."

In her statement today, Miss Davis said that she had wanted all of the Soledad Brothers freed, but through the courts, not by violence.