

# VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

One Company's Position



**I**SLA VISTA, CALIFORNIA, population 11,250.

The business district consists of a couple of gas stations, a few small shops, some real estate offices—and a bank. A large campus of the University of California is nearby. All in all, a normal American suburban community—perhaps very much like the one you live or work in. Normal, that is, until Wednesday, February 25, when violence shattered the peaceful calm of Isla Vista.

At about 8:30 p.m. on the night of February 25, rampaging demonstrators—students and non-students—protesting the “capitalist establishment” converged on the community’s small business district.

Several protesters rolled a gasoline-soaked trash bin through a smashed front door in a Bank of America branch and set it ablaze. Other students extinguished the fire. But just before midnight, with the angry crowd in a frenzy, the branch was set ablaze again. While police and fire officials were held at bay by a rock-throwing mob, the bank was gutted by fire and totally destroyed. A police patrol car was overturned and burned. Numerous other fires were started. Windows were smashed and life and property threatened.

These events took place in a community called Isla Vista. They could have happened in your community. They can happen anywhere and with even more disastrous results.

Why did the eruption in Isla Vista take place?

Participants in the violence say it was a protest

against the “capitalist establishment,” “the war in Vietnam,” “the Chicago trial,” “student repression,” “police brutality,” and a list of other grievances against America in 1970. Some of these grievances are real, some are fanciful and others are false. But all deserve to be aired. To the degree that they are not aired, are not taken seriously, Americans break faith with their young.

But all Americans, young and old, liberal and conservative, lose by violence. Violence and destruction are the seeds of anarchy and tyranny—whether it be the tyranny of the extreme right or the extreme left.

We believe the time has come for Americans to unite in one cause: a rejection, total and complete, of violence as a means of political dissent.

All of us, young or old, liberal or conservative, have for too long been silent on the issue of violence. We have been afraid of labels or slogans that would brand us as either arch conservatives or traitors to a liberal cause. Such sloganeering does all of us a grave injustice.

Let us, as a nation, find once again our ability to distinguish between protest and revolt; between dissent and chaos; between demonstration and destruction; between non-violence and violence.

Let us cease to condemn those who disagree with us, but let us also be prompt and resolute in putting an end to violence in our land.

To this end we applaud the courageous response of many dedicated public officials. They deserve the

cooperation of all citizens. They will have ours.

Every American has a right to walk the streets in safety. No polemic should be allowed to obscure this right. Your wife or husband, son or daughter ought to be safe in visiting a supermarket, a filling station or a bank—regardless of whether another may choose to reject that institution as an onerous symbol.

It is for these reasons that we plan to re-open our Isla Vista branch on Monday, March 9. We realize that there is danger in this course of action. But we believe the greater danger to ourselves and to all of the people in this nation is to be intimidated by mob violence. We refuse to be so intimidated.

Is the branch worth this much? In monetary terms, the answer is no. It is not, and never has been particularly profitable. But it is there to serve the banking needs of the community and we refuse to be driven out of any community by a violent few.

Is this a bad business decision? Perhaps in a narrow sense it is. But we believe that at some time and in some place Americans must decide whether they intend to have their decisions, indeed their lives, ruled by a violent minority.

We are but one bank, but we have decided to take our stand in Isla Vista.

## Bank of America

NATIONAL TRUST & SAVINGS ASSOCIATION