

STATEMENT ON NAZI MARCH IN SKOKIE

-- May 1, 1977 --

Symbols have a power over the mind, and heart, and soul which comes not from their physical properties but from the heavy load which they carry of associations with events remembered and with values and aspirations that arouse the beholder. The parchment scrolls of the Torah, for instance, caused Jews to risk their own lives to rescue them from synagogues which the Nazis had set afire. The cross has moved pious believers and sometimes whole populations to deeds of faith which swept away inhibitions of doubt and of personal convenience or safety.

The same power lies also in symbols which arouse memories of abhorrent events and satanic intentions. The brown shirts of the Hitler hordes and their swastika insignia bring back to Americans the memory of the Second World War and of the suffering and sacrifices which American soldiers and their families had to endure. To those Americans who entered the concentration camps as liberators, the abysmal sights of human cruelty and perversity remain an unforgettable memory of horror and disgust.

The martyrs and those still living who were deserted once by civilized societies, and more specifically, by those who could have taken preventative action, and did not are our real challenge. Not only is the integrity of those entrusted with community leadership at stake now, but each of us must test our own moral fibre by not allowing our friends and neighbors, the survivors, to stand alone against an obscenity which threatens to enter our community. It is imperative that we address ourself to this outrage, since the measure of our actions has far ranging implications for future events that are being evaluated not only locally, but nationally and internationally. Our responsibilities are indeed very grave.

To Jews, the brown shirts and swastikas are unbearable symbols of a fiendish, premeditated system of torture and killing as a sport, of murder as a legal system, of the invention of ever new forms of maiming and destruction of human souls and bodies as an honored profession. To the survivors of the concentration camps that very thought of brown shirts and swastikas on the streets of their community stirs up the memories of loved ones being driven to torture and destruction before their eyes. It reminds them of the moments when they faced inevitable death themselves, survival from which fills them, even now, with a shudder of fright. Their souls were scorched to their very foundations. These men and women have rebuilt their lives and have lived with appreciation for the miracle of their survival. Those who are dedicated to a peaceful and orderly life have already been hurt deeply by even the prospect of the appearance of the symbols of utter and unthinkable evil in their beloved new homeland. These symbols loosen and elemental force in them which can sweep away the years of healing and renewal of hope.

We express our solidarity as neighbors and deplore any disruption in our community.

Rev. John Hollingsworth

Rabbi Karl Weiner

Rev. Joseph Buckles

Rabbi Neil Brief

Rev. Warren Thummel

Rabbi Milton Kanter

Rev. James Bauman

Rabbi Lawrence Montrose

Rev. Phillis Koehnline

Rabbi Harld Stern

Rev. Edward D. Grace

Rabbi Nathan Levinson

Dr. Lee Gallman

Rabbi Ernst Lorge