

On second floor

Officials huddle, wait for the Nazi ‘invasion’

By ROBERT FEDER
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SKOKIE-Mayor Albert Smith leaned out his office window to take home movies and snapshots of the crowd of counter-demonstrators below.

Corp. Counsel Harvey Schwartz scurried from his office to a conference room to the windows and nervously paced the floor.

And village trustees wondered out loud just when it would all be over.

It all happened on the second floor of village hall Saturday, April 30, as Skokie officials prepared for what could have been an ugly day of violent confrontation between the 300 mostly Jewish counter-demonstrators below and a band of Nazis who came within moments of staging their rally there.

As it turned out, the Nazis made it only as far as the east-bound exit ramp of the Edens expy. at Touhy, but Schwartz and others expressed doubt about how long they could keep them out of Skokie entirely.

“ON ONE hand, they’ll never rest until they’re allowed to come here and on the other, those people outside say there’s no possible way to negotiate anything that will permit (the Nazis) in Skokie in any form,” Schwartz told a group of village attorneys and Trustee Manly Croft.

The last-minute decision by the National Socialist Party of America to stage its rally on Saturday afternoon instead of the originally scheduled Sunday, May

1, threw the village into a mild panic.

Officials and department heads were summoned to village hall early Saturday morning as soon as they learned of the revised plan. In a series of hastily called meetings, they decided to seek another injunction barring the Nazis and put into effect their contingency plans to handle the mob expected to form outside.

SKOKIE POLICE faced the day’s biggest problems in two ways. First, they were charged with delivering the latest injunction to the Nazis and second, they had to control whatever crowd would gather at village hall.

By the time Judge Harold Sullivan signed the restraining order Saturday, police were unable to serve it to the Nazis on the Southwest Side in time. So they waited at expressway exits to halt them when they neared the village.

In order to control the crowd, additional police were on duty or on call throughout the weekend, with all days off and vacations cancelled. Units from neighboring villages were placed on stand-by alert.

When the threat of the Nazi “invasion” had finally passed for the day and the crowd below began to disperse, Skokie officials on the second floor of village hall became noticeably more relaxed.

AT THAT point, Schwartz permitted other reporters to enter the building and granted interviews to describe how the latest crisis had been met.