

# The Correspondent

BY CHARLENE LOUIS

## Skokians breathe massive sigh of relief

AS I drove into Downtown Skokie around noon, Sunday, June 25, I was delighted to find it was a typical Sunday afternoon.

There were parishioners coming out of St. Peter's Catholic Church, people stopping to buy newspapers get something to eat, and windowshop on Oakton.

Nearly everyone your Correspondent stopped to chat with was pleased and relieved there would be no Nazi stormtroopers marching in front of village hall, counterdemonstrators, confrontation or violence.

A few people even laughed as we watched a camera crew taking pictures of the deserted front of village hall. There would be slim pickings for the television this day.

Driving through the village parking lot on my way to Niles East high school, where a giant counterdemonstration had been originally scheduled, I found Vernon Anderson the only soul around. Anderson, who lives about four blocks from village hall was reading the Sunday paper.

**HE TOLD** me he had been concerned about violence erupting in town because of the march but he said he counted on the police and the troops (the Illinois National Guard was to be called in) to prevent trouble. He added, if the march had still been on, it was too bad the heavy morning rains hadn't continued, because then the march might have been rained out.

Driving east on Lincoln, I noticed a few cars and a small van parked in front of the high school. Were

some people still planning to hold a counterdemonstration, I wondered?

Close to a dozen people were ready to participate in a Nazi protest. Most of them had come from Chicago and were members of the Young Workers Liberation League. There were a couple of blacks from Chicago hoping to join in the counterdemonstration.

**ONE NEW** York member of the league was pointed out to me, as Jay Schaffner, a former Skokian. We talked for a few minutes about his memories of Niles North and then he bragged about having run for national office on the Communist party ticket.

The group soon left and I stopped to talk to Jerry Kasper, who lives across from the school and had been planning to attend the counterrally.

Kasper said he was very glad the Nazi march was called off because of his fear of violence. He said he had been trying to put himself in the position of Nazi concentration camp survivors.

For them, he said: "It had to be either stay away or kill the Nazis. I was told by survivors they wouldn't stay away."

Kasper also echoed two sentiments repeated to me over and over on Sunday: Support for the way village officials, and particularly Mayor Albert Smith, fought to prevent the Nazi march here and anger at the media for making the march a world-wide event.

**RETURNING TO** the Lincoln-Oakton area, I wandered into a beauty parlor at 7933 Lincoln. Waiting to talk to the owner, I was hailed by a woman sitting under a dryer, Nitsa Psychogios, wife of the owner of the Desiree restaurant, on corner of Lincoln and Oakton. She recognized me from many late Monday night visits to the restaurant after Skokie village board meetings.

Psychogios was eager to talk about her reaction to the Nazis not coming to Skokie. She lived in Greece,

when it was occupied by Nazis during World War II.

"They know how to hurt people," she said with authority.

She said she couldn't blame Skokie people for wanting to keep Nazis from marching here.

"Thank God they are not coming," she exclaimed. "If they had marched here today with their uniforms and swastikas, I don't know if I could have taken it myself."

**DESIREE WAS** one of the businesses along Oakton that was advised by Skokie police to board up their windows if the march took place.

Entering into the conversation, Nick Frangos, owner of the beauty parlor, added his feeling of relief about cancellation of the march.

"I couldn't have been open for business today," he said. "I would have boarded up, too, even though no one said I had to."

Continuing my tour of the area, I talked to Adolph Pawlan. He said he couldn't see any good coming from having the march.

"The Nazis got exactly when they wanted – publicity," he said with regret. "But somebody has to fight them," he concluded. "Hitler started out with

only 20 followers in Germany."

I also found a few people who favored fighting Nazis – members of the Jewish Defense League and others waiting for buses to return them to their homes in the New York area.

Among the group was Esther Berman, the New Jersey nurse who was arrested on Saturday by Chicago police at the rally the Nazis held in Chicago's Loop. She said a Chicago magistrate told her to go home and mail back a \$10 fine.

Berman told me she plans to come back for the July 9 march the Nazis are planning to hold in Marquette park in Chicago. She made it clear she favors death for the Nazis.

Not everyone agreed. Lillian Weisberger, daughter of concentration camp survivors, said she was here "not to kill, but to be counted because she had lived through the Holocaust with her parents, seeing the pain in their eyes."

**I REALLY** feel the majority of Nazi protesters want just that – to be counted among the thousand putting the world on notice. They are ready to oppose Nazism and all it stands for.

I'm glad we weren't put to the test in Skokie.



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