

Skokie aide calls swastikas, Nazi uniforms 'violent acts'

A Skokie official said Friday that Nazi swastikas and "storm trooper" uniforms are not an exercise of free speech but "have the force and the effect of a violent act upon many thousands of people in Skokie."

Village Atty. Harvey M. Schwartz made the comment before a U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals panel reviewing a U.S. District Court decision to strike down three ordinances aimed at prohibiting a planned march by Nazis in the heavily Jewish suburb.

Judges Wilbur F. Pell Jr., Robert A. Sprecher and Harlington A. Wood Jr. are expected to rule on Skokie's appeal within three weeks. On Friday, the courtroom was packed with spectators as arguments by attorneys for both sides were heard.

David Goldberger, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the Nazi group, argued that the stricken ordinances were unreasonably broad.

"There is no way for a speaker or communicator to know what is legal or illegal," he said. Under the ordinances, he said Polish jokes might be a violation and newspapers and television stations could be prosecuted for showing pictures of the march because they also would inflict "trauma" on the viewers.

He argued that "this (Nazi) assembly would be permitted in virtually any other place in the United States . . . except the Village of Skokie."