

An alternative to Skokie

We wish it would be otherwise, but the Chicago area's Jewish community apparently is determined to counter the Nazi parade planned for Skokie with its own demonstration at the same time and place.

The proposal was put forth by, among others, the Public Affairs Committee of the Jewish United Fund (34 organizations represented) and endorsed by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (20 organizations).

That's a strong crowd to challenge, but we still prefer Gov. Thompson's idea, which was to hold such a counterdemonstration somewhere else.

Even with the Jewish organizations' promise that their demonstration will be "orderly and peaceful," a same-time-same-place encounter would guarantee an explosive mixture: evil, anti-Semitic, violence-courting Nazis in the same small beaker with the justifiably unforgetting, unforgiving survivors of the holocaust created by human vermin of another generation.

It wouldn't take much of a spark to ignite the mixture and give the Nazis the martyrdom — counterfeit martyrdom though it would be — that they seek.

But the streets of Skokie are too small for another reason:

They are too small to contain, as a spokesman for one of the Jewish organizations put it, "the many thousands of people of all faiths and races who have expressed their concern and solidarity with us in putting the Nazi obscenity in proper perspective."

The streets of Chicago's Loop, on the other hand, are big enough and far more accessible to accommodate and attract an outpouring of decent Americans, perhaps on a scale rarely matched in this celebration-loving city.

And a celebration it would be — a celebration of freedom over tyranny, of love over hatred, of life over death.

Mayor Bilandic ought to issue the invitation in that spirit.

And offer to lead the march down State Street with Gov. Thompson.