

*On Nazi case*

# ACLU weathers storm of abuse

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**ABUSIVE PHONE** calls, letters and resignations from about 20 members were some of the casualties the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) suffered in the days after the aborted Nazi demonstration in Skokie.

Now, nearly three weeks later, the ACLU says the pressure from outraged citizens at its defense of the Nazis has subsided and more attention is being given to other cases. But it acknowledges that some people will base their judgement of the group solely on this example.

"I understand the emotions of the folks in Skokie," said David Hamlin, executive director of the ACLU's Illinois division. "I have discovered that while they disagree with the stand we've taken, they understand why we've done so."

The ACLU is defending members of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party of America in challenging an injunction issued April 30 that prohibits them from marching in Skokie. It is also backing the Nazis in fighting a Chicago park district ordinance that requires expensive insurance coverage for groups seeking a parade permit.

**WHILE HAMLIN** said several contributors notified him that they would no longer support the ACLU, he doubted the group would sustain significant long-term damage.

"The pressure was on us for awhile," Hamlin told *The LIFE*. "Now we've come through it."

He reiterated the ACLU's basic position of vigorously defending First Amendment rights of all individuals and groups and said those rights were in "grave danger" in Skokie.

Shortly before the attempted Skokie march, Hamlin said the group held a special board of directors meeting at which about 40 members unanimously voted to continue with the Nazi defense. One member abstained, however, saying he could not approve of such

a stance. About 60 persons serve on the board.

"Internally, there has not been very much dissension," Hamlin said. "There are a number of people who have personal difficulties with the position we've taken."

**THE ILLINOIS ACLU's** involvement with the Nazis dates back to the early 1969's when it defended a group picketing a Chicago movie theater. The six demonstrators were charged with disorderly conduct and found guilty.

In 1970, Hamlin said Frank Collin, the local Nazi leader, approached the ACLU for help in getting a permit to march in Marquette Park. The Chicago Park District refused to issue one to him but the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals later ruled that such action was an unacceptable form of prior restraint.

"Courts have consistently said you cannot have prior restraints on people because there might be violence," said ACLU national secretary Frankly Haiman.

Last summer, police arrested Collin's group while they marched in Marquette Park. The ACLU again defended them and the disorderly conduct charges were overturned.

**"ABOUT HALF** the time the ACLU is in the news, it's bound to make people angry," Haiman said from his office at Northwestern University in Evanston where he is a communication studies professor.

He stressed the group believes that the state has the responsibility to prevent potential violence resulting from a demonstration.

"The theory is if you put out enough force, the counterdemonstrations will subside," he said.

And he added that "one has to be pretty broad-minded to be a member of the ACLU."

Said Hamlin, "We are in one sense fire fighters. We have a tendency to drop other things and concentrate on a particular offense."