

Judge forbids Nazi event in Skokie, cites riot peril

Mary F. K. Plous Jr.

Circuit Court Judge Joseph M. Wosik Friday barred a Nazi group from holding a demonstration Sunday in Skokie, saying the march could cause a riot in the heavily Jewish suburb.

"I believe I have as much right to protect life and limb as to protect the First Amendment and 14th Amendment rights of the Nazis to free speech," Wosik told National Socialist Party of America leader Frank Collin.

Collin announced in March his intention to hold a demonstration in Skokie after learning that the City of Chicago had turned down his application to speak in city parks. Wednesday, the Village of Skokie asked the Circuit Court for an emergency order to stop the march on the ground that irate Jewish residents might protest violently.

"There will be bloodshed, loss of property and maybe loss of life," said Sol Goldstein, 62, who noted that some 7,000 of Skokie's estimated 40,000 Jewish residents, himself included, are survivors of Nazi death camps.

Goldstein said he had attended a number of recent meetings by Skokie Jews to discuss the projected Nazi demonstration. "The use of violence was not discussed at the meetings, and I don't intend to use any," he testified, "but as a survivor I don't know if I can control myself."

Collin's lawyer, David Goldberger, legal director of the Illinois division of the American Civil Liberties Union, maintained throughout the hearing that the First and 14th amendments to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed the Nazis the right to demonstrate in Skokie.

"The question is, can the court muzzle somebody?" Goldberger told the judge. "I know they want you to do it. I know you're tempted to do it. But you can't do it. If an injunction is issued, the Village of Skokie will be dancing on the grave of the First Amendment."

But Wosik said he had strong reason to believe the presence of Nazis and Nazi symbols would inflame Skokie's refugees from European concentration camps, many of whom retain strong memories of Nazi terror.

"What other court has had a community of 40,000 Jewish people where these stories are lived and relived?" Wosik said. "Were the march to progress on the first of May and one person was blinded or hurt or if destruction was wrought, I would be the one responsible. This is a small village, You don't have the police protection you have in the city of Chicago."

Goldberger said he would file an emergency appeal of Wosik's decision Friday with the Illinois Appellate Court.