

Nazi march may be called off: U.S. official

By Pamela Warrick

The U.S. Justice Department's community relations service has been working behind the scenes to find an alternative to the proposed Nazi march in Skokie.

And Richard A. Salem, Midwest director of the service, is so pleased with talks so far that he told The Sun-Times Thursday there is a "distinct possibility" the march will be called off.

Basing his comments on months of discussions with all parties involved, in the proposed June 25 march through

the heavily Jewish suburb, Salem told The Sun-Times that "everybody would like to make their point, but, at the same time, avoid a Skokie demonstration. . . . It's the principle and not Skokie."

Salem's comments were the first of their kind for the community relations unit since it volunteered its behind-the-scene "liaison" services to the parties involved in the march dispute early this year. Salem's group provides conciliation services for groups involved in racial and ethnic disputes.

NAZI LEADER Frank Collin had said earlier that he would "very strongly consider" dropping the proposed Skokie march if the Chicago Park District would drop its demands for an insurance bond for Nazi rallies in Marquette Park. And, Thursday Collin reiterated that to The Sun-Times, saying that if the way is cleared for Nazi rallies in the city park, "there would be no purpose in going to Skokie."

Collin said he applied for a permit to hold a July 9 rally in Marquette Park, but has

not yet received approval. He said that the outcome of a Circuit Court hearing scheduled for June 20 could decide "the necessity for a march on Skokie." The hearing will deal with the Park District's insurance bond requirements for assemblies of more than 75 persons in city parks.

"I currently have freedom of speech in Skokie and nowhere else," said Collin, referring to a May 22 ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals that cleared the way for his National Socialist Party of America to march in Skokie. "I would rather speak in Marquette Park than in Skokie," Collin said.

"ALL OF THE principles involved (in the Skokie march dispute) are important ones," said the Justice Department's Salem, "and they all must be respected." But he added that he believes the principles can remain intact "without a confrontation in Skokie. . . . There are alternatives."

While Salem refused to discuss specific alternatives, he said that "when everyone is talking within the framework of the law, more ways are available for resolving differences." Salem quickly added, however, that avoiding a confrontation in Skokie should in no way suggest that "a deal has been made."

In fact, Salem, said, "in this

kind of situation, you cannot strike a deal. Some of the parties aren't free to sit down together and some wouldn't sit down together under any circumstance . . . as a matter of principle."

The Chicago Park District's spokesman, Arnie Matanky, also denied Thursday that his agency is offering any "deals to avoid a Skokie march." But, he added, "The (Nazi) group's application for a park assembly permit will be treated just like anybody else's, Skokie or no Skokie."