

Nazi advance on Skokie stirs emotion, memories

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FROM A NON-EXISTENT park to the United States Supreme Court, Chicago-area Nazis have come a long way in stirring up emotions and old memories without even setting foot in the village of Skokie.

Members of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party of America originally announced their intention to demonstrate in Skokie last Oct. 4 in a letter to the Skokie park district officials requesting the use of "Birch park" for a rally on November 6. In the letter, Nazi leader Frank Collin demanded "the same right to free speech guaranteed every American regardless of political bent."

The Nazis were subsequently informed that no Birch park, falls under the jurisdiction of the Skokie park district. They were further hampered by the passage of an ordinance by the park board in late October requiring \$350,000 in liability insurance from any group wishing to hold a parade or public assembly on park district land.

THE ORDINANCE also states that assemblies on park property cannot "incite violence, hatred, abuse, hostility to persons or groups of persons by reasons or reference to religion, racial, ethnic, national, or regional affiliation."

To protest what they consider the "exorbitant, unreasonable" insurance bond required for a park rally permit, the Nazis scheduled a demonstration in front of Skokie village hall for Sunday, May 1. Their plans were thwarted by an injunction prohibiting their rally which was issued by Circuit Court Judge Joseph Wosik.

Quickly changing their rally date to Saturday, April 30, they were turned back at the Touhy avenue exit of Edens expressway after Skokie police informed them of a court order banning their demonstration, signed two hours earlier by Circuit Court Judge Harold Sullivan. Several hundred angry counter-demonstrators did show at village hall, however, but were sent home after several hours of chanting and milling around.

A demonstration on May 22 was also called off because of the injunction which was upheld in both the Illinois Appellate Court and the Illinois Supreme Court. Its fate is now in the hands of U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens.

TO AVOID THE threat of further Nazi gatherings, the Skokie Village board followed the park board example and, on May 2, approved ordinances establishing the \$350,000 liability insurance requirement, prohibiting public demonstrations by members of political parties wearing military-style uniforms, and forbidding the distribution of materials which incite group hatred.

If Stevens overturns the injunction, the Nazis will be in Skokie within two to three weeks to challenge these ordinances, according to Collins.

Village officials believe that a visit this summer will be received no more warmly than the proposed trips into Skokie this spring.

At that time, Skokie Mayor Albert Smith promised over 100 persons who crowded into the council chambers in village hall on April 25 that "I will do every thing in my power to protect the rights and dignity of the Jewish community in Skokie."

And most of the persons in that audience, many of whom were survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, were one with a man who said "I cannot come to the point of patiently sitting at home when I'm told that it's only a bunch of hooligans on the street and they will pass over. I cannot forget the lives of my brothers and sisters who perished."