

## Even for Nazis

About a dozen years ago, Martin Luther King's civil rights coalition conducted a series of open-housing marches in white working-class neighborhoods on the South Side of Chicago. These were tense confrontations in a volatile time of urban racial disorders. King's black marchers were disciplined and deeply committed to his nonviolent philosophy. The white residents of the neighborhoods through which they marched were not; they reacted with fury — and sometimes with violence — to what they perceived as a threat to their community. The marchers maintained heroic dignity while insults — and stones — were flung their way.

It is demeaning to the memory of Martin Luther King and his movement to suggest an analogy to the sordid psychopaths who call themselves American Nazis — but the analogy must be drawn. It must be drawn because the National Socialist Party of America, a band of defective delinquents headquartered in Chicago, wants to parade behind the swastika in Skokie, Illinois — and because authorities in Skokie and elsewhere are trying to stop them from doing so.

Skokie is no ordinary community; it is a predominantly Jewish suburb north of Chicago, and some 7,000 of its residents are either survivors of the Nazi extermination camps or immediate relatives of Jews who died in the camps. It is small wonder that the people of Skokie regard the American Nazis with loathing and fear — even more loathing and fear, perhaps, than the residents of the South Side of Chicago had for the blacks who marched through their streets.

The Skokie conflict has attracted widespread attention and debate in the mass media. We are, frankly, at a loss to understand the terms of the debate, for it seems clear that

if Martin Luther King had a right to march on the South Side, then Frank Collin, the self-styled *Fuehrer* of the National Socialist Party of America, has a right to march in Skokie. Obviously, he has selected a target that would constitute a deliberate provocation. Didn't King? Doesn't every group mounting a political demonstration?

\* In Illinois, the American Civil Liberties Union has rallied to the defense of the Nazis' right to march, arguing — as the courts have held — that a peaceful demonstration is a logical extension of the right to freedom of speech. For taking that stand, the ACLU has lost members and financial support. But it is the only stand the ACLU can conceivably take if it is to adhere to its mission of defending the freedoms vouchsafed by the First Amendment.

The rights of Nazis are an issue elsewhere, too. Here in Madison, Wisconsin, where *The Progressive* is published, a listener-supported radio station recently invited a Nazi spokesman to present his views on the air. At the appointed time an angry crowd assembled in the street and effectively prevented the Nazi from entering the studio. The station was damaged in the fracas, and several persons were injured.

Distressingly, people who pride themselves on their commitment to freedom are advancing the argument that Nazis must be muzzled — by force, if necessary. One young man who calls himself a socialist asserted that "the only appropriate response to a Nazi is a lead pipe to the skull." But talk of a lead pipe to the skull has nothing to do with socialism — it is Nazi talk, and wielding a lead pipe is Nazi action.

In a letter to a local newspaper, some activists who have

taken part in the peace movement and community organizing maintained that "Nazis are shouting fire in a crowded theater. . . . Free speech for Nazis? We should as well allow rats infected with bubonic plague to roam the streets in the name of free speech."

Such arguments are, of course, familiar: They were advanced only a few years ago — and can still be heard today — as rationales for denying free speech (and other freedoms) to people on the Left. They were, in fact, invoked to persecute some of the same people who would deny free speech to Nazis today.

*The Progressive* has some questions for those who maintain the First Amendment does not protect Nazi speech:

Do you find Nazi doctrine so enticing that you fear it will attract a mass following among Americans? Are your own politics so feeble that they cannot hope to compete with the Nazis' simplistic pitch to the alienated and exploited of our society? Do you have such contempt for the decency and good sense of your fellow citizens that you cannot trust them to listen to a Nazi? Are you endowed with the superior wisdom to decide what speech shall and shall not be heard by the rest of us?

Those who answer any of these questions in the affirmative must be prepared to face up to the ultimate contradiction: They have no faith in the ability of our people to govern themselves; therefore, they have already consigned them to fascism.

When Americans are persuaded that political advocacy — any political advocacy — is tantamount to "shouting fire in a crowded theater," we know who will be the first to be gagged: those "subversives" who speak up for peace and freedom and economic justice. It has happened here before.

Because we supported Martin Luther King's right to march, because we cherish our own right to speak, we have an urgent interest in protecting those rights for *everyone* — even for Nazis.

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## 'Populism' and Petroleum

Jimmy Carter's voice was stern, his message urgent. It is not often that a President of the United States accuses American corporations of "war profiteering" — especially during a time of peace. But then, President Carter has declared that our energy crisis is the "moral equivalent of war."

One might assume the President was finally giving voice to some of his well-advertised "populist" sentiments. Certainly the anguished cries of the oil executives, accused of perpetrating the biggest rip-off in history, suggested that Carter had launched an attack on their vital interests. Unfortunately, however, even casual examination of the President's latest exertions on energy indicate that it is all a charade: The oil companies have never had a better friend in the White House than Jimmy Carter.

While the President was talking tough, a House commerce subcommittee was demonstrating that major oil companies are busily buying up large uranium reserves in the West and holding them for speculative purposes. These companies have systematically evaded the requirement that all claims be actively mined. Earlier this year, the same subcommittee came up with revealing data on the role of Gulf Oil in an international uranium cartel.

Despite mounting evidence that the oil companies are really energy conglomerates engaged in the monopolistic

