

Defending My Enemy: American Nazis, the Skokie Case, and the Risks of Freedom

Aryeh Neier

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Defending My Enemy: American Nazis, the Skokie Case, and the Risks of Freedom Aryeh Neier Are Nazis entitled to freedom of expression? In 1977, Frank Collin, leader of the National Socialist Party of America, sought to hold a Nazi march in Skokie, Illinois. Skokie had one of the largest Holocaust survivor populations outside New York City. In this Chicago suburb, over half the population was Jewish. The proposed march sparked a host of legal actions: the Village of Skokie asked for an injunction to prevent the Nazis from marching, and new ordinances were adopted to do so; Collin applied to hold a march on a later date, but was denied; an ACLU lawsuit was brought in federal court, seeking to invalidate the new ordinances Skokie had put in place to prevent the march. In the end, Collin and the Nazis did not march in Skokie, but the Illinois Supreme Court ruled for free speech in 1978. The ACLU felt severe consequences, organizational and financial, of what was seen by many members as an insidious, pro-Fascist position. Writing from his perspective as national executive director of the ACLU, Aryeh Neier tells the story, and ponders the consequences, of Skokie and other cases in which the enemies of freedom have claimed for themselves the rights that they would deny to others.



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