

Skinheads in Germany cut swastika in girl's face

By RICK ATKINSON
• The Washington Post

BERLIN — Three neo-Nazi skinheads carved a swastika into the cheek of a 17-year-old girl in a wheelchair after she refused to shout fascist slogans, German police said yesterday.

The assailants attacked the victim with a knife Monday after she emerged from a public toilet for the disabled in the eastern city of Halle, about 125 miles southwest of Berlin, a police spokesman said.

After the girl refused the attackers' demand that she shout "Gas the cripples" and "Foreigners out," the three cut a crude swastika in the left side of her face, according to Police Chief Guenter Hermann.

Reports of the attack sparked outrage from groups for the disabled and politicians across Germany. As part of the wave of right-wing violence plaguing the country since reunification in 1990, scores of people who use wheelchairs or are otherwise disabled have been attacked or harassed.

Although violent crimes linked to right-wing assailants dropped by more than 25 percent in 1993 compared with the previous year, horrific accounts of neo-Nazis preying on the defenseless remain an almost-daily occurrence in Germany. Government statistics indicate that of 2,456 acts of right-wing violence in 1992 — a 30-fold increase in a decade — about 90 percent of the victims were foreigners and the other 10 percent were "leftists, homosexuals and disabled persons."

In the Halle incident, the victim suffered a cut, "but the chances are good that there will be no permanent scar," police spokesman Ralf Berger told Reuters.

More than 100 police officers are searching for the suspects, and about 200 known right-wing radicals have been questioned, Berger said.

WORLD WAR II

FIFTY YEARS AGO TODAY

JANUARY 12,
1944



