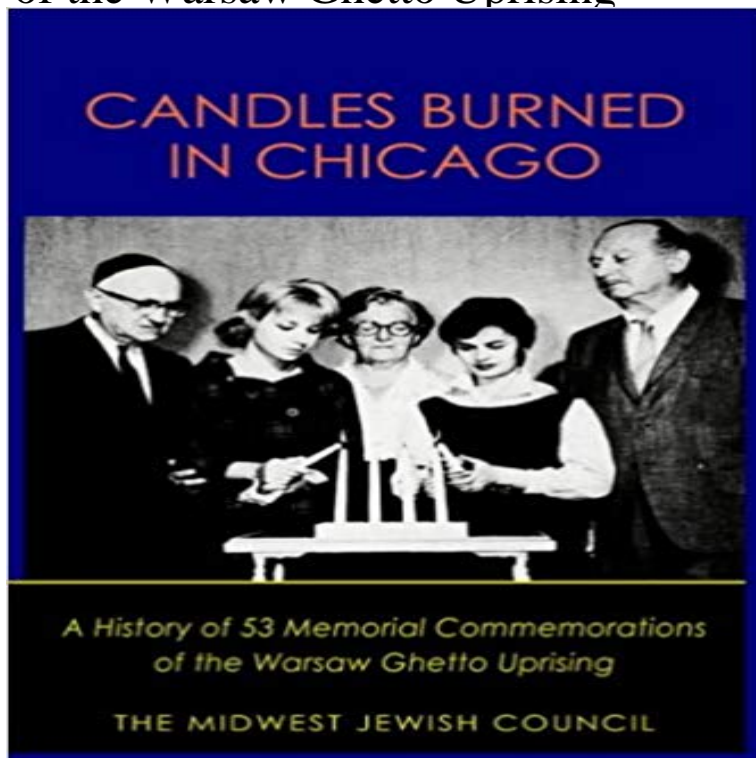


Candles Burned in Chicago: A History of 53 Memorial Commemorations of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising



This book tells the amazing story of 54 years of effort by a group of Jewish Chicagoans to commemorate the murder of 350,000 Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 1944, when these Chicagoans learned of the murder and of the heroic resistance by the last Warsaw Ghetto residents, they determined that the events must be made known to all America so that they might never be forgotten. Except for the fact of past emigration from Europe, these Chicagoans would have been part of the resistance bands. But for their presence in America, they would have lost their lives in the Warsaw slaughter. They determined that they must do all within their power to mobilize the world to prevent a recurrence. So, for 54 years, they undertook to publicize the Warsaw events dramatically and to point out to society the lesson of the events, namely, that humanity must work unceasingly for a just world in which evil cannot triumph as it did. From 1944 to 1996, this group of Jewish Chicagoans and their friends mounted stirring national meetings, candlelight commemorations, dramatic presentations, and gifted discussions so that the heroism of the Warsaw Ghetto fighters and the tragedy of the victims might never be forgotten. This book tells the story of the annual meetings and their organization. The reader can only be deeply impressed that the thrust of these was not merely to rehearse the past lest it be forgotten, but also to look to the future. For 54 years, speakers at the Commemorations stressed the need for present and future action to build a society in which a Warsaw Ghetto slaughter could not take place. The major Commemoration, year after year required cooperation and organization, which were not always easy to achieve. Since the effort was open to everyone to support and participate, it attracted also its share of radicals and dissenters. If such individuals were also among the residents of the Warsaw Ghetto,

why not in Chicago? Creative differences of opinion had to be ironed out with tact and firmness. They attracted the attention of the Chicago Police Department espionage unit, which describe some of the participants as Communist Party sympathizers or members. The Jewish Chicagoans who carried forward the Commemoration, effort had, in themselves, all the elements of heroism and tragedy of the Warsaw Ghetto. So, year after year, they resolutely continued their effort and achieved effectiveness and prestige for what they were doing. In part their effort was sustained by a pride in the bravery and resistance of the last units in the Ghetto. The reader of this book will note the continuing emphasis on youth. It was not enough that contemporaries of the Warsaw fighters remember what happened. They believed it was essential that their new generation know what occurred and forestall repetition. At the end of the 54 years, the story became well known. Although it is still necessary to retell the story, remind the world what happened, and impress the need to prevent a repetition, a specific Commemoration, meeting in Chicago is no longer necessary. The lesson has been well learned and widely disseminated, thanks to the Midwest Jewish Council and other like-minded Americans. What one significant group did single-handedly is the story of this book.

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