

“Il Presidente della Repubblica”

Rome, 17th January 2011

Dear President,

I thank you for having informed me of the theater performance, which will take place on January 26th in Milan in memory of **Moshe Bejski**, creator of the “Garden of the Righteous” in Jerusalem, for the benefit of an audience of Milanese students.

On January 27th, the celebration of the “Day of Memory” will take place as every year at the “Quirinale”. The accent will be placed this year, which commemorates the 150th anniversary of the unity of Italy, to the Italian Jews’ contribution to the “Risorgimento” and to the edification of a united Italy.

Italian Judaism, free from its earlier closure within ghettos, provided illustrious characters to the battles for the renaissance of Italy: they were active in all areas of the political and social spheres of our newly united nation. These personalities, who were faithful to their traditional Jewish identity, expressed as well their strong Italian belonging, rooted into their millenary presence in our country. As the Lombards and the Neapolitans, Venetians and Sicilians and together with them, Jews felt to be and became completely Italian citizens in the new Italian State.

The fascist persecution, which culminated into the participation of the Social Republic to the Nazi program of extermination of all Jews contradicted and negated the humanitarian and liberal conception of our nation, as well as the close links which existed in our society with the Jewish community. Due to these links, a large number of Italian Righteous came forward who protected and saved persecuted Jews, often while risking their own lives.

If each year, we celebrate in Italy, like in other countries, the memory of the cruel tragedy of the Shoah, this is due to our will to fortify in the souls of the new generations the certainty that men who are inspired by their instinctive and profound feeling of justice and love for other human beings always succeed to find the strength to fight evil.

I wish to congratulate you once more for your initiative to remember the Righteous and I ask you to give my warmest greetings to all participants.

With my most cordial salutations
Giorgio Napolitano
President of the Republic of Italy

translation by **Marc Fermont**