



Minister Imami: the martyr Toçi, an example of honor for all those brave men from Drenica, the mountains of Shkodra and Tropoja, Dibra and Mati, of the virile Kolonja, brave Laberia, and of martyr Çameria.

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The remains of the Homeland Martyr, Shahin Toçi, finally will rest peacefully in his hometown, Burrel. In a solemn ceremony, organized by the Burrel Municipality, for the family of the deceased Toçi and with the support of the Ministry of Defence, the remains of the Homeland Martyr have arrived from Italy on Friday noon in Albania, to be reburied on Saturday at the place he loved so much, in Homeland.

Homage in honor of the Martyr Toçi, who stood firmly against the Italian fascists bullets accepting death, started in the lobby of the Burrel Municipality, where among family members, relatives and friends of Toçi family, attended the Albanian Defence Minister Mr. Arben Imami, Chief of General Staff, Major General Maksim Malaj, representatives of the Presidency, members of the Albanian Parliament, Prince Leka Zog, Force Commanders of the Armed Forces, etc.

After performing the homage in the lobby of the Municipality, the ceremony moved to the Martyrs Cemetery of the Mat District, where took part the remains reburial of the deceased Toçi. Besides the floral wreaths placed by senior leaders attending in this ceremony, the rifle team saluted with gunfire in honor of the martyr.

The solemn ceremony followed later in Burrel Cultural Center, where an addressing speech was held by the Albanian Defence Minister, Mr Arben Imami. Addressing to the Toçi family relatives and all citizens who had filled the hall, Minister Imami said: "It's a special day for all of us to come today to honor the work of a great Albanian patriot. It's a day of special emotions, because this is not a simple act of memory, this is an act of updating our pain, our respect, our reverence for Shahin Toçi, martyr of the Homeland. It is an act of reverence for all those brave men, patriots, warriors, martyrs, heroes who sacrificed their lives and everything for the freedom of this country, who sacrificed everything for our National Flag, because this Flag and this country is washed with their blood. It's a great civil act that today made possible that the remains of Shahin Toçi may rest in his native Country, in his Homeland, which today is just as he had wanted, a free country between free countries.

From today, the remains of Shahin Toçi, this patriot who was declared Martyr of the Homeland in 1970, will lie in his beloved Mat, in this land of brave and noble men, and will make it even more memorable its patriotism and contribution for the freedom of his country", underlined Minister

Imami.



Returning back on time and making a brief retrospective about the short life, sacrifice and career path of the martyr Toçi, Minister Imami emphasised: “For his values, he was decorated with “1st Class Flag Order”, by the President of the Republic in 1994. Today, we all together and I feel particularly honored that on behalf of the Ministry of Defence I had the opportunity to engage in giving a modest contribution to this splendid ceremony that took place today in the town of Burrel. It is a symbolic act of our eternal gratitude for the martyrs of this country. The patriot Shahin Toçi, who was martyred for our National Flag, is the eternal pride of the Albanian boyhood, of the brave military, professional, patriot who sacrificed his life for his Flag, for the basic symbol of this Nation, in the youngest age. He represented worthily the Albanian military figure with the best features during the studies in Italy. The Italian invasion of 7th April '39 would find him in the protest of Albanian military that were studying in the Italian Academies. Although the bibliographic records are incomplete, all leads to the great truth that the fascist invasion of 1939 found out the patriot Shahin Toçi, a student in Italy, among the Albanians who lined up against the fascist occupation of Albania, defending the Flag and Homeland. Shahin Toçi life, the studies vicissitudes in Italy and generally his existence in the last part of life, have been a real drama, which would evolve far away from the country and that included the dynamics of the turbulent events in Albania, in 1939. Lined up also because of his origin from Mat, on the side of King Ahmet Zog, the military student Shahin Toçi would prove a strong internal dilemma, in the days when Italy would invade Albania and when all the Albanian system of traditional values would attest the Second World War crisis. In fact, here arises one of the biggest problems of the present era”, declared Minister Imami.

While talking about the patriotism feeling that followed patriot Toçi, Defence Minister, Mr. Imami, made also a comparison on the example the Albanian Armed Forces soldier should follow today. “Obviously this brave guy of Mat, operated on the basis of a honor code of our Highlands that has been and remains based on honesty, the word given, and oath. In modern times, our Army as well as other armies go towards professionalism. A remarkable man of our time makes the question: Is patriotism a virtue! No doubt that patriotism is a virtue! This excellent example of patriotism of a graduate soldier, officer, as Shahin Toçi should be a model of behavior, an example for our soldier. He was one of the first that broached the idea of organizing students to return to Albania and fight for the liberation of the country.”



Citing some words of the Homeland Martyr, Minister Imami said: “Those who speak with beautiful words and consider themselves civilized, in fact justify the oppression of peoples” – he expressed in the days of fascist occupation of Albania, addressing friends with the words:

“There is no other way left, but to through away the arms and fascist robe, and go back to our Homeland. The oath is not lost there, even manhood. There we can organize better, to throw away captivity.”

“Shahin Toçi was filled with despair when the Albanian royal crown was surrendered to Rome from the Albanian National Guard, which would experience it as a tragedy, as a national betrayal. However, Shahin Toçi knew how to stand as an Albanian, brave and firm man even in those difficult days of the fascist occupation of Albania, but also difficult and dark days for the friendly people of Italy. In May of 1939, the Albanian students at the Military Academy, were gathered in a large hall, to perform the fascist vow and were asked to be

engaged and be in full service of Rome. But on the vow day, in a armoured ceremony from the Italian Army troops, where was taking part the Deputy Secretary of War, Pariani, student Shahin Toçi presented himself with a red and black ribbon, two colors of our Flag, over the Italian military uniform. To the Italian General request to remove the ribbon, because the Albanian king had fallen, he replied saying “Kings may fall, even uniforms may change, but this ribbon, red and black, remains”. He also oppugned intoning the vow’s formula, a day later, hoisting up the voice to say that “Albanians vow just before the red and black flag!”

Minister Imami continued further adding that: “In these days of fascist jeopardy, the courageous military student had only one idea in his head, to return as soon as possible in Albania, a wish that unfortunately could not be realized due to the interruption of his life in tragic manner. But Shahin Toçi is and will remain the honor for all of our military, will remain an example of honor for all Albanian patriotism, to all those brave men from Drenica, from the mountains of Shkodra and Tropoja, mountains of Dibra and Mati, of the virile Kolonja, brave Laberia and of martyr Çameria. He will remain an example for the younger generation, saying what does your country mean, what Homeland means, what does the Flag means”, concluded Defence Minister Mr. Imami.

By conveying this message to all young Albanian people, Minister Imami thanked the attendees in the hall, saying: “Allow me to thank on this occasion, all those who made possible the return of the remains of the patriot in his land, firstly the Mayor of Burrel, Deputy Qemal Minxhozi, Deputy Hoxha, Deputy Fatmir Toçi, Ambassador Lleshi and the Italian authorities. May he rest in peace in his land who he loved so much and dreamed, Glory to the Martyr Toçi, Glory forever to the Martyrs of the Homeland.”

Shahin Toçi is an example of honor, not only for his hometown, Mati, but for the entire Albania, for which ourselves and the history remain indebted of his patriotism and Albanianism.

At the conclusion of the ceremony was also projected a television documentary in honor of the Martyr of Homeland Toçi, and a concert with a specially selected repertoire for this day by the Armed Forces wind band, from the Mat songs and dances group and musical group from Kuç, Vlora, who came specially for this occasion from the remote Vlora.

Two words for the martyr Toçi:

Shahin Toçi was born in 1914 in a family with patriotic tradition in the district Urxallë, Mat. He took the first lessons in the school of Derjan in his country of birth. In 1934 he finished studies at the Royal Military School in Tirana. In the same year, he wins the competition for military studies at the Military College of Naples, Italy. He returns back home in 1937 and on the same year he starts studies at the Military Academy of Modena in Italy. After returning home in 1938, he works in the Ministry of Defence. He will excel in the “Military Kingdom” school where he was introduced under the auspices of King Zog himself in the Technical School of Tirana, as well as in the Military College of Naples in Italy.



He would graduate with number one, in the College, by the Academy Commander Colonel Vittorio Giovannelli. But he would show up even in the Modena Military Academy, as well

as during the high qualification in Rome, in 1938. In May 1939, during the ceremony for the military vow, Shahin Toçi proudly protected the Albanian Flag, coming out in this way against the Italian fascists.

In front of the higher Italian military authorities, he called the students and Albanian officers to defend the colors of the Albanian Flag. His call: "I kneel only to my Flag", became an inspiration and powerful wing of the Albanian students and officers. Following this approach Shahin Toçi was killed by fascist secret police. He was buried in secret in Rome on 25th May 1939.

Decorations:

Decorated on 20.03.1961 with "Order of Bravery".
Declared on 15.10.1970, Martyr of the Homeland.
Decorated on 10.02.1994, with the "Order of National Flag of the 1st Class".
For his patriotism he was honored by the Derjan Municipality that declared Shahin Toçi "Honorary Citizen" in 1999.
Today, the President of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Bamir Topi, awards to Shahin Tozzi, (after death), the "Golden Eagle Medal", with the motivation: "In deep reverence to the high civic and patriotic act, to challenge vowing as a soldier, before the Italian fascist flag, that would cost later his lives, but that would remain among the inspiring examples of dignity and patriotism", order which the Albanian Defence Minister Mr. Imami consigned to the grandson of Shahin Toçi.

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