

Hero born in Suwałki

Some of us might not realise that our city is a hometown of such a noteworthy person as Edward Szczepanik, the last Prime Minister of the Government of the Polish Republic in Exile. I truly believe that we should all have an up-close view on his biography and legacy, especially today, in the 21st century, which is - not without reason - more and more commonly called "the age of moral decline". The world undoubtedly does lack role models which are such a vital part of adolescent development and the process of shaping personal values and civic responsibility in young people.



Edward Szczepanik can definitely be considered a moral example. The outstanding patriotic attitude of his started to develop from the very beginning of his life when he was attending Gimnazjum im. Karola Brzostowskiego in Suwałki (currently I Liceum Ogólnokształcące) and was involved in scouting. His life priorities at such a young age were simple yet very significant: fatherland, school, virtue; friendship, serving God and others. After graduating from high school, Szczepanik started his studies in Warsaw and then he continued postgraduate studies in London.

During the Second World War he was deported to a prison camp in Kozielsk, as well as fought in the battle of Monte Cassino. After the War he worked as a lecturer, taught at various universities and worked as an economic consultant in numerous international organizations. Leading such a hectic life, he did not neglect his connection with Poland, whatsoever. He still had contact with Polish combatant, academic and community organizations, he also got involved in diplomacy, supporting battle for independence of Poland. Therefore, expressing their appreciation, Polish people honoured the results of that work by entrusting him more and more significant dignities, eventually choosing him the Prime Minister of the Government of the Polish Republic in Exile in 1986.

Responsibility for his words and actions, hard work, modesty, care for common wealth more than for his own personal well-being, and most of all, unconditional patriotism – all these traits make Edward Szczepanik one of the greatest Poles in Exile. He was fighting for the fatherland on several fronts since 1939 – not only with a gun but mainly, and most successfully, with the power of his mind, talent, devotion and optimism. Also, Szczepanik has undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of the independent 3rd Republic of Poland in 1989 – he was the one who persisted in sending the presidential insignia from London to Poland.

„Each one of us is an amazing human being and everyone should live the best life possible. That is how I lived...” These words by Edward Szczepanik are both a great essence of his life and a valuable advice for us on how to live right. The Prime Minister was a perfect moral example of a soldier, patriot, scholar and politician. May this example become an inspiration and a call to live the best life we can.

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