

Lāčplēsis' Day

On November 11 every year, Latvia lights up numerous candles to commemorate the Latvian army's victory over the Volunteer Army led by General Pavel Bermont-Avalov on November 11, 1919. On this day Latvia honours Latvian Freedom fighters.

The period between the Proclamation of the Independent Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918 and 11 November 1919 was one of the most complicated periods in Latvia's history, because there were still battles raging for the newly-born country.

Only in 1919 it became clear that Latvia is truly independent after Bermont's Army was driven from Riga. A significant fact - the Latvian fighters were less in number and worse equipped than their opponents. They are deemed to have earned victory, thanks to their courage and will to fight.

The day was named after the Latvian epic hero Lāčplēsis, who had the strength of a bear; he has become a symbol of heroism and devotion to the state.

The Order of Lāčplēsis, the first and the highest Latvian military award with engraved phrase "Par Latviju" (For Latvia), was established in 1919. The Order was presented to soldiers of the Latvian Army, former Latvian Riflemen and former Red Riflemen.

On this day various events are held all over Latvia: laying of flowers at Riga Brethren Cemetery, followed by a military parade in front of the Monument of Freedom. The event is attended by the leaders of the state. In the evening, thousands of people converge at the Daugava Riverside to lay candles at the Riga Castle, paying tribute to the brave freedom fighters. Special concerts and torch processions also take place in various locations.

The speech has been created based on facts derived from: <https://latvianmom.com/2017/11/11/11th-of-november-lacplesis-day/> [22.11.2018]