

LATEST NEWS # 416, May 25, 2007

The following news concerns Latvia.

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New translation opens God's Word to all in Latvia

LATVIA — The recently launched New Testament in modern Latvian will be warmly welcomed by the growing number of people who are interested in spiritual matters, the Latvian Bible Society believes. And with the completion of a project which began more than 10 years ago now in sight, it will not be long before people will also be able to read the complete Bible in modern Latvian.

The various events which took place in Riga during April to mark the launch of the New Testament in modern Latvian represented a key landmark in a project which is due to be completed next year. In 1995, within five years of its founding, the Bible Society embarked on a very ambitious project to offer an alternative to the existing Latvian Bible, which was launched in 1965 and contained language which an increasing number of people, especially the young, were struggling to understand. Another difficulty with that translation was that it was not ecumenical, so care has been taken throughout this project to consult experts from all denominations.

The translation team, coordinated by Dr Juris Calitis, launched various Portions as the project progressed and, through the use of pre-paid reply slips, obtained regular feedback on its work. In July 2005 it launched the Deuterocanonical books, which do not appear in the 1965 translation, to an audience of Church leaders and theologians at the University of Riga (see *World Report* 397/12).

The ecumenical nature of this project was reflected in the fact that Church leaders from many different denominations gathered at the Lutheran Cathedral in Riga on April 9 for a special service to celebrate the launch. Among the other guests was the Rev Krister Andersson, General Secretary of the Swedish Bible Society. Having launched its own new translation in modern Swedish in November 1999 (see *World Report* 348/14), this Society is set to advise the Latvian Bible Society as it draws up plans for promoting the new translation.

Promotional activities will become a key focus in the next few months as, with the Old Testament translation also finished and now ready for typesetting, the Society prepares to launch the full Bible in modern Latvian next year.

Thanks to this ambitious project launched by a fledgling Bible Society, "young people will have access to the Word of God and people who otherwise would reject the Bible as difficult to read or as too 'churchy' will read it and be touched by its message," says General Secretary the Rev Dr Valdis Teraudkalns. "With the new translation we also hope to change the staid image of the Bible and stress that it is for everyone, not only for those who regularly go to church. There will be a greater unity between the Churches as this ecumenical Bible is accepted by all."

This report refers to project 80400.

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