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## Theological Observer

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### JAPAN REPORT

Drs. Kurt Scharf, Adolf Wischmann, and Johannes Schlingensiepen of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKiD) arrived in Tokyo the latter part of October 1965 as representatives of the EKiD. The announced purpose of their visit was to develop closer relations between Japanese and German churches. As a result of their visit and various conferences, a liaison committee composed of Japanese and German members will be formed to actualize closer cooperation between the churches in these two nations. The committee will represent the Japan NCC and several German groups that are carrying on mission work in Japan. Representatives on nonaffiliated German groups will be invited as observers. The *Japan Christian Activity News* has called the proposal epoch-making in that it "represents the first united approach of the German Church to an overseas church, such as the one in Japan." Up till now relations have been on a denominational and even congregational basis. The publication also hailed this development as "a signal contribution to church unity" because denominational sending of missionaries has created the so-called "missionary problem in Asia." Groups that formerly acted independently in Germany will now channel their aid and missionary manpower through the proposed liaison committee.

An item which makes Christian unity an even more urgent concern was brought to the attention of the readers of the *Japan Times* in October. It was reported that the Soka Gakkai, an aggressive and militant Buddhist sect of the Nichiren school, concluded a 4-day fund-raising drive (Oct. 9 to 12) which netted about 97 million dollars for the erection of a new temple at the foot of Mt. Fuji. The Soka Gakkai has

been showing phenomenal growth and has attracted international attention in recent years (Cf. *Look Magazine*, Sept. 10, 1963). Its political power in Japan has steadily increased, and in the most recent elections here it was able to elect 20 of its members to the national Diet. Votes cast for the Komei-to, the political party of the Soka Gakkai, in July 1965 numbered 5,100,000. According to some reports the Soka Gakkai plans to be in control of the Diet by 1982. Some missionaries that have talked with a few Soka Gakkai members have been told that it will not be long before Soka Gakkai forces them to leave Japan. They have no illusions about being tolerant, and actively attack those who are not in agreement with them on religious matters.

On the Lutheran scene negotiations for the purchase of land on the campus of International Christian University for the cooperatively run Lutheran seminary have progressed to the signing stage, and the purchase of land should be formalized in December. The next matter to be taken up by the Lutherans is the engaging of an architect and approval of blueprints. A joint committee has been organized to proceed with further development of the new campus. The English-speaking St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church has been formally organized and reorganized by the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Japan Mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is now holding services in two locations on Sundays. The congregation, presently served by Rev. Richard V. Goeres of the Missouri Synod, meets in the auditorium of the American School in Japan in a western suburb of Tokyo and holds its downtown services in the Star Hill Room of the Tokyo Hilton Hotel. The congregation was organized as a result of a need felt by English-

speaking Lutherans in the Tokyo area for Lutheran services in English.

Another event of importance is the appearance of a new translation of the New Testament in Japanese under the sponsorship of the Lackmann Foundation in the United States. The new translation published by Word of Life Press was put on sale on November 25, and the first edition was

sold out soon thereafter. Word of Life Press is also planning to publish a new translation of the Old Testament which will be ready in a few years. The editor for this project is the Rev. Professor Kosaku Nao, professor of Old Testament in the Missouri Synod theological training program.

Tokyo, Japan      HENRY R. SCHRIEVER