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# CONGRESS OF BRITAIN'S MUSLIMS

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## "MAKING NEW FRIENDS"

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

WOKING, JULY 24

Muslims of the British Isles will assemble in congress next Sunday "to make new friends and develop a new understanding with Muslim brothers and sisters from various countries." On the following day there will be an excursion to Virginia Water and a programme of games.

August Bank Holiday—a secular affair, even in England—has, of course, no place in the Muslim calendar. But it happens to fall this year on the Monday following Saturday, July 30, when the Muslim festival of Id al-Adha will be celebrated at the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking, the first ever built in England. The fourth annual congress of Muslims of the British Isles may well be numerically stronger than those of previous years by virtue of its taking place when England is on holiday. The festival of Id al-Adha attracts to the Shah Jehan Mosque some 1,500 or so of Britain's 60,000 Muslims.

### "TORCH FOR ISLAM"

But the Shah Jehan Mosque—"a torch for Islam, shining a pure light among the peoples of the west"—holds only about 50 people. And so the gathering for the festival assembles in a big marquee erected in front of the mosque. There the Id prayers will be led by Mr. Abdul Majid, editor of the *Islamic Review*, and the oft-repeated words *Allah akbar* will sound across the Woking scene. It is not an unfamiliar scene, for the mosque has been an active centre of Muslim observances since 1912, after having been almost deserted between that year and 1889, when it was built.

The two Muslim festivals, Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha, give a pleasant reality to the name of Oriental Road at Woking in which the Shah Jehan Mosque stands. The road is then crowded for a while with people from distant Muslim lands, representing in all about 25 different nationalities. As the Imam of the mosque, Dr. S. M. Abdullah, puts it, here is a scene in miniature that has something of the same inspiration as the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Not all those attending the festival of Id al-Adha will take part in the congress of Muslims of the British Isles. Those who do will discuss a wide range of problems with no formal agenda. The congress is rather a "get together" than a deliberative assembly. It will consider, broadly, ways and means of extending the brotherhood of Islam among British Muslims, of opening up study circles where opportunity offers, and of generally consolidating the future of Islam in Britain.

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