

OPENING ADDRESS ♦

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In the most southerly part of Serbia there is an area of specific national composition – Gora Mountain with its residents Goranians. A little more towards the north besides Serbs, Romanians, Albanians-Muslims and Muslims of the Slavo-Serbian origin in the area of Sredska District and around Prizren live Turks and a specific group of Albanians who are Catholics. Almost all of these national or religious groups are today exposed to pressures and minor or greater repression. What is most regrettable the broader public knows very little about these groups and rarely talks about them. It has only in the last ten years become aware of the fact that Goranians exist as a separate ethnic group, which in older census records was not even separately noted down.

Four years ago the Committee on Kosovo and Metohia Studies demanded that Goranians as an ethnic group should be separately registered. We are now glad that it has finally been done. However, only in the last several years the existence of Goranians has become a fact. It is still known very little about the Muslims of the Sredska District and not enough about many Turks in the Prizren area.

Until now, consultative conferences have been held about the Kosovo Romanians, their position and living conditions. We are generally familiar with the problems that Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are met with. There have not been any considerations, on the scientific level, of

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the problems of Goranies and Muslims of the Sredska District, and of Turks. Therefore the Committee on Kosovo and Metohija Studies and the Geographical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts "Jovan Cvijić" took the initiative in the preceding year to organize a scientific conference at which the present-day position and living conditions of the Goranies, Muslims and Turks in these areas would be analyzed. Today's scientific conference is primarily devoted to Goranies. We hope that the living conditions of Muslims in the Sredska District will be taken into consideration at a similar conference in the future.

This conference would not be possible without the immense interest and remarkable work of the Goranies immigrated to Central Serbia, of the researchers-geographers, ethnologists and others who were doing research in Gora. I want to call attention to their contribution and to thank them.

I am obliged to mention the help rendered by the Temporary Executive Council of Kosovo and Metohija, Ministry in Charge of the Human Rights and National Minorities Rights, Ministry of Information and Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Serbia. Without their help broader attention could not be drawn to that conference and its Proceedings could not be published.

I also feel obliged to express thankfulness on behalf of the Presiding and Organizing Committees to all participants and authors who are taking part in this Round Table, especially to Mr. Ivan Sedlak, the Minister in charge of human rights and national minorities.*

* In office when the conference was held.