

ON A RESOLUTION CONCEPT CONCERNING THE CALENDAR  
REFORM SUBMITTED TO THE PAN-ORTHODOX  
CONGRESS IN CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1923

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**Abstract.** The present paper deals with a document concerning the calendar reform which was addressed to the Pan-Orthodox Conference in Constantinople in 1923. The document was written in German using the Gothic letters and the author's name is Gustav Baron Bedeus from Hermannstadt (today Sibiu, Romania). Independently of the proposal he considers that the task of calendar regulating belongs to a state and for this reason a world conference gathering all states and churches aimed at calendar reform could be organized.

The Julian calendar was subject of various projects aimed at its reforming several times in the course of its use. The reason was that the difference between the year duration in this calendar and that of the tropical (natural) year increased by one day each 128 years. For instance, by the time of enacting the Gregorian calendar in 1582 this difference had reached 10 days. The Gregorian calendar was not adopted simultaneously in all countries; most of the Eastern-Christian countries adopted it after the First World War. The Orthodox Churches were not willing to adopt the Gregorian calendar, not only because of its shortcomings, but also for political reasons. Therefore, in 1923 in Constantinople a Pan-Orthodox Meeting was arranged where, among others, the question of reforming the Julian calendar was considered.

The present authors consider a resolution concept concerning the calendar reform written by Gustav Baron Bedeus from Hermannstadt (today Sibiu, Romania) proposed by him to the Constantinople Pan-Orthodox Meeting.

Gustav Baron Bedeus lived in the second half of the XIX century and in the early decades of the XX century. He originates from a well-known noble family which had come to Transylvania in the XVI century and was appointed baron by the Austrian emperor in 1854.

Especially active in the social and political life of Transylvania was his grandfather Bedeus von Scharberg Josef Freiherr who took degree in law from the University of Klausenburg, acted as a governmental adviser and afterwards became Superior Lands-Commissair. In 1844 he published the Constitution of the Grand Principal-

ity of Transylvania. According to our searches Gustav Baron Bedeus wrote several articles and books and was active in the Saxonian organizations and associations in Transylvania (Egry Gábor doctoral dissertation, 2005; Béla Köpeczi (General Editor) History of Transylvania).

This resolution concept entitled as (in English translation) "A Resolution Concept for Conference of the Calendar of Orthodox Churches in Constantinople on May 1, 1923" was published in "Siebenbuergisch-Deutschen Tagesblatt" (Transylvanian daily paper in German) and it contains seven items. Its reprint followed by an Annex is stored in the National Brukenthal Museum in Sibiu (Romania) as No II 34507 (Fig. 1.). Another reprint can be found in the Archives of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

As can be seen from the title, Bedeus entitled this resolution concept "The Calendar Conference in Orthodox Churches" since the meeting was originally viewed as a Conference. At the third session the meeting was renamed by the delegates to become a "Pan-Orthodox Congress" which was source to various comments and protests in the ecclesiastical circles (Fomij, 2004).

In the document Bedeus presented his concept of calendar reform, first of all by introducing the so-called fixed calendar in order to achieve all the Christian holidays to be celebrated at the same time. The basic unit in this calendar is a week, i.e. the number of days in a year must be divisible by seven (remainder zero) and, as a consequence, at the beginning of every year and month it would be Monday and at the end Sunday. In this way the dates would be the same for the same week days.

A year would have usually 52 weeks ( $52 \times 7 = 364$  days) and the remaining days (365-th and 366-th ones, i.e. so-called zero days) would accumulate to attain one week (leap week) which would be added to form a leap year of 371 days (53 weeks). This would take place 10 times for each fifth year and 15 times for each sixth year in a sequence. The number of months would be also 12, but a month could have 28 or 35 days: in particular, the first four months would have 35 days, as well as the last one in a leap year, otherwise a month would have 28 days.

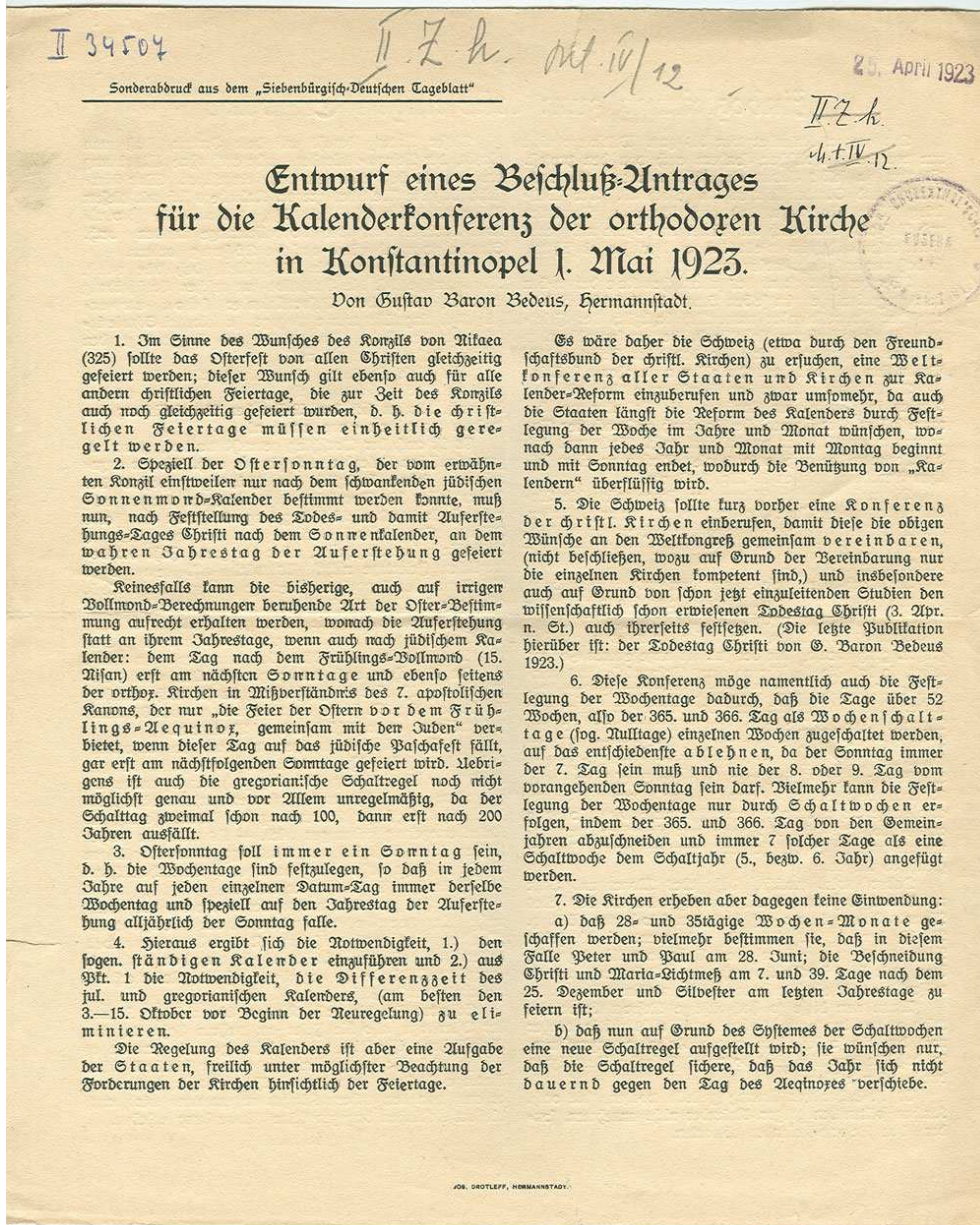
Such an intercalation rule, as given above, would yield a cycle of 140 years with 25 leap years (consisting of 53 weeks). Then, it is easy to calculate the average number of days in a year which was not done by Bedeus, but has been done by us and we find 365.25 days exactly as in the case of the Julian calendar.

The idea of a year consisting of 52 weeks (364 days) was known as early as to the ancient Jews. It also appears in the case of the World Calendar published by the World Calendar Association in 1930. This association was very active in the League of Nations which was also interested very much in the calendar reform.

In the World Calendar there are two *zero* days – days not distributed within a week. One of them called *Worldsday* is to be on December 31, this is a world holiday – of year's end and the other one is to be on "June 31" – *Leapyear Day* which is, of course, characteristic for leap years only (Skrobonja, 2000).

Different from Bedeus where the first date in each month should be on Monday, in the case of the World Calendar only the months with which the year quarters begin would have the first dates on Sunday.

A version similar to this document, in the Romanian language and without any indication about its author, was the official Romanian proposal for the calendar reform





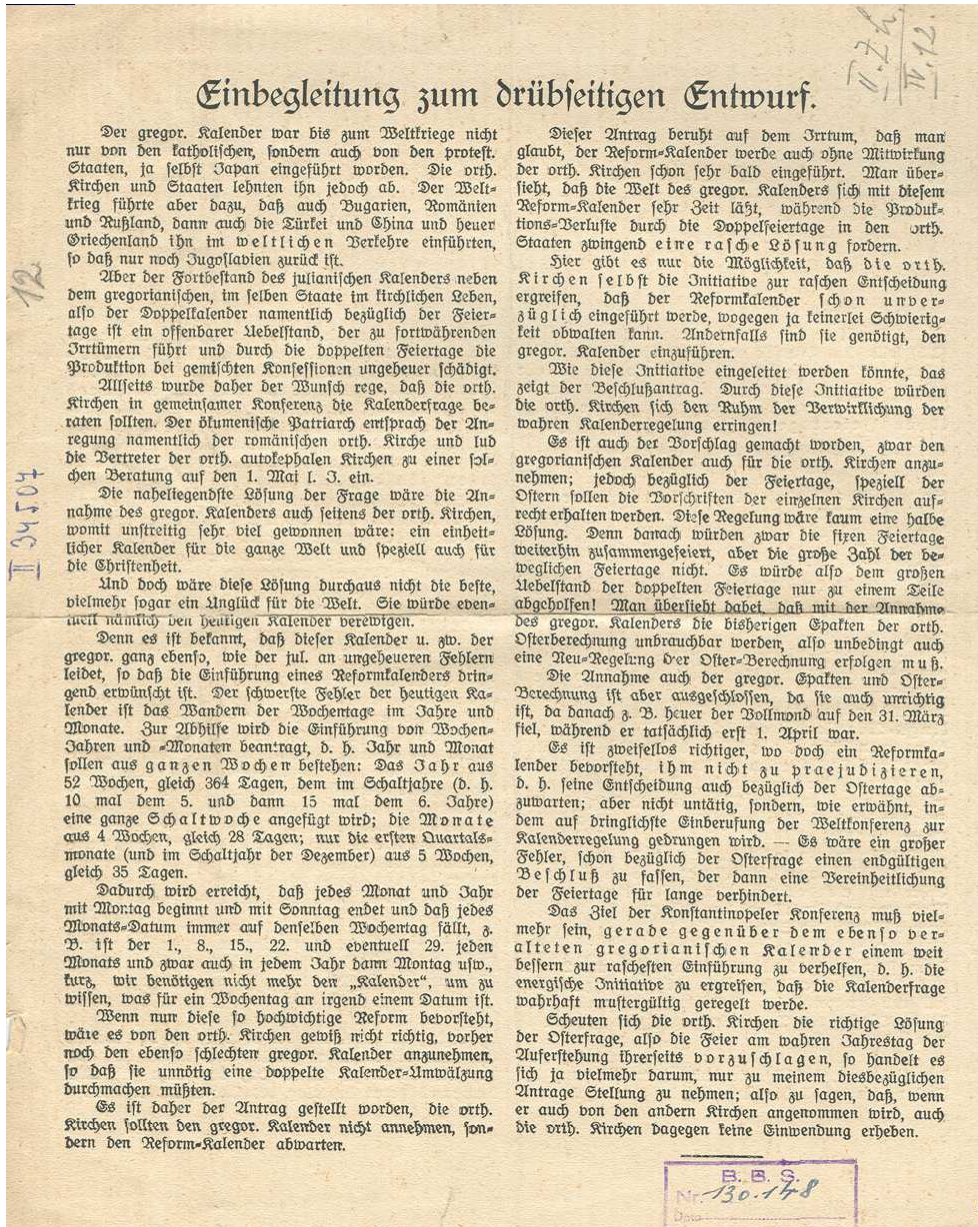


Figure 1: The document (a) and its annex (b) concerning the calendar reform written by Gustav Baron Bedeus from Hermannstadt (today Sibiu, Romania).

at the Pan-Orthodox Congress in 1923.

According to Milanković (1923) the Romanian proposal was presented by a Romanian delegate, Senator Dragici, as if he were the author, but Milanković adds that he learnt "from another side" that the true author was Baron Bedeus from Sibiu. This proposal is somewhat different from what we find in the document considered here. The common year also consists of 364 days, there is a leap week, but the distribution of number of days in months is different so that each year quarter has the same number of days – 91. From this point of view it is more similar to the World Calendar where the first month in a year quarter has 31 days, unlike the Romanian proposal for which the last month of a year quarter has 31 days. In the World Calendar the problem of the 365-th, i.e. 366-th, year day is solved by adding them every year, i.e. every fourth year. On the other hand, in the document and in the Romanian proposal considered at the Congress the *zero days* (named also by Bedeus "leap days in a week") form one week which is added after a given time interval. In both cases the same goal is achieved, to have a year duration as close as possible to the tropical year.

According to Živković (1927) "the project of the World Calendar is not new because in 1923 an identical one was submitted to the Serbian Patriarchy by an unknown person".

The scientific commission of the Congress, in addition to the Romanian proposal, considered also that of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Milanković (1923) which was the project of Maksim Trpković (1864-1924) where during the presentation Milutin Milanković (1879-1958), as a delegate to this Meeting, proposed a change in the intercalation rule (Trajkovska 2003, Trajkovska 2008). The Scientific Commission took into account only these proposals because the others were not complete.

In order to achieve the goal of a simultaneous celebrating of Christian holidays in Bedeus' opinion the Orthodox Churches should accept his proposal of calendar although according to him the solving of the calendar question belongs to state. Therefore, he proposes Switzerland to call a world conference of all states and churches where the question of calendar reform would be solved. The Romanian delegation at the Constantinople Meeting at the sessions of May 23 and June 5, 1923 was successful in making a decision concerning the participation in a world conference of unifying Christian calendars aimed at "finding out a new calendar improved scientifically and practically". This decision is characterized by a flexibility concerning a future calendar reform if it was to be adopted by all Christian Churches. The calendar proposed by the Romanian delegation was not accepted because it did not take into account the canonic rules of the Church.

## 1. CONCLUSION

At present we cannot be sure that Gustav Baron Bedeus was the actual author of the official Romanian proposal for the calendar reform submitted to the Pan-Orthodox Congress because the concept given in the document studied here is rather different from the version described by Milanković. The calendar version contained in the official Romanian proposal at the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople was not

accepted. The main objections were due to the absence of respecting the canonic rules of the Church.

As well known at the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople the Serbian proposal was accepted which is a modified version of Trpković's project where Milanković preserved Trpković's basic idea, but changed the intercalation rule.

The Orthodox Churches have never applied this proposal in their practise. This proposal has been called in different ways by different authors: Reformed Julian calendar, Newjulian calendar, Pan-Orthodox calendar, the Trpković-Milanković calendar, Milanković's calendar.

As for Bedeus' idea concerning a world conference devoted to the calendar reform, i.e. to unifying the Christian calendars, the position of the Congress was positive.

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