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## **”Julius Tischler” – The Future Peter II**



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Some of the available lists of twentieth-century papal claimants include a Julius Tischler, who asserted that he was Pope Peter II. Most lists do not include any details on him, while some note that he was born in 1908. To my knowledge, the only researcher who provides some information about the case is Joachim Boufflet, who briefly mentioned Tischler in his well-researched *Faussaires de Dieu*. Though he does not refer to any primary sources, Boufflet underlined that Julius Tischler was not a real name, but a pseudonym, and that he was not strictly a papal claimant, but a claimant to a future papacy; he would become the last pope.<sup>1</sup>

### *Der Handwerkseselle*

The main source of Julius Tischler's claims is his 336-page-book published in 1972: *Der Handwerkseselle: Der Vierte Seher von Fatima* [The Journeyman: The Fourth Seer of Fatima.] The editor, Josef Künzli of Miriam Verlag, presented it as the first part of a four-volume project. However, for reasons that will become evident, the grand project was not completed, and the first volume would remain the only one.

It is a peculiar book. On the one hand, it is a very detailed autobiography about the author's first fifteen years in life, following a strictly chronological outline. On the other, the author included many accounts of amazing spiritual experiences, which he seamlessly intertwined with the much more down-to-earth autobiographical narrative. Among other things, the author claimed that he was mystically present at Fatima when the Virgin appeared in 1917. In short, he was the fourth seer of Fatima. Moreover, he was the only of the children who received the second, most important part of the Virgin's message in 1923.<sup>2</sup>

In his preface to the book, the editor stated that the author's name, "Dr. Julius Tischler" was a pseudonym, but disclosed that he was a Roman Catholic priest and a doctor of Canon Law. However, given the sensitive nature of the book's contents, he wanted to remain anonymous, at least for now. The priest

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<sup>1</sup> Boufflet 2000: 450–451.

<sup>2</sup> Tischler 1972.

was of Hungarian origin but had fled the country in 1956, and the book was, in fact, a translation from his native language.<sup>3</sup> From other sources, however, we know that the man behind the pseudonym was Franz Engelhardt (or originally Ferenc Egerszegi) who at the time was a parish priest in Ehlenz bei Bitburg in the diocese of Trier. Still, when analyzing the book, I will use his nom de plume.<sup>4</sup>

According to *Der Handwerkseselle* Julius Tischler was born in 1908 in Gyula, Hungary. His father who was a brick-layer died only four months after his birth, and he was raised by his mother and later by his grandparents. The family was of German ancestry but Hungarian-speaking, and as a young man, he learned the three languages used in the town: Hungarian, German and Romanian. In the book, the author often underlined that he was blessed with an excellent memory and claimed that he remembered some events that had happened when he was two years old, for example, the passing of Halley's Comet in 1910.<sup>5</sup>

Having told more usual stories about his early childhood in excruciating detail, Tischler claimed that he, in 1912, while playing in his home, was mystically brought to the Titanic when the ship was about to sink. He also claimed to have been mystically present at the shooting of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 and the killing of the Tsar family in 1918. Through bilocation, he was also present at various locations during the World war and precluded that his stepfather would not return from the battlefield, and at the age of 27, his mother became a widow for the second time.<sup>6</sup> After mentioning his mystical experiences, he continued with a very elaborate, down-to-earth description of his early school years.

Having recounted his first eight years in life, he entered one of the most central assertions in the book: he was present at Fatima and experienced all Marian apparitions there between May and October 1917. Still, nobody else could see him, not even the other three children seers: Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta. In short, he claimed to be the fourth, hereto unknown, seer, of Fatima.

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<sup>3</sup> Tischler 1972: 8–11.

<sup>4</sup> "Pfarrer: Wie ein Diktator", *Der Spiegel*, December 24, 1973, cf. Künzli 1973 and Künzli 1977.

<sup>5</sup> Tischler 1972: 45–60.

<sup>6</sup> Tischler 1972: 67–77.

In Tischler's story, the children, himself included, were ready for their experiences, as an angel—the Angel of Peace—visited them on several occasions in 1916. The angel told them that they should prepare themselves for the coming events through prayers, penitence, and veneration of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. At the angel's third, and last apparition, they also saw a bleeding Host; a sign that meant that they were to become the messengers of Heaven to the sinful humanity.<sup>7</sup>

In *Der Handwerksgele* Tischler devoted some eighty pages to recount his experiences at Fatima, basically following the outline of the stories, messages, and secrets, that were known by many Catholics. He claimed to have seen and heard the same things as the other three children, but he was unsure of how he was able to be present, though he guessed that he had bilocated, being in Hungary and Portugal at the same time. It was clear to him he had been invisible to other humans. However, he understood that they could hear him, so he remained silent all the time. Moreover, he did not know how he could understand what the Virgin said. She spoke in Portuguese to the others, but simultaneously in Hungarian to him. While the three Portuguese children testified about the visions at the time; Tischler remained silent, following the orders of his guardian angel.<sup>8</sup>

However, Julius Tischler's main mission began six years later, in 1923, when the Virgin and Christ appeared to him handing over two written messages that according to Tischler constituted the second and most important part of the Fatima message. However, on that occasion, he was not at Fatima, but in his hometown Guyula. On May 13, 1923, Tischler, whose mother had passed away recently, was on his way to flee his paternal grandparents' home, as they treated him badly. Suddenly, the Virgin appeared to him together with the Christ Child, who was later transformed into an adult Jesus with the Crown of Thorns, and then back to a child. After that, the Virgin gave Tischler the two printed documents that constituted the second part of the Fatima message.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Tischler 1972: 121–132.

<sup>8</sup> Tischler 1972. 133–214.

<sup>9</sup> Tischler 1972: 285–296.

Not surprisingly, the documents had an apocalyptic content, foretelling the events in the next 55 years until the end of the world in 1988, and the Virgin told him to spread the message to the Pope, to Hungary, and the whole world. Still, he had waited almost fifty years until he published them in his book. The messages follow the basic outline of many modern Catholic apocalyptic prophecies, but many details are less common or even unique.<sup>10</sup>

The first document was quite brief. In the End time, the Church would become increasingly persecuted. The Jews would establish a state of their own. The Devil would spend ten years in Hell, but in 1933 he would be released, and after that Communism would spread to all corners of the world. The only things that humans could do during this period were to convert to the true faith, pray and suffer vicariously for the sinful world.<sup>11</sup>

The second document was longer and much more detailed. It explained Tischler's mission. The Virgin explained that he would become Pope Peter II, a message he claimed not to have understood at the time. The predictions in the second document focused on the period between 1985 and 1988, the three last year of the world. According to the message, Antichrist was born in 1957 as the son of a prostitute and an apostate cleric. He would go public in 1985 and make Jerusalem his headquarters, but from there he would visit all parts of the world. Antichrist was a human being, but at the same time, Satan incarnate. When he appeared publically, prophets Elijah and Henoch would return to earth to fight him.<sup>12</sup>

According to Julius Tischler, the second message stated that the Third World War would start in 1986, when the Chinese, Japanese, and Mongol armies would attack the West. In their warfare, they would use not only atomic bombs but also "death rays." At the same time, Antichrist would re-build the temple in Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant would be re-discovered, and he would declare himself the President of the United States of Europe. There would be many changes in the climate, horrible natural catastrophes and the ices on both poles would melt. The English, the Russians, and the Muslims would convert to

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<sup>10</sup> For a general description of modern Catholic apocalypticism, see e.g., Cuneo 1997.

<sup>11</sup> Tischler 1972: 294–296.

<sup>12</sup> Tischler 1972: 287–322

the true faith, but there would be many apostates, too, and Communism would have even greater international success. In 1986, the last Pope Peter II, that is himself, would leave Europe and shortly after that St. Peter's Basilica would fall into pieces. 1260 days after his public appearance Antichrist would kill prophets Elijah and Henoch, and thirty days later he would begin to ascend to heaven, but then Michael the Archangel would crush him and send him to Hell.<sup>13</sup>

Still, Antichrist had many emissaries left on earth, who wanted to kill the last pope and his faithful remnant. By then the last pope had moved to "the east," where he lived in a small house with an adjacent chapel. He was able to communicate with his faithful cardinals and bishops through "a combined telegraph," which automatically translated the messages, but was a printer, too. A group of cardinals and bishops would come to the Pope's house, and they would all dress in the Franciscan habit. When they realized that the bomb planes of Antichrist's emissaries came closer, they would know that the end was near and organize a procession, the Pope carrying a monstrance, but before the bombers killed them, the world would come to an end.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Aftermath**

Shortly after "Dr. Julius Tischler" published his book, the police arrested his alter ego, Franz Engelhardt, the parish priest in the village of Ehlenz bei Bitburg, for a series of sexual crimes against minors. At that time, he had been the curate for a decade, and many villagers described him as a dictator and a tyrant who frightened people. The attorney accused him of having abused 19 children and young men aged between nine and 21. He had photographically documented some of the cases, though he was about to burn the evidence when the police arrived.

Some children had told their parents what had happened, but they were too afraid to report it to the police, and it was not until a local school teacher told the police that the magnitude of the case was unearthed. In the beginning, neither the police nor the bishop believed the stories. Still, when the diocese

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<sup>13</sup> Tischler 1972: 310–322.

<sup>14</sup> Tischler 1972. 310–322.

examined Engelhardt's file, they realized that he was accused of similar crimes already in 1957, while living in Austria and that he had been sentenced to five months in prison. In 1959, the Roman Congregation of the Clergy was informed about the case, but soon after the German diocese of Trier still incardinated him. The parishioners' criticism against the diocese was hard. They had placed a known child offender as their pastor. In 1973, a first-degree court sentenced Engelhardt to seven years in prison, while the second-degree court lowered the prison sentence to 5 years and nine months.<sup>15</sup>

The editor of Engelhardt's book, Josef Künzli, certainly had problems and in late 1973, he published a 15-page commentary: *Kommentar zu dem Buch Der Hantwerksgeselle: Der vierte Seher von Fatima*. He wrote that he had not known anything about the crimes of which the author was accused. Still, he fiercely defended the publication of the book against critical articles in the press, accusing one of the journalists of being a spy for East Germany. Despite the author's criminal offenses, Künzli was convinced that the contents of the book were entirely true and that the Tischler/Engelhardt was the apostle of the Endtime who gave exact testimony of the events that would come and indicated humanity's way to escape eternal damnation. Künzli told the readers that Engelhardt, himself, was not convinced that he would become the Pope, but that he had only repeated the contents of the messages from the Virgin Mary. Künzli ended his *Kommentar* by stating that it was unknown whether any other volumes of the planned series would appear.<sup>16</sup>

In late 1976, Engelhardt was released from prison. Somewhat later, on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last vision of Fatima, October 13, 1977, Künzli wrote a four-page comment destined "to all readers of the book." There, he stated that he had been in contact with Engelhardt while he was in prison. He had thought that Engelhardt would repent, but that according to Künzli that had not been the case. Künzli had decided not to publish any other volumes of the work, even if the priest presented manuscripts to him, as he feared that Engelhardt was under satanic influence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Pfarrer: Wie ein Diktator", *Der Spiegel*, no. 52 (December 24), 1973.

<sup>16</sup> Künzli 1973.

<sup>17</sup> Künzli 1977.

Being released from prison, Franz Engelhardt went, more or less directly to Palmar de Troya and joined the Palmarian Catholic Church. There, he was instantaneously consecrated a bishop on February 13, 1977. In the consecration records, he appears under his original Hungarian name: Ferenc Egerszegi. According to another bishop who was at Palmar at that time, he was open with having spent several years in prison but claimed that he was innocent. He was also known as the fourth seer of Fatima. At least for some time, the Palmarians planned to publish translations of his work. Still, Engelhardt left Palmar after just three months, probably becoming aware of Clemente Domínguez's plans to become the next pope, which contradicted his own papal claims.<sup>18</sup> It is not known when Engelhardt died, but it was probably in the early 1980s.

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Correspondence with a former Palmarian bishop, 2018.

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<sup>18</sup> Correspondence with a former Palmarian bishop, 2018