



I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual Pierre Seel, translated by Joachim Neugroschel

About the book

I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual is the testimony of a gay survivor of the Nazi regime of hatred. In his story, Pierre explains what happened to him under the arrest of the Gestapo, his subsequent interrogation and torture and time in the camp of Schirmeck. He discusses how the revelation of his sexual orientation impacted on his family life and how the pain of holding his story inside affected the remainder of his life.

We recommend this book to help you find out more about the fate of gay men under the Nazi regime. It is particularly relevant for those thinking about the HMD 2012 theme [Speak Up, Speak Out](#) as it took Pierre many years to speak about what happened to him. By taking inspiration from his story, we can all act to stop discrimination and exclusion based on sexual orientation today.

About the author

Pierre Seel was a gay man who was born in 1923 in Alsace which was then part of a border dispute between France and Germany but is now in present-day France. He was a practicing Catholic who lived with his parents, brothers and adopted sister. Having reported the theft of a watch, Pierre unknowingly signed a document which would add his name to a list of known homosexuals held by the Police. In May 1941 he was summoned to Gestapo headquarters where he and many other gay men were interrogated and tortured in an attempt to pass on the names of others. Pierre was sent to Schirmeck Concentration Camp in Alsace where he witnessed the murder of his former lover at the hands of the Nazi officers. He was released from the camp after being forced to sign a document which forbade him from telling anyone what had happened to him and that his nationality was German. After being called up to fight in the German Army and escaping, he was eventually repatriated to France. Unable to speak of his experiences, he married and had a family. He did not tell anyone what had happened to him until the late 1980s when a Bishop called Homosexuality 'a sickness'. He says:

I had to react. I was seething with anger, I had to stop those words forever. And to do so, I had to bear witness, tell everything, demand restitution for my past, a past I shared with so many others, with people who had been buried and forgotten in Europe's darkest hours. I had to bear witness in order to protect the future, bear witness in order to overcome the amnesia of my contemporaries.

Pierre sought reparations for his time in the concentration camp from the German authorities, who would not recognise his case at the time of writing in 1994. He died in 2005, his status as a survivor was only confirmed in 2003.

Please note that there is one scene of extreme violence in this book.

Discussion Questions

Please note that some of these questions will act as spoilers for the book.

1. why did Pierre choose to not share his story?
2. when in Schirmeck, Pierre's uniform had a blue ribbon on it? What does this signify? Would you expect something different?
3. why do you think Pierre was able to tell his mother what happened to him and no-one else?
4. what made Pierre take the decision to speak up?
5. in his introduction Professor Gregory Woods talks about placing a memorial wreath for the gay victims of the Nazi regime on Remembrance Sunday in Norwich in 1977 and the reaction this caused. He says 'there was nothing especially imaginative, innovative or daring about this political gesture'. Do you agree with him?
6. do you think homophobia has stopped? What steps can you take to ensure that it is not accepted in our neighbourhoods?

You can use HMD resources to find out more about:

The treatment of gay men under the Nazi regime
(<http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/victims-of-nazi-persecution>)

Read the story of Albrecht Becker, who was also persecuted under the Nazi regime
(<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/education/case-study-albrecht-becker>)

Watch Paragraph 175, a film featuring Pierre Seel
(<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/film-reviews/paragraph-175>)

Find out how you can **Speak Up, Speak Out** (<http://www.hmd.org.uk/resources/theme-papers/hmd-2012-speak-up-speak-out>)