

Transcript of the Shoah Interview with Jan Piwonski
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Translation by Erica Booth - Volunteer – Visitor
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[P.B. is Piwonski and Lanzmann's Translator]

Lanzmann.- Good, okay can Mr. Piwonski tell us how everything started in the Spring of 1942.

Piwonski.- Well, I never kept a diary, I never took notes, but based on my memory, towards the end of February or the beginning of March 1942, some Germans came and brought a group of Jewish workers, we housed them in one of the buildings, because the camps didn't exist yet.

P.B.- Yes.

Piwonski.- And a little bit later, train cars came from time to time with parts for the barracks.

P.B.- Yes.

Piwonski.- And the Jews unloaded the cars and brought the material for the barracks over there by the camp.

Lanzmann.- Had they already built the fences at that time?

Piwonski.- No, they had not...there was no wall, there were no fences, there was nothing at that time. So the Poles that were working there had no idea about what was going to be happening there, because there was absolutely no contact between the Germans, the Jews and the Poles that worked there. There was something that really stuck in our memories, it was the extremely brutal attitude that the German surveyors had towards the Jewish hands that worked there.

Lanzmann.- Can he explain that?

Piwonski.- Okay; for example, all the unloading work had to be done while running because the Germans would beat the hands that worked there. So there was no mode of transport, all the pieces had to be carried on the backs of the Jewish hands.

Lanzmann.- They were what? They were Jewish Poles.

P.B.- He cannot respond to that question, because they could not approach them.

Lanzmann.- He never heard them talking?

Piwonski.- Me personally at that time, I had no contact with them; later yes, when I worked here, I could walk around more freely and I could hear them talking, but at that time I could not.

Lanzmann.- Were they young?

Piwonski.- Yes; more or less young; that is to say they could have been between twenty something and forty.

Lanzmann.- Yes; and so was Mr. Piwonski there when the first convoys of deported Jews began to arrive that were going to be killed... by gas?

Piwonski.- I was there, but that didn't happen until much later; because the arrival of the first convoy was followed by a very quick construction of the camp. And yes; but much later on; after the information that we had, the first convoy arrived in March of 1942. Then, no. The first convoys that were destined for death arrived much later and there was

from time to time there were Jewish convoys that arrived, but we used them for the construction of the camp.