About five weeks after the deportation, Miriam Perlmutter, whom I had known since childhood, materialized in the ghetto, along with her sister. The story was that Miriam and her family had gone to the market square on the day of the deportation. Only her brother Hershik, who preferred to go into hiding, wasn’t there. Miriam and her older sister walked all the way to Siedlce. When they reached Stara Wieś, a suburb of Siedlce, they decided to take advantage of the darkness to escape. At the last moment, however, they stopped to say goodbye to their parents. At that moment, somebody seized their arms from behind. Turning around, they saw an SS man. In their fear, they attempted to break free. But he wouldn’t let go, told them to be calm, and pleaded with them to trust him. Miriam’s sister asked him where the people were being taken. He answered by waving his hand at the stars. Still clutching their arms, the SS man led them to a side street where there were neither Jews nor passersby. He told them not to return to the ghetto under any circumstances, because the Jews there were about to be killed. Since Miriam’s features were not obviously Jewish, he suggested that she come to the Gestapo building in Siedlce the next day and ask for the chief cook. He would provide her and her sister with Polish papers so they could survive.

The next day, as she was on the way to Siedlce, she met someone who knew she was Jewish and warned her that the Germans were patrolling the streets and killing any suspected Jew on the spot. Panic-stricken, she retraced her steps. After five weeks in hiding, the two sisters returned to the ghetto. Their case was exceptional—it was the first time I had heard of a German disobeying orders. Germans of conscience still existed after all.