

Simaite, Ona

(1899--1970), Lithuanian librarian who helped Jews in the Vilna ghetto.

Simaite, who worked at Vilna University, got involved with aiding Jews after seeing firsthand how the Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators were persecuting them. She used the excuse that she had to retrieve overdue library books that had been borrowed from her library by Jewish students in order to get into the ghetto. While inside, she took the responsibility to preserve important historical and literary materials that were given to her by private individuals and public institutions for safe keeping.

Simaite also helped the Jews in the ghetto by retrieving some of the valuables that they had left with non-Jews. These possessions were needed by the ghetto Jews so that they could buy food. Simaite, who visited the ghetto everyday, also brought them food and other necessary items. In addition, she enlisted other Lithuanians to help hide Jews outside the ghetto. She herself adopted a Jewish girl in 1944; when she was discovered, Simaite was arrested and tortured. She was deported to Dachau, and then exiled to southern France.

After the war, Simaite refused to accept any honors for her aid activities. She was designated as Righteous among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1966.