

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0445

Inglis, Amirah

(1926 - 2015)

Born	7 December, 1926, Brussels Belgium
Died	2 May, 2015, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Author, Political activist

Summary

Amirah Inglis was a devoted and active member of the Communist Party in Australia during the politically turbulent Menzies era. Her autobiographical works describe the difficulties and confusion of growing up a migrant in Australia, born of Polish-Jewish parents. She has also written essays, reviews and books on Papua New Guinea, and on the Spanish Civil War.

The hammer & sickle and the washing up: memories of an Australian woman Communist includes descriptions of Amirah's life in Canberra in the 1960s, and her marriage to academic Ken Inglis.

Details

Amirah's father, Itzhak Gutstadt (later changed to Gust), migrated to Melbourne in 1928. Amirah and her mother joined him there in 1929.

Two of her books tell the story of her life.

Amirah, an Un-Australian Childhood, published by William Heinemann Australia in 1983 and reprinted 1984, 1985 and in paperback 1989, a 'loving and sensuous account...paints a perfect sociological portrait' (Weekend Australian) of Melbourne in the 1930s and 1940s. It portrays her loving, Polish Jewish Communist parents and the joys and difficulties of living as migrants.

The Hammer and Sickle and the Washing Up, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1995, tells of her involvement with the Communist Party of Australia during the 1950's and 60's, including the Menzies government's attempts to outlaw the Communist Party and the Petrov Affair. It is Amirah's story: her struggle to balance political activism and family responsibilities.

Amirah Inglis' other books reflect a desire to understand the complexities of her world within the framework of the humanitarian, internationalist, European-based communist ideology of her migrant parents and the completely new world of Papua New Guinea where she lived and worked between 1967-1974.

In 1998 in an interview with Sarah Dowse (4 digital audio tapes, held at the National Library of Australia) Inglis speaks of her current project, editing her Polish-born father's memoirs; her family and her own childhood in Melbourne; her political activism as a member of the Communist Party of Australia; her marriage to Ian Turner and events surrounding their move to Canberra in the 1960s; her involvement with the Australian National University and her teaching position at Lyneham High School; her second marriage to Ken Inglis and how their move to New Guinea in the 1970s was the inspiration for her first book which launched her writing career.[1]

Amirah Inglis died in Melbourne on 2 May 2015, aged 88.

[1] Summary from National Library of Australia

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

Not a White Woman Safe: Sexual Anxiety and Politics in Port Moresby 1920-1934, Inglis, Amirah, 1974

Amirah, an un-Australian childhood, Inglis, Amirah, 1983

The hammer & sickle and the washing up : memories of an Australian woman communist, Inglis, Amirah, 1995

Journal Article

Coming of Age in Australia, Shrubbs, Lee, 1984

Memoirs of a dutiful (Red) daughter, Inglis, Amirah, 1987

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives

[Fitzpatrick, Kathleen Elizabeth \(1905-1990\)](#)

Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University

[Amirah Inglis Collection](#)

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Amirah Inglis, 1950-2005 \[manuscript\]](#)

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Amirah Inglis interviewed by Peter Biskup \[sound recording\]](#)

[Amirah Inglis interviewed by Sara Dowse \[sound recording\]](#)

State Library of New South Wales

[Audrey Blake and Jack Blake further papers, 1937-2004](#)

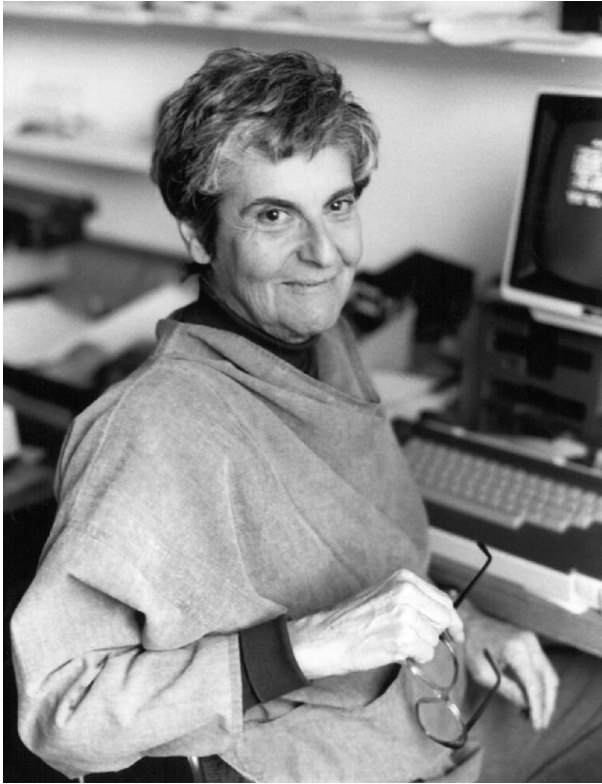
Author Details

Anne Heywood

Created 12 February 2003

Last modified 15 October 2018

Digital resources



Title: Mrs Amirah Inglis completing a book about the Spanish Civil War

Type: Image

Date: 3 May, 2023