

**Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences
Research Seminar Program 2021**

Tuesday 7th December (12-1pm)

To be held via Teams Meeting

Dr. Ebony Nilsson

Ebony Nilsson is a research fellow at the Centre for Refugee, Migration, and Humanitarian Studies in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. She is a social historian whose work specialises in Soviet migrants during the Cold War. She is interested in how certain groups of migrants are designated as ‘threats’ and potential enemies, and the ways that migrants themselves experience and respond to such state controls and public perceptions. Ebony completed her PhD at the University of Sydney. Her first monograph (under preparation) explores the transnational lives and experiences of Soviet ‘Displaced Persons’ who were resettled in Australia from Europe and China during the early Cold War and drew the attention of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation with their political engagement.



Sui Juris: A Peasant's Journey Across Cold War East and West, 1940-1964.

The lives of East Europeans in the mid-twentieth century were often characterised by displacement and mobility. From forced labourers transported to Nazi Germany, to deportees relocated by Soviet authorities and the large-scale evacuation which preceded war fronts, many experienced this period primarily through movement. These experiences were, of course, marked by trauma and loss. But they also provided a rather remarkable experience of politics and political systems. The life of Juris Pintans was particularly mobile: he went from Latvian peasant farmer to soldier for Nazi Germany, postwar refugee, and then factory worker resettled in Australia. There, he encountered industrial trade unions for the first time and began to see the Soviet Union as a utopia of state support and workers’ rights. Returning to Soviet Latvia in 1960, he settled into a collective farm but quickly became a dissident. Drawing on an exceptional set of archival records – in particular, documents from Pintans’ talks with the KGB and his trial in a Soviet courtroom – this paper reconstructs the intellectual biography of a former peasant across Cold War East and West. Pintans’ life is exceptional rather than representative but his idiosyncratic views on socialism, the role of the state, and the rights of ‘free citizens’ push us to reconsider the range of political views which non-elite Eastern Europeans held and the role of mobility and displacement in shaping them.



Pintans Mug Shot Riga, LVA: f.1986-s.1-44701