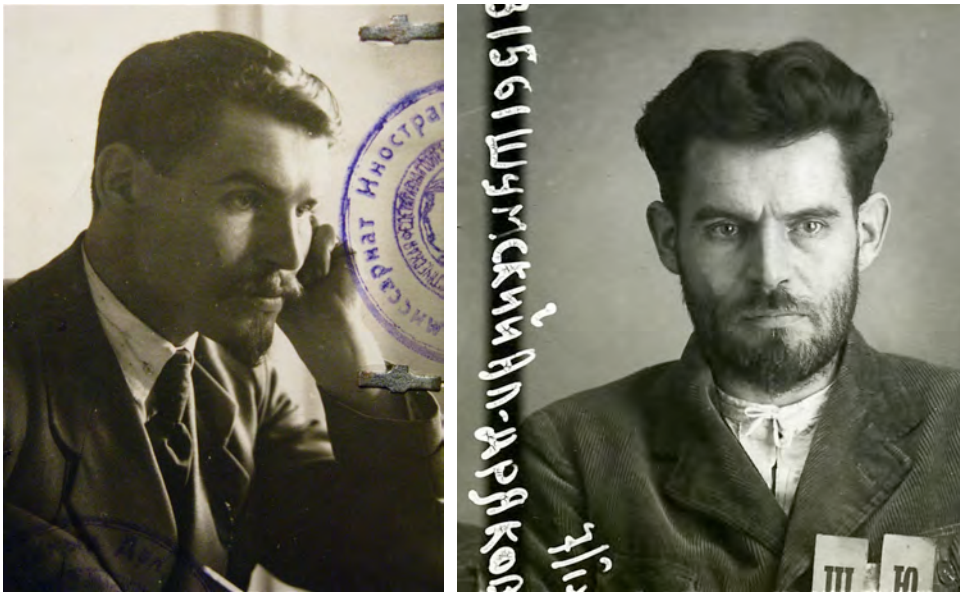


# Defying Stalin/ism in Death: The unlikely case of Oleksandr Shumskyi



Australian  
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BIOGRAPHY WORKSHOP  
SERIES 2022



*Shumskyi as Commissar of Education in the 1920s (left) and following his arrest in 1933 (right)*

Victims of mass repression in Stalin's Soviet Union were subject to physical and psychological torture by their interrogators, forced to confess to crimes they did not commit. Many eventually broke, accepting that continuing to resist the interrogations was pointless as well as believing their interrogators' assurances that confessing would save their lives. The interrogators lied: confessing rarely saved the victims — it was often the last step to their execution.

The case of Ukrainian communist Oleksandr Shumskyi offers unique insight into an alternative strategy of survival in Stalin's terror machine: Shumskyi endured his tortures. He resisted, refusing to confess for over a decade, and waged a campaign against his unlawful arrest. Drawing on a forthcoming biography of Shumskyi, this paper examines the relationship between resistance and survival, focusing on his arrest and incarceration from 1933 until his death in 1946, along with a broader analysis of the fates of his Ukrainian intelligentsia associates also arrested at this time and its contemporary implications for understanding Russia's war against Ukraine.

Filip Slaveski is a lecturer in the School of History (ANU) and an historian of the Soviet Empire, primarily of Russia and Ukraine. His work focuses on mass conflict and its aftermath, specifically the intersections of food crises, mass violence and political control and their contemporary echoes. He is the author of *Remaking Ukraine after WWII: The clash of central and local Soviet power, 1944-1953* (Cambridge University Press, 2021) and co-author of the forthcoming *Stalin's Liquidation Game. The unlikely case of Oleksandr Shumskyi* (Harvard University Press, 2023).

Biography Workshop National  
Centre of Biography (ANU)

## Time:

Thursday 24 November  
2022, 11:00am-12:30 pm

## In Person:

Seminar Room 5.72  
Level 5 RSSS Building  
146 Ellery Crescent

## Zoom option:

### Meeting ID:

849 0058 9945

Password: 630803

### Join Zoom Meeting:

[bit.ly/BioWorkshop2022](https://bit.ly/BioWorkshop2022)