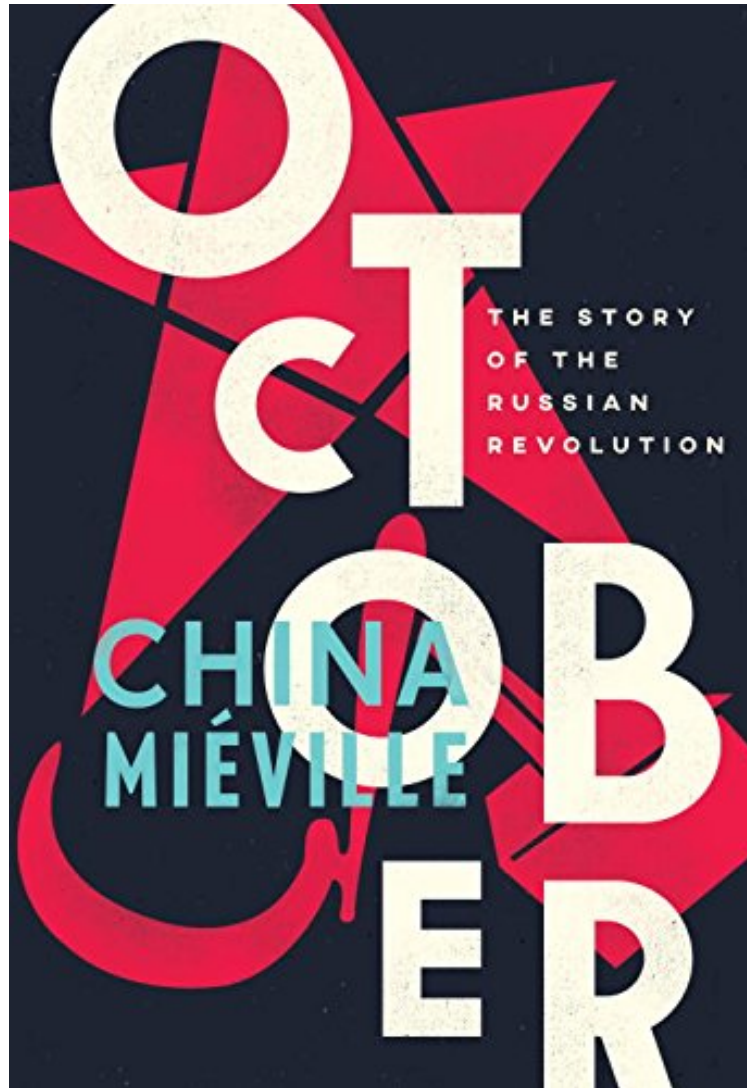


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October: The Story of the Russian Revolution

China Miéville

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China Miéville : October: The Story of the Russian Revolution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised October: The Story of the Russian Revolution:

32 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Amazing General Introduction to The RevolutionBy SamuelThis book is magnificent. It tells the story of the revolution with an approach which is both general, and honing in on hyper specific stories within the revolution that really works to create a stunning narrative progress for the revolution. As far as general introductions to the subject go, this is almost unbeatable, and is an excellent book for the centeniery of the revolution.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. China Mieville provides an excellent background that

helps in understanding the events of 1917 in Russia. China Miéville provides an excellent background that helps in understanding the events of 1917. 22 of 23 people found the following review helpful. Driving that train By John L Murphy Known for his post-modern fantasy and science-fiction, China Miéville enriches these genres with his expertise in international relations and critical legal studies. Educated at Cambridge and the London School of Economics, he argues in the 2005 adaptation of his doctoral thesis: "The attempt to replace war and inequality with law is not merely utopian but is precisely self-defeating. A world structured around international law cannot but be one of imperialist violence. The chaotic and bloody world around us is the rule of law." Recently a very unsuccessful Socialist Workers Party candidate for the House of Commons, he has since helped to found the anti-capitalist "red-green" Left Unity party. His biographical data assist the reader of this version of the Russian Revolution. Although a fellow-traveler alongside many of those whose tales he retells, Miéville sustains a detached stance, if an implicitly radical affinity, for the rebels and malcontents within the nine months of 1917 he explores. He offers the pre-history of that year, especially the anti-tsarist tumult in 1905. That earlier October, Moscow's print-workers started a strike. The reason? Having been paid by the letter, the typesetters demanded added remuneration for punctuation. Massive unrest spread. Debating such resistance, Bolsheviks agreed that the time for a socialist uprising led by proletariat and peasantry remained premature. Their semi-rivals the Mensheviks counter that a democratic and capitalist insurgency is acceptable, given the need of the bourgeoisie to guide under-prepared factions in a backward land. Miéville commences his chronology of the pivotal year in February of a century ago, in the former St. Petersburg. The imperial capital witnesses its mill-workers rallying. They turn to meet Cossack cavalry facing off against. then letting through, thousands of marchers again on strike. The horsemen stay still as protesters duck under their mounts. "Rarely have skills imparted by reaction been so exquisitely deployed against it." With so many of the military turned against their royal commander, by March the Mensheviks are in charge. Under Alexander Kerensky, the moderate leftists struggle to keep order. Vladimir Lenin returns from exile to incite a new "second stage" revision of his earlier opinion that the revolution could wait. He regards Russia as ripe for leadership by the workers allied with the poorest peasants. Rejecting collaboration with the Mensheviks, the Bolsheviks edge towards the seizure of the councils, the soviets, established by the proles and farmers. They want power now. However, triumph will not hurry itself. The First All-Russian Congress of Peasants' Soviets convenes during May in Petrograd. Out of 1200 delegates, nine are Bolshevik and 14 affiliated. Urged on by Lenin and his comrades, their numbers will soon balloon. But others contend against them for a share of the action. Anarchists attempt to occupy a right-wing press. Not amused, the authorities push them aside. "Up with these anarchists, they decided, they would not put." A rare glimmer of levity lightens the recital of figures and the recording of events that may sink heavily, for this is quite a dense story. While Miéville provides a glossary of key characters and an annotated reading guide, keeping the zemstov straight from the Trudovski remains a challenge for any novice inquirer unfamiliar with this milieu. To his credit, Miéville patiently lists the constantly warping factions and their fleeting moments of notoriety. Still, the pace of change occurs so rapidly that it requires very steady attention. By July, the Kerensky government weakens. Bolsheviks bicker. Hearing armed masses approaching, someone "in the room gasped: 'Without the sanction of the Central Committee?'" Miéville remarks on the gap between party and populace: "How easy to forget that people do not need or await permission to move." This showdown nudged the Bolsheviks against the soviets, now dismissed as counter-revolutionary. Although they numbered 8000, a tenth of the Menshevik ranks, momentum was theirs. Under Lenin and Leon Trotsky, they sought "direct seizure of power by workers and the party." August witnesses Kerensky despairing. "I want to take the middle road, but no one will help me." A right-wing military coup fizzled. September opens as the Petrograd Soviet finally adopts the Bolshevik militancy as a socialist wedge against the Provisional Government of the Mensheviks and their wavering allies. But this policy is rejected by a pro-Kerensky committee. Worsened by insistent opposition to Russia's entanglement in the Great War, troops desert and mutiny, filling the cadres of radicalized Bolsheviks back in Petrograd. Europe itself appears to tip towards the long-anticipated socialist revolution. German's kaiser totters towards chaos. Lenin reckons the time to act has arrived. The titular month starts with Lenin returned from his flight to Finland. Disguised in a grey wig, he enters crime-riddled Petrograd. The last bastion between the Eastern front and it having been abandoned, those within the tense capital prepare for second overthrow of a Russian regime that year. "Upheaval was traced over a regular city dusk." Strollers continue; gunfire peppers cold air nearby. Over an attenuated 26th of the Julian calendar (November 5th by the Gregorian reckoning superseding it the following year), Miéville depicts not a dramatic raid by eager recruits on the Winter Palace, but a stultifying endgame. Shots from a naval vessel meet with little response from cadres on the ground. Inside the grandiose redoubt: "Men skirmished in stairwells. Any creak on the floorboards might be the revolution." The victors find a dim dawn, with a hint of lightening above. In a necessary epilogue, China Miéville charts the trajectory of the Bolshevik overthrow. While never diminishing the human costs of the Soviet triumph, he insists upon a balanced tally of the progress achieved for millions, in a dim but persistent era of advancement away from serfdom and bigotry, oppression and submission. "Twilight, even remembered twilight, is better than no light at all. It would be equally absurd to say that there is nothing we can learn from the revolution. To deny that the summer of October can be ours, and that it need not be always followed by night." At the close of

Miéville's narrative quest, he considers the metaphor and fact of 1917 as a "revolution of trains." He aptly concludes: "The question for history is not only who should be driving the train, but where."

Award-winning author China Miéville plunges us into the year the world was turned upside down. On the centenary of the Russian Revolution, China Miéville tells the extraordinary story of this pivotal moment in history. In February of 1917 Russia was a backwards, autocratic monarchy, mired in an unpopular war; by October, after not one but two revolutions, it had become the world's first workers' state, straining to be at the vanguard of global revolution. How did this unimaginable transformation take place? In a panoramic sweep, stretching from St Petersburg and Moscow to the remotest villages of a sprawling empire, Miéville uncovers the catastrophes, intrigues and inspirations of 1917, in all their passion, drama and strangeness. Intervening in long-standing historical debates, but told with the reader new to the topic especially in mind, here is a breathtaking story of humanity at its greatest and most desperate; of a turning point for civilisation that still resonates loudly today.

"Miéville is an ideal guide through this complex historical moment, giving agency to obscure and better-known participants alike, and depicting the revolution as both a tragically lost opportunity and an ongoing source of inspiration." —Publishers Weekly (Starred —"Best Summer Books of 2017") "When one of the most marvellously original writers in the world takes on one of the most explosive events in history, the result can only be incendiary." —Barbara Ehrenreich "To give a new generation of readers a fresh account of the great revolution, incorporating all the post-1989 archival discoveries and scholarly research, is a singularly daunting task. To render it in vivid, oracular prose, moving across the pages with the gathering force of a hurricane, is something that only China Miéville could achieve." —Mike Davis "Miéville sifts through the extraordinary disagreements, debates, and debacles that accompanied the Russian reds on every step of the road to revolution ... He's especially evocative when he chronicles the scenes on the chaotic streets. But much of the value of *October* comes in his mastery of how the intricacies of human decision-making play out in Petrograd, Moscow, and beyond." —Christian Science Monitor "Elegantly constructed and unexpectedly moving." —Sheila Fitzpatrick, London of Books "Engaging retelling of the events that rocked the foundations of the twentieth century." —Village Voice "China Miéville's literary retelling—made to feel like a novel, but scrupulously sourced to real events—captures the vertigo of 1917's encounter between massive historical forces, plunging us back into the heart of a far-reaching social upheaval, in which time flowed backward and forward even as it marched inexorably forward toward a future that was radically unknown." —David Sessions, New Republic "This is a very fine book — in some ways, I believe, the best work that China Miéville has produced since the three thick volumes of the *Bas-Lag* trilogy. Indeed, *October* bears, in certain respects, a deeper affinity to those novels than to anything else he has published since; and it thus provides a convenient opportunity to take stock of the Miéville oeuvre to date... That [*October*] is an excellent work of art there is no doubt whatever." —Carl Freedman, Los Angeles of Books "There are workers, there are peasants, there are soldiers, there are parties, there are tsars, there are courtiers. Each of them bears his or her class position, his or her economic and other concerns, but it is the political field itself, how it hurls its protagonists into combat, combat with its own rules and norms, its own criteria for success and failure, that is front and center here. This may be the most textured, most concrete, account of what political contest and political combat, literal and metaphoric, feels like." —Corey Robin "Provides an introduction to one of the seminal events of the 20th century—the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty and the establishment of the world's first communist state 100 years ago this year ... It has all the makings of a novel, and Miéville's narrative builds toward its crescendo as the Bolsheviks prepare to take power." —Boston Globe "There are delightful grace notes here over and above a brisk and perceptive narrative." —Stuart Kelly, Scotsman "This gripping account is a re-enactment of the Russian Revolution ... His writing can be as passionate as that of the poets of the time: Alexander Blok, Mikhail Kuzmin, Marina Tsvetaeva, to mention some of those quoted here. Miéville's own special effects are of a piece with them." —Financial Times "Cinematic and vivid." —Newsweek "An exciting account of the revolutionary moment ... well-argued and elegiac." —Spectator "An intriguing march to revolution, told here with clarity and insight." —Kirkus "Readers will be satisfied that *October* gives them the literary equivalent of bearing witness to world history." —Booklist "It's as if John Reed, author of the classic piece of revolutionary journalism, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, woke from a decades-long sleep to tell the story of 1917 once again." —Counterpunch "Miéville's understanding of the intricacies and underlying absurdities of party politics is unmatched ... A rich and compelling book." —Dallas Morning News "Miéville, known for his extravagantly weird science fiction and fantasy, is a virtuoso storyteller; here he conjures a society convulsing on the verge of total transformation while staying squarely within the lines of the historical record. Reading this blow-by-blow account of revolution now, when political life is stranger than any fiction, is galvanizing." —Artsy

About the Author China Miéville is the multi-award-winning author of many works of fiction and non-fiction. His fiction includes *The City and the City*, *Embassytown* and *This Census-Taker*. He has won the Hugo, World Fantasy, and Arthur C. Clarke awards. His non-fiction includes the photo-illustrated essay *London's Overthrow* and *Between Equal Rights*, a study of international law. He has written for various publications, including the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, *Conjunctions* and *Granta*, and he is a founding editor of the quarterly

Salvage.