

Forthcoming in *Capital & Class*

The iconography of the Russian Revolution is curious business. The iconographer must evince gloom for the Revolution's historical predecessor, Tsarism, then awe at its conditions of birth, the revolutions of 1905 and February 1917, followed by adulation for its first steps, the Council of People's Commissars, followed by odium at its murder in the hands of Stalinism. Generations of Leninist historians have incessantly plastered this macabre altarpiece with ink, layer after layer, typically drawing inspiration from Isaac Deutscher's revered triptych of the life of Trotsky. Three recent histories of the Revolution, all by non-professional historians, propose to dispense with these revolutionary pieties.

The first book, entitled *Que faire de 1917?*, is by Olivier Besançon, the uniquely recognizable face of the French anti-capitalist Left. The second, *October*, is by China Miéville, a well-known science-fiction writer. And the third, *No less than mystic*, is by John Medhurst, writer and activist.

Full text [here](#).