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COMPARING THE RUSSIAN AND CHINESE REVOLUTIONS: A STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE

a public lecture by

Steve Smith

(Oxford University)

The lecture will comprise a series of reflections that compare the revolutionary process in the Russian Empire and the early Soviet Union with that in China between 1920 and 1949. Scholars of China, writing in the 1970s and 1980s, especially in the wake of the Cultural Revolution, tended to agree that the Chinese Revolution had very little in common with the Russian Revolution, being very much a product of Chinese conditions. Recent scholars, by contrast, have tended to stress the extent to which Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) followed the Stalinist model. The lecture will reflect on the similarities and differences between the two revolutions by looking at: 1) the context of war and the military character of the revolutions; 2) the social forces that made the revolutions; 3) the relationship between class and nation in the two revolutions; 4) the role of propaganda, campaigns and the nature of mass mobilization; and 5) the revolutions as fundamentally revolutions against backwardness.

Steve (S. A.) Smith is a Senior Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, and a Professor in the History Faculty of Oxford University. He was formerly Professor of Comparative History at the European University Institute, Florence, and Professor of History at the University of Essex. He is a historian of modern Russia and China, who works on the interface of social and political history and, more recently, of comparative Communism. He has published books on Russian history – including the prize-winning *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis* (Oxford, 2017) – and two books on Chinese history, plus *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History* (Cambridge, 2008). He edited the *Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford, 2014) and was a co-editor of the *Cambridge History of Communism* (Cambridge, 2017). He is currently working on a comparative study of the efforts of the Soviet state in the 1920s and 1930s and the Chinese state in the 1950s and 1960s to eliminate popular religion. He is a former editor of *Past and Present* and a Vice-President of the *Past and Present* Society. He is also a Fellow of the British Academy.

