

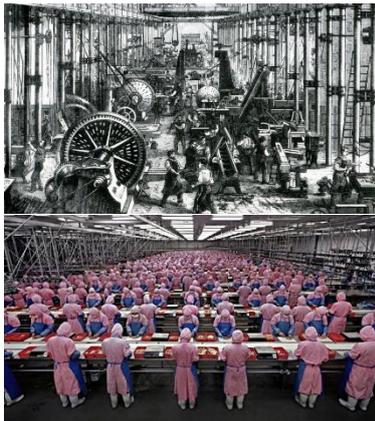
**PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE ISSUED: 10.09.2015**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## British historians discuss the legacy of Magna Carta at conference in China

This year, the British-Chinese History Conference travels to Beijing to understand the foundational and international importance of Magna Carta. From 9 to 13 September, eight leading figures of early modern and modern British history will present papers at Beijing University and engage in an educational exchange with their Chinese counterparts.



In the 1980s, the rapid economic and social change sweeping through China threw up a host of problems not unlike those faced by Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, during its own period of transformation. Since 1985, the British-Chinese History Conferences have promoted a productive dialogue between academics from both countries to address and examine these common issues. Chinese scholars, in conversation with the British, were able to better understand and appreciate the changes happening around them, and British historians were afforded an unparalleled opportunity to compare their theories to an actual ‘industrial revolution.’ Held periodically since their inception, the theme of these gatherings has slowly evolved. What began as a study of economic and social history has naturally transformed into a curiosity about political and legal history. It is no surprise, then, that when asked what should be the topic for the 2015 Conference, Professor Chengdan Qian, of Beijing University, replied without hesitation: “The history and influence of Magna Carta.”

To discuss Magna Carta is to discuss the concept of rule of law and how it transcends the arbitrary and authoritarian exercise of power by a monarchy or government. The rule of law is a necessary building block in the construction of liberal, plural, and democratic societies and Magna Carta, as the foundation of English liberty, has provided this for Britain. It is of considerable intrigue, then, that in China – a country that has developed a type of open market and is perhaps on the path to a much more open society – there is such strong interest in Magna Carta.

This year's delegation consists of Sophie Ambler (UEA), David Carpenter (KCL), Harry Dickinson (University of Edinburgh), Rachel Foxley (University of Reading), George Garnett (St Hugh's College, Oxford), Alex Lock (British Library), and Nicholas Vincent (UEA). Also joining the British delegation is Professor Lawrence Goldman, Director of the Institute of Historical Research, one of the research institutes of the University of London's School of Advanced Study. Professor Goldman will speak at Beijing University on the British memory of Magna Carta and commemorations of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He will then stay in China for several more days to give two lectures on the history of the British labour movement, furthering the international exchange of ideas. Sir Robert Worcester, as Chairman of the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Committee, will also attend the conference to deliver a paper. The historians from the UK will learn first-hand from their Chinese counterparts about the immediate influence of the rule of law whilst furthering the international legacy of Magna Carta.



*Professor Lawrence Goldman (IHR)*

Support for this conference has generously been provided by the Magna Carta Trust. The Magna Carta Trust's 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration Committee is charged by the Magna Carta Trust to co-ordinate activities, raise the profile of the anniversary and deliver a number of key national and international aspirations. For more information, visit [www.magnacarta800th.com](http://www.magnacarta800th.com)

– Ends –

**Notes for editors:**

1. **For further information**, please contact: Maureen McTaggart, Media and Public Relations Officer, School of Advanced Study, University of London +44 (0)20 7862 8653 / [Maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Maureen.mctaggart@sas.ac.uk).

2. **The Institute of Historical Research (IHR)**, founded in 1921, is one of 10 member institutes of the School of Advanced Study, University of London. It is home to two important research centres and a major open access library, hosts over 60 seminars and offers doctoral supervision in a wide range of historical subjects. It has a substantial publishing programme, hosts a number of innovative digital research projects, administers fellowships, runs specialist research training programmes and organises a variety of conferences and workshops each year. [www.history.ac.uk](http://www.history.ac.uk)

3. **The School of Advanced Study (SAS)**, University of London, is the UK's national centre for the promotion and support of research in the humanities. SAS and its member institutes offer unparalleled academic opportunities, facilities and stimulation across a wide range of subject areas for the benefit of the national and international scholarly community. In 2013-14, SAS: welcomed 743 research fellows and associates; held 2,081 research dissemination events; received 26.4 million visits to its digital research resources and platforms; and

received 202,891 visits to its specialist libraries and collections. The School also leads the UK's only nationwide festival of the humanities: Being Human. Find out more at [www.sas.ac.uk](http://www.sas.ac.uk) or follow SAS on Twitter at @SASNews.

4. **The University of London** is a federal University and is one of the oldest, largest and most diverse universities in the UK. Established by Royal Charter in 1836, the University is recognised globally as a world leader in Higher Education. It consists of 17 self-governing Colleges of outstanding reputation, together with a number of prestigious central academic bodies and activities. Learn more about the University of London at [www.london.ac.uk](http://www.london.ac.uk)