*In the Shadow of the First World War:*

*Social and Cultural Dimensions of Conflict in Global Perspective*

May 15-16, 2014

The University of Manchester

*In the Shadow of the First World War: Social and Cultural Dimensions of Conflict in Global Perspective* brought to campus a diverse group of scholars, peace activists, official army historians, and members of the public on May 15 and 16 with generous sponsorship from the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence and the Centre for Chinese Studies at Manchester. The two-day event began on the Thursday with a plenary talk on memory, India and empire in the Great War by Dr. Santanu Das from King’s College, London, whose wide-ranging and colourful presentation was well-received and especially appreciated since Dr Das had stepped into the breach after a last minute cancellation by Prof. Ron Suny of the University of Michigan, an expert on the Armenian genocide.

Two panels and two roundtables followed on the Friday which brought together graduate students, post-graduates and established scholars in conversation on topics ranging from mass violence in the Russian empire, suffering and survival seen through the letters of children and youths experiencing war, commemoration and memory over the course of the twentieth century, and the role of empire and ethnicity in war. Friday afternoon also included a presentation by Prof. Peter Gatrell on an online encyclopaedia of WWI project (<http://www.1914-1918-online.net>) in which he is involved, a cutting edge online resource with collaborators across the globe. Friday’s discussion concluded with a second plenary talk given by Prof. Xu Guoqi from the University of Hong Kong who spoke on the subject of his acclaimed book on Chinese workers in the Great War, *Strangers on the Western Front*.

As a fitting closing to the two-day event, conference attendees made their way on Friday to the nearby Big Hands venue for a performance by Harp and a Monkey, a Manchester folk trio whose music deals with themes of experience, loss and activism involving twentieth century war, very much in the spirit of the conference themes, and whose frontman, Martin Purdy, was also a panellist earlier in the day. While the last-minute change of plenary speakers led to a rush to regenerate new posters in time and less than ideal publicity around the campus and community, the conference was well-attended, and the feedback from colleagues and guests very positive. Overall, *In the Shadow* was a fitting mark to the momentous centenary of the Great War occurring this year.