

remained friends, by 1890 it was clear that Italy's loyalty to the Alliance would be uncertain. Russia and France had signed secret agreements in 1894 which had brought them together against the Triple Alliance, particularly against Germany and Austria-Hungary. In 1904, Britain and France, who had long been enemies and had often reached the brink of war in their rivalries over colonies, entered into what is known as the *Entente Cordiale*, a sort of friendly agreement rather than a formal alliance. The secret clauses of the 'friendly agreement' included France giving up her claims on Egypt in return for freedom to do what she liked with Morocco. The next stage in the process was an agreement in 1907 between Britain and Russia — the two had a long history of rivalries and hostility. The purpose of this friendly agreement was to divide Iran, as already mentioned. With this was formed the *Triple Entente* comprising Britain, France and Russia. It was an *Entente* (understanding) and not a formal alliance. The formation of the alliances (or understanding), in spite of doubts about the loyalty of allies and friends in case the war broke out, brought the war nearer and added to the mistrust and fear of each country against the others. The alliances also made it, in a way, inevitable that, when the war broke out, it would not be a local war confined to one or two countries and that it would almost certainly assume wider proportions.

Social Tensions

Besides the conflicts between States, there were serious tensions and problems *within* States. The problem of nationalities, which has been mentioned, was not the only source of internal tensions. The changes that had come about since the rise of capitalism and during about a hundred years after the beginning of the Industrial Revolution had made Europe's hegemony over the world possible. However, the social system in all

countries of Europe was marked by gross inequalities. In the countries where industrialization had not taken place on any significant scale, the peasantry which constituted the bulk of the population, continued to live in the old way in conditions of misery and oppression. The countries that were industrialized and had become mighty economic powers had social systems that were based on undisguised exploitation of the workers. In spite of the growth of industries which produced an increasing quantity of goods, vast masses of people lived in unhealthy conditions in slums and led lives of semi-starvation, with the ever-present danger of being thrown out of employment. In Britain, during her war against the Boers (Dutch settlers) in South Africa in 1899–1902, the need for recruiting additional men to the army was urgently felt. A large number of people who came to the army recruiting centres were, however, rejected, for they were diseased and too weak, having lived lives of poverty in unhealthy surroundings, to serve as soldiers. Efforts were made to mitigate some of the worst evil effects of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution but the situation of the downtrodden had not significantly improved even after the end of the nineteenth century. A British historian of twentieth century Europe has remarked, "The poor who thronged the overcrowded slums of the big towns and industrial districts were a lower order of humanity and treated as such, valued only as the necessary pool of labour, always in surplus, on which the social as well as the economic system depended".

Socialist Movement

The rise of the trade union movement and of the ideas and movement of socialism has been mentioned earlier. The socialist view that capitalism was a system based on exploitation and must be ended, was gaining