

Line-Up For Land

THE OMINOUS SPRING before us becomes intelligible in terms of natural resources. The line-up of European powers for the death struggle will be determined primarily by land-hunger and the probability of satisfying it at the expense of a neighbor. The map's the thing.

Land-hunger has ever been the initiatory impulse to war. It is not the land-hunger of the landless that drives them to organized murder, but that of their exploiters. The rent collectors within the nation seek to satisfy their insatiable gluttony beyond the national borders, at the expense of new victims.

This war is different from most others only in that a new class of rent collectors has appeared. Previous to the nineteenth century this fraternity admitted to its membership only the self-anointed "aristocracy." In the last hundred years some of the bourgeoisie have been permitted to share in the spoils, partly because their enterprise always increases the rent fund, partly because they serve as rent collectors for the daintier swash-bucklers.

The newest class of rent collectors are the bureaucrats. The Junkers of Germany still share in the land grabs of the Nazis, as in Austria, Czecho-Slovakia and Poland. But, to a large extent the loot goes to "public officials." The Czarist regime of Russia was no more land-hungry than are its commissars; strangely enough, their foreign policy (which is a euphemism for the exploitation of foreign peoples) coincides with the foreign policy of Russia for centuries—Poland, Finland, European Turkey, Mongolia, the warm water seaports of Scandinavia. So, we see that strong centralized governments, under whatever ideological names they travel, have but one purpose: grab land to collect rent for the benefit of privileged groups.

England and France have apparently no desire to increase their land holdings. Their purpose at present seems merely to hold on to what they have. If they succeed in vanquishing Germany, they will grab as they always do, but this time possibly will acquire only "spheres of influence."

Now for the line-up:

Italy's price for participation seems to be freedom to exploit the Balkans. Who will pay? Germany and Russia need the Rumanian oil fields so badly that a deal for a Balkan "sphere" might be made with Mussolini. On the other hand, England and France have been known to make promises. Rumania may be protected by Greece and Yugoslavia

from Bulgarian and Hungarian landlords who joined the "wrong" side in 1914.

Turkey, with the aid of England, may create a "diversion" for the Red commissars by grabbing their manganese deposits and oil fields in the Caucasus; on the other hand, Russia has long had an eye on British oil fields in Iran and Iraq.

Japan, besides encroaching upon China, has a longing for the rich holdings of the Dutch in the East, and if Germany invades the Low Countries and seems to have a chance of bringing Britain to terms, the flag of the Rising Sun may fly over the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese may be forced into this undertaking by their inability to do business with moralistic Uncle Sam. In that case, will the American fleet go into Asiatic waters to protect something or other?

As we study the map we see where land-hunger is driving the ruling classes of the various nations. During the Spring the relative strength of the sparing predators will determine the lineup.

And the workers who pay the rent will fight and suffer and die. If rent were socialized—if private appropriation of rent were abolished—who would war for what?

