

New Russia Is Individualistic and Imaginative

Colonel Golejewski, Military Attache to the Russian Embassy, Tells of the Great Similarities Between His Countrymen and Ours

JUST before he sailed for Europe yesterday Colonel Nikolai Golejewski, Military Attaché to the Imperial Russian Embassy, compared his native land to the United States, saying that both nations were individualistic and highly imaginative, and that if George Kennan's impressions of Russia still remained in the minds of some Americans, it was no less true that among Europeans who had not visited us it was equally difficult to eradicate the "Martin Chuzzlewit" notion of this country. Colonel Golejewski had many complimentary things to say of the United States, but admitted that when he came here three and a half years ago he did so with dragging step, because he, too, had read "Martin Chuzzlewit," and believed it to be a true picture still. He is now on his way to the front.

"In my profession," said the Colonel, "the last things I want to discuss are military matters. At this moment it would be superfluous to say that the Allies are going to win. I don't think that the war situation is any longer open to doubt. Even to a neutral press it is clear that the tide has turned. One of the most interesting things that I have read in many months is the announcement in today's wireless press dispatches from Berlin, just at the historic moment when the great offensive at Comblès is electrifying the world. The text of the official German statement reads: 'Successes were obtained by the enemy to the east of Rancourt l'Abbaye, and the conquest of the villages on the line of Gueudecourt-Bouchavesnes must be recognized. But before all we must think of our heroic troops, who faced the united Anglo-French principal forces and the massed employment of material of the whole world's war industry prepared during many months.'

"That is interesting," he continued. "It gives the idea that the German General Staff is preparing the public to discount future defeats. We have here a tremendous change in tone. And if they take for their text that 'the whole world is against us' it cannot be anything but an education of the public mind of what is going to happen. And between the war map of Bethmann Hollweg and the famous sentence that a political unit stretching from Arras to Mesopotamia cannot be conquered—I say, between that sentence and this latest sentence in the wireless dispatches from Berlin, we have a change, indeed, and the difference is obvious."

Colonel Golejewski was born in Petrograd, but speaks English without any suspicion of an accent. He was in the Russo-Japanese war, and afterward, from 1907 to 1912, was Assistant Military Attaché at the Imperial Russian Embassy in London. In 1913 he came to Washington, where he has since remained, except for the months of June and July in 1914, when he went to Vera Cruz in his official capacity, and also visited Mexico City. He has been officer of the Twelfth Russian Hussar Regiment, but now belongs to the General Staff. In 1904 and 1905 he was in Manchuria, where he distinguished himself, being awarded as a quite young officer the Order of St. Vladimir, Fourth Class, and the St. George's sword, (or golden sword, as it was then called,) which is given, like the British V. C., for gallantry and conspicuous bravery under heavy fire.

"As there really does not seem to be any argument possible in the matter of the outcome of the war," said Colonel Golejewski, "it may be of interest to say a word about the tremendous opportunity that American business men will find awaiting them in Russia. We now have in the United States a Russian-American Chamber of Commerce, which is doing good work in bringing the two countries together. And, of course, you know that with all the war order business that America has received has come a study of conditions that has helped

America to learn a great deal about Russia.

"The Russian Army has been a colossal customer of the American market, and I am convinced that, although this trade is of a temporary character, the future will develop a great business between the two countries. Of course, the important point in those future relations is that there should be mutual knowledge. Great interest has been aroused in Russia concerning the United States, and the

Kennans, we in Europe live on the impressions we got from 'Martin Chuzzlewit.' And it takes a long time to get over it!

"The United States is like Russia in another respect—it is a very hard country to understand; it is so vast, and, except by travel, it is difficult to get any idea of either country at all. The average European—what does he know of America? Washington, that's all he knows; Washington in Winter and New-



Colonel Nikolai Golejewski. (Photo by C. S. Smith.)

United States is so quick to learn new things that I am certain when it comes to getting the business America will not lag, but that she will already have it, so to speak. She is so much quicker than anybody else.

"And do you know there is a kind of common ground between Russia and America in the matter of both being unconventional and both having a lot of imagination. Russia is highly individualistic, and most unconventional. In Russia everybody lives his own life—no cut and dried forms. It is only the cheaper moving picture concerns which keep up in America that fallacious picture of a Russia which never existed.

"In Russia, as in America, the human touch plays a great part. To put it crudely, you cannot get from an American anything *ex officio*. But if he just takes to you—ah, then it is not difficult at all. That is also essentially Russian."

It was suggested to Colonel Golejewski that his description of the Russia of today would probably impress many Americans as a new point of view, especially those Americans whose ideas about the Russians had been received from George Kennan and other writers.

"I know what you mean," replied Colonel Golejewski, "although I have not read any of Mr. Kennan's writings. If you in America don't know Russia, perhaps it is permissible for me to say that Russia—or, we will say, Europe—does not know America at all. If you live on the impressions planted by the George

port in Summer, and that's not very representative. One cannot know any country really, unless one has been in it. Not only been in it, but lived in it, and, more important than all, traveled in it.

"Now, when I came here three and a half years ago, I had a 'Martin Chuzzlewit' sort of notion of America. And I tell you frankly that I did not want to come here very much. I have been absolutely converted."

"How long did it take to convert you, Colonel?"

There was some little pause, long enough for Colonel Golejewski to take four, perhaps five, unhurried puffs at his cigarette, before he replied:

"I was a little slow, perhaps," smiling. "The conditions in any new country are so different, one has to understand why things happen, what they mean. But now, I cannot leave this country without expressing my heartfelt gratitude to countless persons who have done such things, entirely beyond what the most generous interpretation of their duty could have suggested, for me and my family while we have been here. Indeed, I shall always look upon certain episodes as quite beyond anything that has ever come into my experience elsewhere in the way of kindness, responsiveness, and hospitality.

"All that will be necessary in order to assure a great business between Russia and the United States is that the two peoples shall realize the remarkable similarity in their characteristics. You rightfully place considerable emphasis

here on the fact that a poor boy at the plow—your Garfield on the towpath and your Lincoln splitting rails—may hope to reach the places of greatest honor in your country. It is not generally known, apparently, that similar conditions exist in Russia; in so far as a man shows unusual ability, it is almost impossible for him to keep out of Government circles. In a word, Russia, too, is highly individualistic.

"The Russian-American Chamber of Commerce is making it known here that, while preparation for success in trade with Russia may seem to the American manufacturer somehow a different thing from preparing for the home market, in principle it is exactly the same thing.

"I said a moment ago that one should travel in order to understand a country. I was for two months with the American army at Vera Cruz. I was there when the European war broke out, living with the American army, seeing General Funston every day. If I had not had that experience perhaps I might never have known that the American army knows how to and does extend exceptional courtesies in a truly magnificent way to the foreigners. Unfortunately, I never went further West than Chicago, but I have done the Eastern seaboard from Boston to Galveston.

"Also, I should like to say a word concerning a certain rumor floating about in Europe to the effect that the American reporter is a thing to be avoided. One is always warned against the American reporter. Well, for three and a half years I must say that fallacy has been entirely exploded so far as my personal experience has gone."

"What is the feature of American life that comes to your mind as representing the biggest problem for us to decide in the near future?" Colonel Golejewski was asked.

"I think," he said, "that the national existence of your country is in a period of formation, and the fact that this formation period is protracted is due to the influx of a new element every year. Your problem is immigration—undigested food—you have always a surplus of unassimilated population which never grows less. That is the most striking thing in my mind on the eve of my departure, and perhaps I should not express myself in this fashion, being a visitor only, but since you have asked me, I will say that before the population itself is settled and grows internally, not from the outside, the national aims and policies and aspirations are, of course, nebulous.

"Now the question is: Can the United States form themselves into a finite nation with that continuous influx? That is the national side of the question. On the other hand, can the United States live on the present scale without the influx of the raw element—the importation of labor? You are building up a nation and diluting it every year. But, on the other hand, you have to dilute it, because you are growing and you want labor. You are between the two questions."

"What would be your advice to us in the circumstances?" Colonel Golejewski was asked.

He walked up and down the room for some little time, evidently debating whether he should permit himself to be quoted in such a matter, but not, as the precision of his utterance soon indicated, because of any doubt in his mind as to the course we should pursue. Finally, he said:

"I would stop immigration and run the risk."

"What trait in the American character has principally impressed you?" he was asked.

There was no hesitation this time. "The remarkable receptivity and the remarkable energy of the American people," he said. "I might put it this way: If you were to inquire of an American candy manufacturer, we'll say, 'Can you build an aeroplane?' the candy manufacturer would reply instantly, 'I'll try.' And what is more, he might build it."