

RUSSIANS IN WANT, BUT WON'T ASK AID

Thomas Whittemore Asserts
Silent Resignation Marks
Nation's Sacrifice.

THOUSANDS OF DEAD DAILY

Member of Grand Duchess's War
Relief Committee Praises Work
of Provincial Unions.

Thomas Whittemore of 471 Park Avenue, who recently returned from Russia, where he was a member of Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaovna's committee for war relief, and who is a member of the Russian Relief Commission here, said at his home recently that it was not because of the fact that Russia was not in need of American assistance that it had not appealed for relief, but that a silent resignation had been characteristic of Russian sacrifice.

"I have just returned from an eight months' sojourn in Russia," said Mr. Whittemore, "where I visited among the refugees rather than among the civil and military prisoners. The refugees compose a vast horde of humanity who evacuated the west when the country was devastated for military reasons in the early part of the war. This multitude of sufferers are Jews, Poles, Letts, Little Russians, and Lithuanians, and moved in wagons, on foot, and by train, and were months on the march. They moved across Russia toward the Central Governments on the Volga.

"No other nation has had this tremendous problem to solve—the problem of saving the lives of countless human beings. The Russian Government recognizes in these multitudes of nations but one—a nation in want—and it was forced to turn to the Zemstroffs, the provincial unions, for assistance and the organization of help. The Zemstroffs are the mighty national unions which breathe the spirit of the new Russia.

"These city and county unions have established feeding centres on roads and in places of centralization in the heart of Russia, and further east they found lodgment for many of those who were intrusted to their care. It is impossible to say how many millions of people

these Zemstroffs have taken care of, as no record could be taken; this, too, would be an impossibility.

Death Rate Called Terrific.

"Thousands are perishing every day, but in the early part of the war the death rate was terrific. Whole Governments perforce rose to their feet and moved away, like the Nomads or Tartars of old, and wandered over the face of Russia in tremendous clouds. The acute agony of flight is over, but the chronic distress remains. Summer brings its diseases, cholera and others, but the Winter was made terrible by the ravages of typhus, which, in spite of every effort made to curb it, raged frightfully."

"A national committee was formed. It was made up of Jews, Russians, Poles, and representatives of the other nationalities who inhabit Russian territory, and was established to preserve the national life of Russia's great family of nations. The committee was headed by her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Tatiana Nikolaovna, and has been doing wonderful work in sending out tons of clothing and the necessaries of life to the needy. Information bureaus were established so that families, and even towns, which became separated could be located and reunited. A concerted effort was made to hold the horde together, to keep towns and families entire, but despite all this work many thousands were lost when children strayed from their own.

Task Beyond Human Power.

"Hostels were established for children and infants, and it was necessary to crowd all these humans into every available building. Several barracks were built to house from 1,500 to 2,000 people apiece. The refugees were packed in these single sheds, which resembled huge barns or stables, and which were made into double or triple stories. The unions here did their share. They assisted efficiently and honestly in the distribution of food and money, which was given by the Government for feeding and medical aid. Everything possible is being done, but the problem is so gigantic that it is well beyond human handling.

"Russia is rich, and sometimes it is said that she is so rich that she needs no alien help, but she has poured out her money and her men with the utmost prodigality. Silent resignation is characteristic of Russian sacrifice, and if we have not heard the cry of Russia as we have heard the cry of France and Belgium and the other warring nations it is not because the need is not great. The problems of the Summer will have to be met. Adequate bathing facilities are needed before the Winter or that terrible Russian scourge, typhus, will strike once more. I am interested in assisting the bathing and disinfecting schemes—the Japanese method—whereby the war victim's clothes are sterilized while the owner is taking a bath. Thousands have died because of this lack of equipment and the hygienic conditions naturally attendant on getting these people off the roadsides and into their Winter quarters."

Mr. Whittemore said that he would return to Russia in a few months and that he was at present making arrangements in this country for shipments of bathing equipment and sanitary devices for the relief of the war needy in Russia.