

Ela Bauer

## St. Petersburg 1905: The Impressions of a Polish-Jewish Journalist

**Abstract:** During March–April 1905 and from October 1905 until February 1906, Nahum Sokolow (1859–1936), a renowned journalist, editor, Zionist and public figure who lived and was active in Warsaw, stayed in St. Petersburg. During that time he wrote almost every day in his diary about the political meetings he attended and the existence of the city during those crucial moments. Most of the diary is written in Polish, and some parts are written in Hebrew and Yiddish. His notes indicate that he was fully aware of being a witness to significant historical events and saw them as an opportunity to gain some advantages for the Jewish residents of the Russian Empire and for himself. As a result we can learn about the daily life of the city and get a sense of how the political life was conducted in the shadow of the revolution. Although Sokolow was fully aware of the significance of the 1905 events for the entire Russian Empire, he was not aware of the transition that was taking place in the Jewish public sphere. He believed that the old political methods were still relevant and did not realize that a new era in the Jewish political life in the Russian Empire had begun. Sokolow's diary provides an opportunity to learn of the events that took place in St. Petersburg from the perspective of a journalist and political activist who knew the city quite well, but nevertheless remained an outsider.

**Keywords:** Nahum Sokolow, Revolution of 1905, St. Petersburg, Jewish political life in the Russian Empire, Sergei Yulevich Witte, *Ha-tsefirah*, *Der Telegraph*.

Nahum Sokolow (1859–1936), a distinguished Warsaw-based journalist, Zionist activist, and personage, visited St. Petersburg from March to April 1905 and again between October 1905 and February 1906. Given the enormity of the hour, he put aside trying family circumstances back in Warsaw and braved fickle transportation to spend as much time as possible in the Russian capital. During these stays, Sokolow wrote on a near

daily basis about the political meetings he attended and his impressions of daily life in the city. On occasion, the journalist accurately identified moments of historic importance.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Sokolow had amassed three decades of journalism experience and was considered one of East Europe's preeminent Jewish newspaper writers.<sup>1</sup> Sokolow began contributing to *Ha-tsefirah*—the first regularly-published Hebrew-language newspaper in Congress Poland—in August 1880. Within six years, he became co-editor of the paper; and by 1894, he was presiding over the entire operation. Under Sokolow's leadership, *Ha-tsefirah* became the most important Jewish newspaper in Eastern Europe. He also wrote for the Polish-Jewish weekly *Izraelita*. From 1896 to 1902, he concomitantly served as the editor of both periodicals. Throughout this time, Sokolow wrote in Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, English, and German for an array of other Jewish and non-Jewish publications. He was also deeply involved in Warsaw's Jewish community and advanced Jewish causes throughout the Russian Empire. In 1897, Sokolow joined the World Zionist Organization and went on to serve as the president of this body some three decades later.

## Background

In September 1905, an armistice was signed that formally put an end to the Russo-Japanese War. Against the backdrop of the revolutionary disturbances earlier that year, Japan's victory further undermined the social and political stability of the tsar's realms. There is wide consensus among scholars that Bloody Sunday—a demonstration in St. Petersburg earlier that same year (January 22) in which over 400 participants were killed or wounded by the Imperial Guard—marks the beginning of the 1905 Revolution. While this tragedy set off a wave of public gatherings, strikes, and riots throughout the Empire, similar spasms of unrest had transpired beforehand.

A fledgling opposition had already laid down roots in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century. Several political parties and organizations were active throughout this expanse, including the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (the latter of

<sup>1</sup> Josef Wenkert, "Herzl and Sokolow," *Herzl Year Book* 9 (1989), 187.

which subsequently split into the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks). In parallel, a bevy of ideological essays—such as Vladimir Lenin’s “What Is to Be Done?”—caused quite a stir among young people across the Empire and beyond. This tension was only exacerbated by a number of attempts on the lives of political figures. As part of its efforts to douse these flames, the Russian authorities issued the October Manifesto. This edict laid the groundwork for, among other reforms, the establishment of the Russian Duma, which convened its inaugural session in April 1906.

Between Bloody Sunday and the outbreak of the First World War, new social and political organizations emerged on the scene. In the Jewish sphere, the most prominent left-wing force was the Bund—the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (Der Algemeiner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poylin un Rusland). The Bund made inroads not only in proletarian circles, but among Jewish gymnasium students and the intelligentsia. The most formidable right-wing Jewish figure was Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky (1880–1940). Before 1905, Jabotinsky had earned a reputation as a gifted Russian journalist. However, his Jewish popularity was confined to those familiar with the Russian press. Over the course of the Revolution, he increasingly participated in public events. By dint of these activities, Jabotinsky familiarized himself with and became more recognized within the greater Jewish community.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of these actors was generally met with ambivalence and doubts. Though the established leaders of a few Jewish sectors initially believed that the 1905 Revolution would enhance the status of Russian Jews, a subsequent wave of deadly pogroms in various parts of the Empire significantly dampened these hopes.

### In the Halls of Power

Notwithstanding the cornucopia of studies on 1905 (from both Jewish and non-Jewish vantage points),<sup>3</sup> Sokolow’s diary from his aforementioned

<sup>2</sup> For more on these developments, see Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862–1917* (Cambridge, 1981), 134–171. As we shall see, Sokolow commented on Jabotinsky’s public appearances in his diary.

<sup>3</sup> Sidney Samuel Harcave, *First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905* (New York, 1964); Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton, 1976); Solomon M. Schwarz, *The Russian Revolution of 1905: The Workers’ Movement and the Formation of Bolshevism and Menshevism* (Chicago, 1967); Yehuda Slutsky, “Shnat 1905 be-hayehem shel yehudei Rusyah,” *He-avar* 22 (1977), 2–23;

trips to St. Petersburg have yet to be scrutinized. The entries offer an interesting perspective on daily life in the city and its divisive politics amid this turbulent period.

At the time, a government commission was formed to prepare new legislation on the censorship within the Empire.<sup>4</sup> In light of their vast experience with the Russian censors and the government's occasionally excessive demands,<sup>5</sup> the body's chairman, Senator Dmitri F. Kobeko, set up a meeting with Sokolow and Sha'ul Ginsburg (1866–1940), who was the editor of *Der Fraynd* [The Friend]—the first daily Yiddish newspaper in tsarist Russia. At this meeting, Kobeko promised the two writers that his commission would include representatives from the Jewish press.<sup>6</sup>

This commission was not the only motivation behind Sokolow's stay in the capital. *Ha-tsefirah* was then in the midst of a financial crisis that threatened its very existence,<sup>7</sup> and Sokolow was hoping to find a solution among the city's power brokers. What is more, the journalist was interested in obtaining a license for his latest journalistic venture: a Warsaw-based Yiddish weekly known as *Der Telegraph*. While Sokolow had no intention of giving up on *Ha-tsefirah*, his decision to establish *Der Telegraph* attests to the fact that Jews throughout the Russian Empire, especially in Congress Poland, were increasingly warming up to Yiddish, not Hebrew, papers and journals. Furthermore, the government's policy toward Yiddish press was in a state of flux. Until the late 1880s, the Russian authorities only issued licenses to literary organs in this language. However, the government started to take a more lenient approach to informational Yiddish newspapers as

Eliyahu Feldman, "Reports from British Diplomats in Russia on the Participation of the Jews in Revolutionary Activity in North West Russia and the Kingdom of Poland 1905–6," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 3 (1987), 181–203; and id., "Ha-minshar mi-yom 17 be-Oktobor, ha-Rozen Witte veba-she'elah ha-yehudit be-Rusyah," in Shmuel Yavin (ed.), *Sefer Rafael Mahler* (Merhaviva, 1974), 223–237.

<sup>4</sup> Dmitrii Arkadevich Elyashevich elaborates on this particular topic; see Dmitrii Elyashevich, "A Note on the Jewish Press and Censorship during the First Russian Revolution," in Stefani Hoffman, Ezra Mendelsohn (eds.), *The Revolution of 1905 and Russia's Jews* (Philadelphia, 2008), 49.

<sup>5</sup> Nahum Sokolow, "Ha-tsefirah veba-mevakrim mi-ta'am," in Getzel Kressel (ed.), *Be-mar'ot ha-keshet* (Jerusalem, 1960), 207–237. In his book *Mitsukei Erets* (1876), Sokolow wrote that Siberia was unknown to Russians. Furious at him for this remark, the censors forced the journalist to delete it from this work.

<sup>6</sup> Sokolow reported on this meeting for his Hebrew newspaper; see Nahum Sokolow, "Telegramot meyuhadot le-Ha-tsefirah," *Ha-tsefirah* (23 Feb. / 8 Mar. 1905).

<sup>7</sup> For more on *Ha-tsefirah*'s financial woes, see Regina's letter to Sokolow, 23 Mar. 1905, The Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem [henceforth: CZA], A18/box 221 (uncatalogued); Sokolow to Regina, 9 Nov. 1905, CZA, A18/570.

well. Sokolow did not want to be left behind. By dint of his prior efforts to obtain a license for *Ha-tsefirah*, the editor knew that he would have to personally lobby the powers that be in St. Petersburg. As he wrote to his wife Regina, “Anybody can submit a request [to publish a newspaper], but I am working to find channels [through which to close the deal]; to this end, I will have to lodge in St. Petersburg for at least a month.”<sup>8</sup>

Sokolow was no stranger to *fin-de-siècle* St. Petersburg. In fact, he had come a long way since his first trip in 1886, when he lacked a visitor’s permit and barely knew a soul in town.<sup>9</sup> By 1905, the journalist was indeed a *persona grata*, as he was acquainted with “the right people” in both Jewish circles and the halls of government. For instance, Sokolow had an interesting relationship with Sergei Yulevich Witte—the chairman of the Committee of Ministers.<sup>10</sup> As a leading journalist, he had interviewed Witte for *Ha-tsefirah*.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the two had conducted a number of official and unofficial meetings. In the aftermath of Bloody Sunday, Sokolow tried to leverage these ties for the good of the Warsaw Jewish community,<sup>12</sup> first and foremost in areas under the minister’s jurisdiction. A case in point was the Empire’s “Jewish policy.” On this matter, Witte had even informed Sokolow that he believed the Jews’ legal status should be upgraded to the level of all other imperial subjects.

During this period, there were indeed several attempts on the part of the Russian authorities to reconsider the “Jewish question.” A royal prescript from 3 March 1905 called for an elected consultative assembly, under the helm of Count Ignatyev, to resolve this matter. Though the assembly never convened, its very *pronunciamento* led the government to the realization that in order to make progress on this question, it was imperative for such a commission to study the recent history of Jewish political rights and, more generally, freedom of religion both within and outside the tsar’s realms.<sup>13</sup> In any event, several high-level discussions were held in early

<sup>8</sup> Sokolow to Regina, 3 Mar. 1905, CZA, A18/579.

<sup>9</sup> Sokolow to Regina, 26 Jan. / 7 Feb. 1886, CZA, A18/box 37 (uncatalogued).

<sup>10</sup> Established in 1809, this committee served as an advisory board for the emperor on monarchical affairs and for policy introduced by his ministers. A paper tiger throughout its existence, the ministry was terminated in 1905.

<sup>11</sup> Nahum Sokolow, “Siḥah im nesi Va’ad ha-Ministrim,” *Ha-tsefirah* (1/14 and 2/15 Mar. 1905); id., “Sergei Yulevich Witte,” *Ha-tsefirah* (11/24 Aug. 1905).

<sup>12</sup> For more on the Warsaw Jewish community during this period, see Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford, 2012), 117–140.

<sup>13</sup> Nahum Sokolow, “Li-she’elat ha-Yehudim,” *Ha-tsefirah* (8/21 Aug. 1905).

1905 by various powerful committees on whether Jews should be allowed to vote in elections for the proposed constitutional assembly and whether the Russian government should promote Jewish equality.<sup>14</sup>

Sokolow was involved in these efforts. According to his diary, the journalist was the one who seeded the idea of collecting material on Jewish civil rights in Witte's mind. In addition, he offered to carry out this study for the committee.<sup>15</sup> Witte, however, did not immediately embrace this plan, and there was uncertainty with respect to its funding.

Another of Sokolow's political contacts was Prince Mikhail M. Andronikov, who is referred to in the diary as "A." The diary suggests that the latter was quite confident this relationship would improve his chances of securing a new political position and would advance Sokolow's own agenda. However, the prince's aspirations ultimately came to naught. Witte remarked in his own memoirs that he never trusted Andronikov nor considered him the right candidate for the job that the prince wanted.<sup>16</sup> In any case, Andronikov was involved in Sokolow and Witte's negotiations over the fact-finding mission.

From the time and effort invested on their relationship, it seems as though Sokolow initially believed that Witte would serve as minister much longer than he eventually did and that the count indeed had the capacity to improve the standing of Russian Jewry. It is quite evident from the diary, though, that the journalist was aware of the count's problems.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the latter was far from a "safe bet." Be that as it may, Sokolow never missed an opportunity, be it solid or flimsy, to advance the interests of the Warsaw Jewish community. It also bears noting that a couple of diary entries reveal that his information on the events unfolding in St. Petersburg was not always accurate.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day* (Philadelphia, 1920), 3: 121–123; Hans Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-Wing Politics in Imperial Russia* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1986), 84–86; Feldman, "Haminshar mi-yom 17 be-Oktober," 223–237.

<sup>15</sup> Ela Bauer assays Sokolow's efforts to collect material on Jewish civil rights in the United States as well as Central and Western Europe; see Ela Bauer, "A Polish Jew and a Project for Jewish Emancipation in the Russian Empire: Nahum Sokolow and Count S. I. Witte, 1905–1906," *Gal-Ed* 15–16 (1997), 65–82.

<sup>16</sup> Sergei Yulevich Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (Garden City–Toronto, 1921), 487.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Sokolow's journal entry from 29 Oct. / 11 Nov. 1905, CZA, A18/box 75 (uncatalogued).

When he deemed it necessary, Sokolow turned to different Zionist leaders for help on Russian-Jewish affairs.<sup>18</sup> Though cognizant of the fact that the latter were angling to exploit the chaos of the Revolution in order to bolster their movement's standing among the Empire's Jews, he also believed that these figures were sympathetic to the plight of this same populace. The journalist had a sense for which Zionist figures were amenable to such requests and indeed capable of lending a hand.

In his diary, Sokolow depicted a wide range of Jewish political activists as well as representatives of other socio-ethnic groups, such as the proletariats and the members of the Polish delegation. All of these elements sought to lobby Russian officials. To this end, they organized public events to air their demands. That said, the writer was by and large unimpressed by these figures' assertions or their wherewithal to articulate them.<sup>19</sup>

Sokolow's attitude concerning the prospects of the Revolution fluctuated. Skeptical at the outset, he subsequently reversed course a number of times. The journalist was indeed enthusiastic about various liberal developments that were sparked by the events of 1905. For instance, he revelled in the debut of uncensored newspapers in St. Petersburg.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Sokolow was consistently impressed by the "heroic" involvement of Jews. If nothing else, he believed that their actions had burnished the Jewish people's reputation. While the writer kept his distance from radical circles and maintained political relatively conservative views (to the point of being accused of opportunism every now and again), he took pride in those Jews who contributed to the insurgency

Sokolow did clamor for a handful of legal reforms aimed at expanding democracy and freedom throughout the Russian Empire. By the end of 1905, he came to the conclusion that the Romanovs were on their last legs and that the situation in the capital would deteriorate even further. At one and the same, he agreed to work for Witte's commission and, by extension, the tsar. For this reason, and not the state's fragile political situation, a handful of Jewish communities refused to cooperate with him on the "emancipation project." The drama in the capital was also a boon to the journalist's personal interests. He reported on breaking developments for *Ha-tsefirah* and *Der Telegraph*, the latter of which was already on newsstands

<sup>18</sup> See his diary from 3 and 9 Nov. 1905, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> 6 Dec. 1905, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> 18/31 Oct. 1905, *ibid.*

and indeed prospering by the end of 1905.<sup>21</sup> Lastly, Sokolow realized that he would be able to use his journalistic instincts as well as connections with editors of various European Jewish periodicals, such as the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, to write for these same outlets about developments in Russia. The same can also be said for non-Jewish papers that did not have correspondents in St. Petersburg, like the *New York Journal* and *The Times* of London. Sokolow's byline did not accompany most of his stories for foreign news outlets. Therefore, he could report freely on events without having to worry about the imperial censor or backlash from the Russian authorities. Nevertheless, the journalist took further precautions, eschewing the local postal service and sending his letters and reports with train conductors. What with *Ha-tsefirah's* financial problems, these assignments constituted a major source of income for the Sokolows.<sup>22</sup>

During his stay in the capital, Sokolow got a feel for the impact of the Revolution on the city's *hoi polloi*. Notwithstanding the public transportation strikes, demonstrations, and shortages in medicine and other goods, life continued with only minor inconveniences during the early stages of the insurrection. The journalist tied this to the lack of cooperation on the part of the middle class, the bourgeoisie, and the merchants with the revolutionary movements.<sup>23</sup> Sokolow's diary illustrates how people found creative ways to deal with the instability. By the end of 1905, though, he complained that it was becoming ever more difficult to maintain one's daily routine.

As the diary reveals, Sokolow was fully cognizant of the fact that he was bearing witness to historic events. "I absorbed impressions like a sponge," he wrote to his wife in October 1905. "One day I will write and tell."<sup>24</sup> Regardless of whether the journalist was commenting on serious political developments or his own private affairs, many of the entries were jotted down in haste and kept to an absolute minimum. Given his expansive journalistic writing style, this terseness most likely indicates that the diary served as raw material for future articles.<sup>25</sup>

Following a host of delays, Sokolow was finally granted a formal mandate by Witte in December 1905 to prepare an in-depth report on

<sup>21</sup> Sokolow to Regina, 9 Dec. 1905, CZA, A18/579.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Sokolow's diary, 18 Nov. 1905, CZA, A18/box 75 (uncatalogued).

<sup>24</sup> Sokolow to Regina, Oct. 1905, CZA, A18/579.

<sup>25</sup> This hypothesis is strengthened by the content of a letter to his wife from Oct. 1905, CZA, A18/579.



the legal status of Jews in different countries. In several communications from around this time, the journalist described this undertaking as an official mission on behalf of the Russian executive branch and the Duma.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter, he briefly returned to Warsaw and stopped publishing *Ha-tsefirah*.<sup>27</sup> In early 1906, he travelled to various European countries for the sake of collecting information on Jewish civil rights. Much to his dismay, though, a large share of the Jewish communities was unwilling to cooperate with him on this project. If this were not enough, Witte was no longer in a position of influence and thus unable to put the fruit of Sokolow's labor to any use.<sup>28</sup> In retrospect, 1906 marked the end of the east-European chapter in the writer's life.

In sum, the diary under review sheds light on the events in St. Petersburg that triggered the 1905 Revolution from the perspective of a journalist and political activist who knew his way around the city, but was an outsider all the same. Sokolow's entries also open a window onto daily life in the capital and the way politics was conducted during this chaotic period. What is more, his entries touch on how the "new actors" on the Jewish stage pushed aside the "old." Despite Sokolow's insurrection descriptions of these changes and his awareness of the overall significance of the Revolution, he was somewhat tone-deaf with respect to developments in the Jewish public sphere. In many respects, Sokolow believed that the old methods were still operative and was blind to the fact that a new era in Jewish politics was underway.

### Diary Entries in the Shadow of Insurrection

In the pages that follow, we will display select excerpts from Sokolow's diary entries that were recorded during his stay in St. Petersburg amid the 1905 Revolution. The journal is part of Sokolow's personal literary estate, which is housed at the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. Though the collection has been in the repository's possession for many years, the diary and other items have yet to be catalogued. Most of the entries are in Polish, whereas a few sections are in Hebrew and Yiddish. Since all the entries come from 1905, we omit the year in the following records.

<sup>26</sup> Sokolow to David Alexander and Claude Montefiore, 4 Apr. 1906, CZA, A18/713.

<sup>27</sup> This turn of events is examined in Bauer, "A Polish Jew," 73–82.

<sup>28</sup> For a disquisition on the various reactions of European communities to Sokolow's mission, see *ibid.*, 65–82.

### 5 March

I am going to St. Petersburg in the company of an old general and another citizen who is probably an administrator of some kind. We sat in the train wagon discussing and analyzing the latest events.<sup>29</sup>

### 6 March

I arrived in Petersburg. Rappoport and Prilutski were waiting for me at the train station.<sup>30</sup> Rappoport took me to his place. I heard a lot of political and non-political gossip. The situation is very interesting. A vehicle with first aid stands ready at every street corner. In the morning we went to the editorial board of *Der Fraynd*.<sup>31</sup> We had a discussion about the commission.<sup>32</sup> I am extremely exhausted.

### 16 October

Ever since the revolutionary events began, I have not written a thing. There has been too much news, too many things going on, and too much information. Today is the fifth day of the railroad strike and the third day of the revolution in Petersburg. Today Trepov published an announcement stating the pharmacies where one can [still] purchase medical supplies. There are many rumors of all kind.<sup>33</sup> Someone said that Trepov was killed. Yesterday I heard other rumors that the navy revolted in the Black Sea and that the minister was killed. In Kharkiv, a temporary government was established and Moscow is under fire. It seems to me that none of these rumors will prove to be true. The power of the strike will decline and everything will return to normal.

### 17 October

Yesterday Baron Günzburg (the old one) came to see me. I was out of the hotel, so he left me a card with a note in Hebrew. He wants to meet me. Yesterday I accompanied Elkon and Adler; they took advantage of their last chance and left for Stockholm. Yesterday evening Prince Andrei [i.e.,

<sup>29</sup> The topic of their conversation was, perhaps, the general strike in Warsaw.

<sup>30</sup> Sokolow might be referring to Shloyme Rappoport—the author and political activist widely known as S. An-ski (1863–1920). The second figure, Tsvi Prilutski (1862–1942), was a writer and political activist.

<sup>31</sup> *Der Fraynd* was the first daily Yiddish newspaper to come out in tsarist Russia.

<sup>32</sup> Against this backdrop, Sha'ul Ginsburg, the editor of *Der Fraynd*, and Sokolow were probably getting ready for a meeting with Senator Dmitri F. Kobeko—head of the governmental commission in question.

<sup>33</sup> Dmitri Trepov (1850–1906) was the governor of St. Petersburg and the assistant minister of the interior. In the latter capacity, he was in charge of the Russian police.

Mikhail Andronikov] came to see me. He told me about a meeting of the proletariat's delegation with Witte. Today I visited Baron G. [Günzburg], but he was planning to leave the house. He speaks decent Hebrew and invited me to return to his house at 2:30. Duke A. gave me pamphlets that were written by someone named Laurence.<sup>34</sup> They are awful, antisemitic tracts. I will try to copy them. I received a wire from home. A new issue of *Der Telegraph* came out. I sent a wire to *The Times* and to Walling.<sup>35</sup> The situation here is dark. We are biding our time.

Duke A. has perhaps already raised the idea of the committee drafting a legal proposition on the matter of Warsaw, but the committee has yet to do a thing about it. During our meeting, he received several booklets, including one that is devoted to the laws in Russia. He wants to study the issue, including the Jewish Question. At the end of our meeting we talked about Slonimski, who . . . tutored him in mathematics. I talked with him about the Old Guy.<sup>36</sup>

### 18/31<sup>37</sup> October

Today was a big day for freedom in Petersburg. At 1:30 last night, when I was in bed, Hirschfeld came . . . and told me that a new manifesto has been published. I got up and together we went to send a wire [dispatching the news]. I spent most of the day in the city watching the demonstrations. Everyone said that the demonstrations will continue tomorrow.

### 19 October

Today the reactionaryism began. Red flags are forbidden. I wrote to Witte about the project overseas.<sup>38</sup> I met Dimitry Nerskin, a very nice and intelligent person. We had a very interesting talk about all the events leading up to the manifesto's release, Nikolai Nikolaevich's arrival from the Tula district, and the arrival of the labor leader Otokov. We also discussed

<sup>34</sup> "Prince A." or "Prince Andrei" is none other than Prince M. M. Andronikov. Albeit less frequently, the diary also refers to him as "Duke A." or, simply, "the prince."

<sup>35</sup> William E. Walling, an American social reformer, was the one that connected Sokolow with English-language newspapers.

<sup>36</sup> In many of his personal notes and letters, Sokolow called Hayim Zelig Slonimski (1810–1904), the founder and first editor of *Ha-tsefirah*, "the Old Guy." A mutual acquaintance of Andronikov and Sokolow, he may have paved the way for the cooperation between the two.

<sup>37</sup> This is the only instance in Sokolow's diary that he used both the Gregorian and Julian calendars, which he probably did in order to highlight the significance of this date.

<sup>38</sup> Sokolow is referring to the above-mentioned fact-finding mission on Jewish civil rights.

the Jewish Question. In the evening, Adler came to my place. I received a telegram from Warsaw informing me of the chaos there.<sup>39</sup>

### 20 October

Anipa visited me in the morning. I showed him the antisemitic tracts that I received from Prince Andrei. The author of one of the pamphlets is Kolofskavi. His pamphlet was printed at the press of the Interior Ministry; it is rather silly.

I had quite a long meeting with Baron Günzburg. He complained about Jewish radicalism. More than once, he repeated the adage: “Don’t take on more than you can chew.”<sup>40</sup> I told him about the talks I had with Witte, and he told me about his talks with Alexander III of Russia in 1894 and the talks he had with the current tsar.

### 3 November

The situation in the city remains the same. There is a great deal of information about pogroms and many rumors about anti-Jewish propaganda. I myself heard many anti-Jewish speeches and slogans in the street, such as “The Jews will be sorry.” Others speak of a connection between the Jews and the Blacks.<sup>41</sup> They do not understand that a majority of the people identify with the Blacks.

I received a telegraph from Warsaw informing me of provocations and pogroms.<sup>42</sup> They asked me if it is possible that Witte will be sending a telegram to the governor of Warsaw.<sup>43</sup> I sent a telegram to Witte and to Trepov. I met with Baron Günzburg and David (his son). They approved of all of my activities. I also wired [Paul] Nathan in Berlin.<sup>44</sup> Late at night,

<sup>39</sup> For a closer look at reactions in Warsaw—both Jewish and otherwise—to the October Manifesto, see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 130–135.

<sup>40</sup> The original, Hebrew entry reads *tafasta merubeh – lo tafasta*.

<sup>41</sup> Short for the Black Hundreds, this ultranationalist Russian organization supported the Romanov Dynasty and opposed the revolutionaries. Though the Blacks were involved in a few pogroms, some observers claimed that the group was connected to the Jews.

<sup>42</sup> Ury expands on Warsaw’s anti-Jewish riots in October 1905; see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 130–135. For an in-depth look at the pogroms throughout the Empire, see Robert Weinberg, “Workers, Pogroms and the 1905 Revolution in Odessa,” *Russian Review* 46 (1987), 53–75.

<sup>43</sup> In Ury’s estimation, rumors about pending attacks swirled through the Warsaw Jewish community throughout the month of October 1905. Police patrols were indeed deployed in various parts of the city in an effort to protect Jews. It stands to reason that Sokolow had a hand in this increased vigilance.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Nathan (1857–1927) was a German-Jewish journalist and politician. What is more, he ran the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*—a philanthropy that supported Jewish communities in Eastern Europe and Palestine.

Prince A. came to see me. He complained about Witte, who he believes will not do a thing since he lacks the requisite power and [merely] flatters the mighty.

#### **4 November**

Today, uncensored newspapers are coming of the press in Petersburg for the first time; it is such a pleasure to read them. Everyone is afraid of the violence that will erupt tomorrow when the victims' funerals are held.

#### **5 November**

Today I received a slew of letters and wires. I got an answer from Berlin regarding the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden* [Aid Association of German Jews]<sup>45</sup> and a telegram from home. Yesterday there was a meeting of the Jewish protection organization. The organizers . . . are Zionists. The Jewish union is against the organization, for wherever the Jewish protection organization was active in the provinces, there were many Jewish victims.

#### **6 November**

I had a horrible day today. I did not get any news. I sent a long wire to Nathan in Berlin and wrote a feuilleton in jargon [i.e., Yiddish].<sup>46</sup> In the evening Rivkin dropped by.<sup>47</sup> The political situation is very complicated. Prince A. will probably get a job in Witte's government. I have not received any new news [*sic!*] or information for the past two days.

#### **7 November**

Late last night Prince A. arrived with good news. He did not get the position in Witte's government, but informed me about the list of new ministers that Witte has nominated; they have a much more liberal bent. Witte asked him if I am still in Petersburg. Baron Günzburg came to Witte's office today, but did not meet him. I worked quite a bit today. I sent long telegrams and am preparing a very big speech. I received a wire from Nathan. He asked me to send detailed information via telegraph. Witte informed me, via [Prince] A., that he wired Warsaw an update stating that the area is no longer outside the district.<sup>48</sup> I sent an urgent telegram to Warsaw on this matter. The political situation today is better than yesterday. I received

<sup>45</sup> For more on the *Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden*, see the note above.

<sup>46</sup> This feuilleton was intended for *Der Telegraph*.

<sup>47</sup> Ya'akov Eliyahu Rivkin was a Jewish, St. Petersburg-based businessman.

<sup>48</sup> In other words, the government was responding to the demonstrations in Warsaw; see Ury, *Barricades and Banners*, 136–137.

a wire from home. I will try to get some financial backing for *Ha-tsefirah* and try to return home earlier. The list of the deceased from Warsaw put me in a terrible mood. Prince A. promised to come, but as usual did not keep his promise.

### **8 November**

I sent a lecture to Warsaw on the political situation and the Jewish Question. I asked them to forward the lecture to Berlin. I am sending wires to Berlin; however, I did not receive any reimbursement yet. At home in Warsaw there is more and more trouble.<sup>49</sup>

### **9 November**

I got a letter from Wolffsohn in Berlin.<sup>50</sup> Several Zionists have gathered there and asked for information. They are interested in knowing what I think about the whole situation. I informed them of all my activities so far. I advised them to arrange mass meetings, wire protests, and join other Jewish organizations. They should ask Nordau to write something and Margulies to launch propaganda activity.<sup>51</sup> Yesterday I received a wire from the *Jewish Chronicle*; they asked me to send them a report of 100 words on the Jewish situation. I replied that in order to write a proper report, it would have to be about 200 words. I asked for ten pounds. They asked me to send these requests in writing. Nathan sent me the money, and I wrote a long article, which I sent to him in Berlin via Warsaw. The German press is brimming with [my] wires . . .

### **10 November**

I received a wire from home informing me that I can stay here longer. It seems that there is a train strike [in Warsaw]. Chaos is rampant throughout the country.

### **11 November**

Last night the prince . . . brought me an invitation to a meeting with Witte today at 11:30. The entire meeting [with Witte] took approximately an hour and a half. During our meeting Witte received a message that Grand Duke Nikolay was on his way to see him. He asked me to move to another

<sup>49</sup> It stands to reason that Sokolow is alluding to his family's economic problems.

<sup>50</sup> David Wolffsohn (1856–1914), a Lithuanian-Jewish businessman, was the second president of the World Zionist Organization.

<sup>51</sup> Max Nordau (1849–1923) was a prominent Zionist figure and renowned European author, while Emil Margulies (1877–1943) was a lawyer and Zionist leader.

room. I sat there until the grand duke left. From [the tone of] the voices I managed to hear, I guess that their conversation was rather gloomy. Witte said more than once, "I cannot agree with this. How can I take something like that on myself? We should let others suffer a little too." From what I could hear, I understood that the duke had some information from the [tsar's] court, which is challenging Witte and his reforms. After the grand duke left, Witte invited me to his room. I noticed that he was angry. He walked restlessly about the room. I talked about the pogroms and my connections with the American and English press. At the end of the meeting we argued about my demands. But after the argument he apologized and said goodbye in a very affectionate manner. During our meeting, he talked on the phone with the minister of the interior regarding some changes that they have to make in the Odessa district. After my meeting with Witte, I went to see Prince A. I reported everything to him. I talked a great deal about the pogrom, and he briefed me on the situation in Warsaw and Kiev. In the evening, I talked with Herzfeld—it was a long night. We talked about the Jewish situation in Petersburg. They confirmed that a local pogrom is imminent. From Warsaw I received a wire that set me at ease. Today I also got the new issue of *Der Telegraph* in the mail.<sup>52</sup>

### 12 November

Today I wrote to Baron Günzburg, asking him for material about the pogroms. He sent me some material that I can copy and use. I spent the whole day working on this material. I wrote an article for *Der Telegraph*. I received a telegram from Wolffsohn about the steps he took in Rome, Carlsberg, and London. The results are already noticeable.

### 13 November

Today I worked for quite some time. I wrote for *Der Telegraph*. I received a great deal of information from home. *Der Telegraph* is a successful undertaking. Last Friday, we sold 12,000 copies. But I am depressed about the vicious edict abrogating all rights and privileges and putting the entire kingdom [Kingdom of Poland] under martial law. I am terrified that the revolution is about to begin in earnest. I received official word from the

<sup>52</sup> At this juncture, Sokolow was arduously searching for ways to attain an official license for *Der Telegraph*. He also continued to write for the Yiddish daily, but the prolonged stay in the Russian capital forced him to delegate his editorial responsibilities for the paper to others.

minister that the chances that Jews will be allowed to purchase land are unrealistic. I continued to work on my notes.

### **16 November**

I received a letter and telegram from Dr. Romansk in Warsaw with information concerning a proposal to cease transferring money to Russia until the country decides to grant equal rights to the Jews. In another telegram, Dr. Goldfam told me that many in Warsaw believe that the Russian authorities will take cruel economic measures. There [in Warsaw] they are unaware of the entire situation.<sup>53</sup> Today Alexander III spoke about Drugov, who was recently nominated to be minister of the interior. The tsar found out that Drugov saw missives that were intended for the American consul. This caused a scandal; the whole situation is horrible. The reactionaryism is spreading. I am concerned that the writing style in *Der Telegraph* is too provocative.

### **17 November**

Today there was another strike because of the Polish problem.<sup>54</sup> The mood here is quite subdued. I had a meeting with Polak, Rothschild's representative in Moscow, regarding the Jewish Question.

### **18 November**

The strike continues. I did not receive any letters from Warsaw. I spent a very nice evening with Prince A. and some Polish people. The Poles said that they wanted to meet with me about Russian Jewry and the strike in the educational systems. We began to talk about Russian Jewry. The Poles do not understand why the Jews insist on speaking in Russian. Malsevski conveyed the position of the *szlachta* [Polish nobility]. Jabotinsky said that this is a superficial position and that Malsevski is [mostly] acquainted with people from the old generation. Malsevski complained about Jews from Wołyń and Bessarbia. He believes that they are all crooks. Jabotinsky disagreed with him. In addition, he said that Malsevski is only acquainted with wealthy people and they are thieves, but this is also true of Catholics. We discussed revolutionary Jews [i.e., those participating in the 1905

<sup>53</sup> This entry is alluding to the negotiations between the Rothschilds and the Russian government over loans. The Jewish banking dynasty, among others, viewed these loans as an opportunity to pressure the tsar on the Jewish Question. For more on this episode, see Eliyahu Feldman, "The Rothschilds and the Russian Loans—High Finance and Jewish Solidarity," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 10 (1994), 231–256.

<sup>54</sup> The diary fails to mention where this strike was held.



Revolution] as well. I told them stories about the courage of the Jewish revolutionaries. No doubt the revolutionary Jews changed the way in which non-Jews look upon Jews. We spoke about other issues that pertain to Congress Poland. Jabotinsky is a radical conservative. Malsevski told me very interesting things about Witte, whom he has known for almost 30 years. He knows Witte's good sides and bad sides. During the hostilities [with Japan], Witte backed the idea of granting a leasing license for the river at Port Arthur, but he was against the [Russo-Japanese] War. After all, he was the one that built the Manchuria Railway, which required army protection and every soldier cost 600 rubles a year. Malsevski was aware of everything, as he was the one who had transferred the money. Once he even told Witte, "Sir, it is your duty, it is your moral obligation [to clarify to the tsar the costs involved in maintaining a rail line], even if you lose your job." However, Witte turned him down. This is one of several negative Russian characteristics. They have a tendency to try and catch several rabbits at once. Another of their bad habits is that they give with one hand and take with the other. Malsevski had an interesting remark about the Rothschilds. He noted that whenever they can, either directly or indirectly, the Rothschilds engage with the Jewish Question. They say, "You see, we are representing Jews. Whether it is right or wrong, we have to take care of them." The old man talked about other issues, important and less so. At 1:00 a.m., the prince called for me. I went to his place. We made some plans to advance the issue of equal rights for the Jews. The idea is that the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich would impose a different and complicated solution. Prince A. is very mad at Witte and the whole military situation. As far as can be seen, all the events that occurred on Saturday affected him. While I was there, a messenger of the grand duke arrived with recommendations from the tsar, who was [once] a powerful ruler, but at the end of the day—an opportunist.

### **19 November**

I worked on my notes all day long. From Warsaw, I received a very sad telegram informing of the restrictions on selling newspapers. Rivkin was at my place and explained to me that it was decreed that only book stores and stationary shops would be allowed to sell newspapers.<sup>55</sup> I informed Warsaw of this [restriction]. Prince A. was at Witte's, but did not meet with him. There are public meetings around the clock. In the city, people

<sup>55</sup> Rivkin was involved in the publishing business.

are saying that martial law has been imposed throughout the whole town. Nonetheless, it seems as though Witte is in a good mood. In the evening I went to a Polish meeting that was organized by the relevant organizations. They are very angry at the government. I did not stay to the end. However, Prof. Rasov made a huge impression on me, and Michał Bergson is here with the Polish delegation, along with Attorney Levi from Piotrków.<sup>56</sup>

### 20 November

I spent the entire day working. The city is quiet; everyone is waiting. All the workers in the city are on strike. However, the impact of the strike is practically unfelt, for the city's residents—the merchants and the bourgeoisie—are not participating in the strike. The backing of these social sectors for the revolutionary sectors [in St. Petersburg] is lower than the backing of these sectors in Warsaw. No periodicals other than official publications and the *Voice of the People* are allowed to be published. The city's military administrator released a statement condemning the workers that forced others to strike. The ministers of war and the navy (armada) were fired. Prince A. received a letter from W. [Witte] mentioning my name. Prince A. might come over? But it is almost midnight and he has yet to arrive. I met Mr. Michał Bergson. We had a short, diplomatic conversation, nothing more than that.<sup>57</sup>

### 21 November

Today is Sunday. I did not leave the hotel because of the weather. I'm waiting for Prince A. General Skolov paid a visit; he was wearing his uniform. He was here for over an hour and a half. We talked about the political situation. I proved to him that the revolution is just, that there is an urgent need for a full-fledged constitution. He is in favor of a strong ruling [hand]; in any event, he advocated his position in an intelligent manner. He believes that most of the Russian people would not be able to live without the tsar. Moreover, if a republic were to be decided upon, it would not last long, for reactionaryism would soon follow. The unsettled people would undermine the republic. He believes that there are a number of rules underpinning the way in which different people live and that there is nothing one can do about this. I rejected his opinions. I defended the idea

<sup>56</sup> The Bergsons were one of the most influential families in Warsaw's progressive Jewish circles; and Michał Bergson (1831–1919) headed the city's Jewish community from 1896 to 1918.

<sup>57</sup> A later entry reveals why this conversation never got off the ground.

of freedom and showed him that the military state of affairs is awful. The conversation was very interesting. The general made an excellent impression. He is a sympathetic old man with highly refined manners. I promised to visit him and to try and make peace between him and the prince [A.] who has left him on the outside looking in for refusing to sign the petition.

## 22 November

Today the trains began to run [again]; the strike is over. I received a few letters from home and several issues of *Ha-tsefirah* and *Der Telegraph*.<sup>58</sup> I got a wire from Nathan [in Berlin];<sup>59</sup> he will arrive later this week. He paid for the telegram, but not the full price. I also received a very odd letter from Zeidman; apparently there is some sort of conspiracy against me. Someone sent Bergson a wire asking him to foil my plans. I wrote a long screed to Golflam about promoting the issue of equal rights. At home, they are mired in financial crises, [and] the political situation in Warsaw is catastrophic. Additionally, Prince A. has continued to keep me waiting.

## 24 November

There is still no final decision concerning the project.<sup>60</sup> We did not receive the budgetary support . . . I went to the prince [A.] and reported everything to him. He will give it another shot with Witte. Afterwards, I attended a public meeting. The majority of the participants were Jewish; Gruzenberg, Jabotinsky, and Verten spoke.<sup>61</sup> Jabotinsky's speech was Zionist in spirit. Many disagreed with him. The terrifying tone of his speech is irritating. A victim from the pogroms was there. Young Seidman returned from the provinces; the Jews there are not taking part in the revolution. At the end of the meeting, there was a religious parade and they sang "God Save the Tsar." The elder Seidman is very optimistic. He believes that the revolution will solve all the [empire's] problems.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> This detail indicates that these items were sent via train conductors, in lieu of the postal service.

<sup>59</sup> Sokolow had already been contributing on an anonymous basis to the *Jewish Chronicle*—an English-Jewish weekly—since 1903.

<sup>60</sup> This is referring to the fact-finding mission to Europe and the United States on Jewish emancipation.

<sup>61</sup> Oscar Osipovich Gruzenberg (1866–1940) was a Jewish attorney who defended revolutionaries and striking workers. Furthermore, he spared no effort advancing Russian Jewry's struggle for equal rights.

<sup>62</sup> Arnold Seidman was a member of the editorial board at *Voskhod*—a Russian-language Jewish journal that came out in St. Petersburg between 1881 and 1906.

**1 December**

Today I waited and did some journalistic work. The prince [A.] stopped by, before proceeding to Witte. To some extent, these developments buoyed my hopes. Everything is quiet in the city. There is a postal and telegraph strike.

**2 December**

Today I spent some time in a meeting of delegations from sundry nations. This gathering appreciably heightened my curiosity. I went there with Jabotinsky and came back with Ussishkin.<sup>63</sup> Jabotinsky delivered a remarkable speech. Less impressive was the speech given by Brodeny, who was followed by Trotsky. I heard one Jew ask his friend something and the friend answered him in Yiddish that “Any *drekh* [Yiddish for “crap”] is worth it for freedom.” There are people who prefer to shut their eyes and think that the world does not exist. In the evening, I waited for Prince A. It is almost 1:30 a.m. and he has yet to arrive.

**5 December**

I returned home after attending a public meeting at a hostel. I gave a speech in jargon and Jabotinsky delivered a wonderful speech. I [then] visited the prince. Freiman was at my place. There is still hope. Walling arrived in town today, and I met with Natanson.<sup>64</sup>

**6 December**

Today I spent the entire day at a meeting of the Jewish organization in the home of Mr. Beack, who publishes a Russian newspaper. There were many wonderful speeches. However, none of them offered any new content.

**10 December**

I got an update from Freiman. I have still not decided if I will stay or go. The prince told me that Sampoch arrived with a delegation of peasants and millions of signatures. The first demand in their petition is to get rid of Witte.

**14 December**

Today I met with Gorky. I reported on the meeting with him to *Ha-tsefirah* and sent the piece with the conductors.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Born in Belarus, Menahem Ussishkin (1863–1941) was an outspoken Zionist leader who settled in Palestine soon after the First World War.

<sup>64</sup> A leading socialist figure, Mark Andreyevich Natanson (1851–1919), was repeatedly exiled for his revolutionary activity over the course of his career.

<sup>65</sup> Nahum Sokolow, “Siḥah im Gorky,” *Ha-tsefirah* (5–6/18–19 Dec. 1905).

**15 December**

The censor confiscated all the opposition newspapers due to the publication of the manifesto “The Revolutionaries are Marching Forward.”

**17 December**

Today I visited Baron David Günzburg and shared all the plans for the journey with him.<sup>66</sup> He supports it. He is organizing a meeting at his place which will include Freiman, Berlin from Riga, Pozner, and several other people. Later on, I was with Walling at Witte’s. Witte was very nervous. He threatened the Jews and said that they must support the tsar. I tried to defend my position in no uncertain terms. In the end, he admitted that some reforms are essential. He even said that there would be some reforms and that the people’s council will be called into session. He asked me when I am going abroad; I told him that it would be soon. Much to my horror, I found out this evening that a railroad strike is planned for next Thursday. This will force me to leave early; however, since the program is getting underway, I have to remain.

**18 December**

The reactionaryism continued, with newspaper closures and arrests. Today I finished an article for Walling.<sup>67</sup> I had a meeting with the prince. He promised me a mountain full of gold. At the same time, though, he is mad at me because I went to see Witte and Walling without telling him.

**20 December**

Dreadful day! No news from Warsaw; I wrote to the prince. The political situation is not clear in the least. The reactionaryism will probably continue for several more weeks. It is obvious that the regime is nearing its end. Bankruptcy is inevitable. The value of the ruble is falling every day. Walling met with Gorky, and Gorky promised Walling that he would write an article for America entitled “My Poor Witte.”

**21 December**

Freiman was here; we spoke a great deal about the fact that Berlin was here but left because he was afraid of the strike. Polak did not come, so nothing happened. We will go to the baron [David Günzburg] and the

<sup>66</sup> This trip was dedicated to collecting material on Jewish civil rights in other parts of Europe.

<sup>67</sup> This article was slated for the *New York Journal*. Also see Sokolow’s letter to Regina, 9 Dec. 1905.

decision [about the fact-finding mission] will be made there. The prince was here. He came from Witte; he told me that Witte has received a mandate [in all likelihood, to proceed with the mission]. I received an urgent cable from home asking me to return at once. I updated them regarding the latest news from here. I do not know if it will be safe to take the train to Warsaw. I sent a package to Warsaw, but I doubt it will arrive.<sup>68</sup> Walling got permission to be the representative of the journalists at the labor meetings.

### **23 December**

Today I was with Walling at Trade Minister Inirian's office. Apologizing for a lecture that he had to give, Inirian asked me to come early tomorrow at ten o'clock in the morning. I decided to leave tomorrow on the express train. I am not calm. The strike in the city is being handled poorly, so that there is a chance that it will not succeed. Tomorrow I am leaving.

*Ela Bauer*  
Kibbutzim College Tel Aviv  
elabau@gmail.com

<sup>68</sup> To the best of our knowledge, his uncertainty stemmed from the fact that the package was sent via the post.