



SERGEI ELISEEV: THE TIMID REVOLUTIONARY

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Revolutionary politics and weightlifting are rarely joined in the same individual, especially when the athlete is from a repressive regime, but sometimes men are forced to act by circumstances. Such was the case with Sergei Eliseev, an extraordinary athlete who opposed the cruel authority of the Russian Czar and paid dearly for his actions. In one of the ironies that history often displays, this gentle revolutionary was fated to survive the excesses of one tyrant only to fall victim to another.

We know little of Eliseev's life, but a few facts can be pieced together. For instance, we know that Sergei Ivanovich Eliseev was born in 1876 in Ufa, the capital of Bashkiria, a mountainous region in the remote southern Urals of European Russia. His father, Ivan Grigorevich, was a massive, tall man who served as a cook to a certain General Kazarinov.¹ Since the elder Eliseev wore a long, forked beard, he was almost certainly an "Old Believer" or *Starouobryadez* [or *Staroveri*], a Russian Orthodox religious sect that clung to old rituals and religious practices.² It was apparently thanks to his father that both Sergei and his elder brother Alexander began training with weights.³

Despite the dearth of biographical information, there is one telling incident from Eliseev's youth which indicates his growing prowess as a strongman and a wrestler. There was an annual Bashkiri festival called *Sabantuy*.⁴ This consisted of a number of cultural and sporting events, but the most important parts were the tournaments of Bashkiri national wrestling known as *Kurash*.⁵ A tall, strong and experienced Bashkiri wrestler named Habdrahman Salikhov was winning most of the matches that day, and he was heartily cheered on by the audience which consisted mostly of Tartars, Bashkirs and other Moslem nationalities. It was clear from the reaction of the crowd that Salikhov was the local favorite. At one point the mighty Bashkir issued a challenge to anyone in the crowd who might come up and try to defeat him. Much to everyone's sur-

prise, Sergei accepted the wrestler's offer; this was all the more remarkable to the audience because of the great discrepancy in the size of the two rivals. At a height of five feet six inches, Eliseev was much the smaller and younger of the two.⁶

What he lacked in size, Sergei made up for in strength and skill, and he surprised everyone by winning the first fight. The audience began to protest—after all their favorite had been beaten—and even the referee bowed to the will of the crowd since he failed to declare Sergei Ivanovich the winner. Finally, a compromise was reached: the two men would fight again after a half hour's rest.

At the start of the new match, Habdrahman Salikhov attempted to use some usually effective holds, but Eliseev was able to stay on his feet each time. In the end, the young Russian picked up his opponent and hurled him onto the grass. Once again he had won a clear victory; however, the match had an unexpected conclusion several hours later. That night when Eliseev and his family were asleep, they were roused by the clatter of horses' hooves resounding in their yard. The nocturnal visitors proved to be the defeated champion, Salikhov and a crowd of his supporters. Sergei's father went out and asked his unbidden visitors, "What do you want?" The Bashkiri wrestler answered that he could not submit to his two defeats and asked if he might have a third and deciding fight right then.

Sergei agreed, and after his brother poured a bucket of cold water over him to wake him up, the third round began. This time there were two referees so that no errors could be made. Thus when Eliseev won the midnight match, there was no mistake about his victory this time. His Bashkiri rival had to retire from the field in defeat, but on the following day three rams were brought to the Eliseev family as evidence of the young man's strength and as an apology for his uneasy night.⁷

Several years after this wrestling victory, the Eliseevs moved to Ufa itself, and there the brothers worked out and wrestled in their free time. Although

Sergei's fame was great throughout all of Bashkiria, the young man initially chose to remain in the provincial capital. That situation was destined to change, however. In 1897 Sergei's younger brother Alexander read an article in the magazine *Niva*⁸ about an athletic club which had been organized by Dr. Vladislav F. Krajewski in St. Petersburg.⁹ Alexander wrote to the magazine and described his athletic achievements. Doctor Krajewski read the letter and invited Alexander to the Russian capital where in mid-1897 the 19-year-old strongman appeared before the members of the country's most famous group of strength athletes. Alexander soon succeeded in astonishing the members by his strength and lifting ability. Although he only weighed 167.5 pounds, he managed to jerk 261.8 pounds and to press 167 pounds with one hand. Krajewski and the other athletes then asked him about his training methods. Alexander replied that he trained under his older brother's direction and that Sergei had achieved even greater results than he had. Since the next Russian weightlifting championships were approaching, the St. Petersburg athletes asked Alexander to arrange for Sergei's participation.

Sergei accepted the invitation, and he began to reconsider his training system. The competition was to take place in nine months, and Sergei tried not to overtrain before the contest. Despite this, he worked harder than he had ever done before: he ran long distances in boots with special lead soles and did hundreds of exercises with dumbbells and barbells. Sergei also devoted much attention to his diet, and he consumed large amounts of dairy products, particularly clabber—the thick, curdled milk that is popular in Russia.

Sergei arrived in St. Petersburg, the stately capital of the Russian Empire, in April of 1898 in order to participate in the second weightlifting championships of Russia. He made a great and immediate impression on the seasoned athletes, and a little of that astonishment is captured in the reaction of the famous weightlifting historian Ivan Lebedev.¹⁰ "He was the most marvelous athlete of any which I had ever seen," remarked the man who was better known to his friends and associates as "Uncle Vanya." Lebedev's enthusiasm was hard to conceal even many years after the event when he recalled his first impressions: "At first sight of Sergei Ivanovich, you would not possibly think that he was 'the very man who . . . ' etc. He is of medium height, lean, very muscular, with only 42-centimeter [16.5-inch] biceps. He is modest even to the point of diffidence."¹¹ Thanks to his unprepossessing appearance and modest demeanor, most

of sporting St. Petersburg did not expect that this 22-year-old athlete would be a serious contender in the upcoming contest. It was therefore something of a shock when the young strongman, fresh from the provincial backwaters of Ufa, placed second in the overall competition. First place that year was won by the famous "Russian Lion," George Hackenschmidt, who had much more experience in competitive weightlifting. Eliseev must have been proud to earn the second-place medal for his very successful debut.¹²

Despite Sergei Ivanovich's triumph, it should be mentioned that his success was not without its difficulties. According to Lebedev in his book *Heavy Athletics*, Eliseev lacked the technical prowess to become an immediate champion. "Unfortunately, it was not to be during this visit nor even in the next one that Eliseev was able to show his true prowess because he was unaccustomed to working with regular weights. For example in Ufa, Eliseev always trained with "bulldogs"—these were dumbbells which were designed for use in one hand [rather than using them as a pair] and which weighed over 35 pounds.¹³ In St. Petersburg, however, he was forced to work with barbells and other material. Since he was also a very nervous man, he could not lift his maximum weight with the entire audience staring at him. He always approached the weights slowly, softly and silently—white as a sheet with anxiety. He preferred to start with the maximum, record-breaking weights right away,"¹⁴

Thanks to his impressive performance, Eliseev was singled out for notice in the mainstream media. An article in *The St. Petersburg News* of April 21, 1898 reported, "S.I. Eliseev demonstrated the following remarkable feat with dumbbells: he took a spherical dumbbell weighing 152.5 [Russian] pounds [i.e. 127.5 English pounds] with his right hand and slowly raised it over his head and then lowered it. Then he kept his hand in the horizontal position for a few seconds. This is a world's record, for no one, even among professional athletes, could do the same with more than 120 pounds [108.2 English pounds]."¹⁵

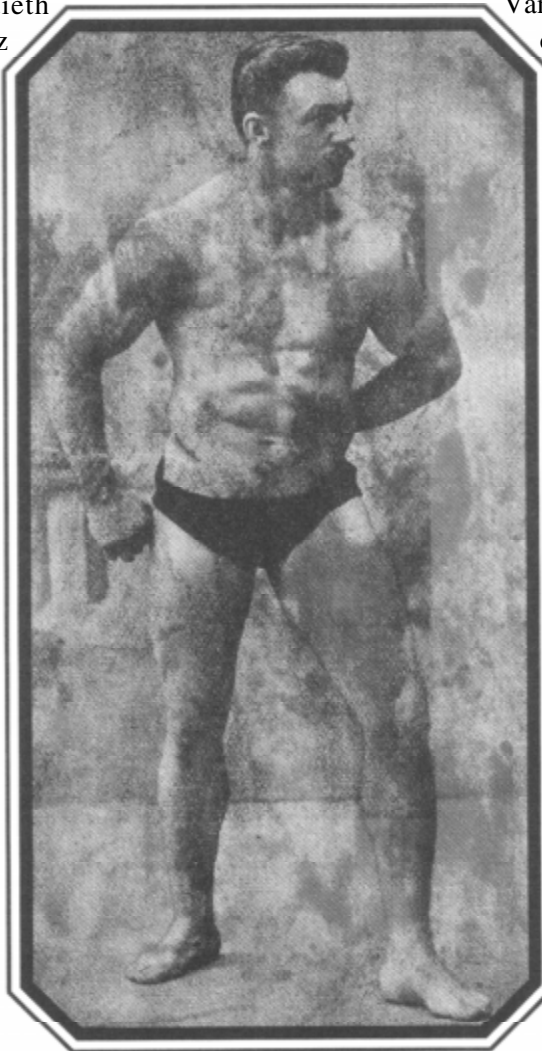
On the day after this amazing performance, Eliseev participated in another competition which was organized by The Bicycle-Athletic Society in which he bested his own record and won a large silver medal for his efforts. His Old-Believer father would have been proud to see his son cross himself reverently two times, especially since the athlete was gripping two dumbbells weighing 70.5 and 74.9 pounds in each hand.¹⁶

Eliseev's third public performance came ten days later. At this competition the young athlete broke one more world's record and earned a large gold medal.¹⁷ Thus, only two months after his debut in the Russian sporting arena he had become the holder of several world records. Despite these successes, it was the great George Hackenschmidt who was sent to the World Weightlifting and Wrestling championships in Vienna. The Russian Lion placed third in the weightlifting contest, but he won top honors in the wrestling competition. It was partly as a result of that failure (if one can call a third place win a "failure"), that Sergei Eliseev was sent to the next championships. This contest was to be held in Vienna in the summer of 1898, and the world weightlifting championships were originally part of the festivities to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Emperor Franz Josef's reign. The reporter from the *Allgemeine Sport Zeitung* reports tersely that Eliseev was present but did not participate. Perhaps there was a problem, but the more likely explanation was that he chose simply to observe the level of competition so that he could launch his international career with greater understanding of his fellow lifters. That opportunity would come just a few months later in the championships which were to take place in Italy.¹⁸

Accordingly, Eliseev arrived in Milan in February 1899 in advance of the contests which were to take place on March 4-5. Many of the heavyweight foreign athletes must have supposed that this diminutive Russian lifter could not possibly pose much of a challenge to them, but after he began competing it only took a very short while for the audience to understand that Eliseev possessed both phenomenal power and brilliant technique.¹⁹ The little Russian athlete soon shot to the fore, leaving all his competitors behind in both his individual lifts and his overall total. Using only one

arm, he snatched 158.7 lbs., pressed 165.3 lbs. and a jerked 187.3 lbs.; with two arms he pressed 253.5 lbs. and jerked 308.6 lbs.²⁰ Thus, Sergei Ivanovich Eliseev, the 23-year-old worker from the wilds of Bashkiria became the first Russian to win a World Weightlifting Championships. He immediately acquired a high reputation among the lifting powers of Middle Europe, and several years later the Germans were calling him "The Athletic Superman" and marveling at his prowess.²¹ Naturally, when he returned to St. Petersburg, Eliseev was greeted warmly and with much enthusiasm; Russia had produced one of its first world-class weightlifters, and seemingly the entire country was proud of him.

Even after this great victory, Eliseev did not take a vacation; instead, he continued to train hard. Uncle



Although this rare photograph is stained with age, it gives solid evidence of the strength and power Eliseev's body possessed in his prime. Todd-McLean Collection

Vanya writes that the young man decided to give both French style wrestling and belt wrestling a try.²² Sergei never really took to the French style, but he was a skilled fighter in the so-called belt style. In addition to being a superb wrestler and weightlifter, Eliseev was also a popular man. It was said that he never boasted of his unique status as world champion in front of other less experienced opponents.²³

Eliseev had few rivals equal to his skills at the next Russian championships. In addition to the gold medal for Champion of Russia, he also won three other medals for breaking three new world records.²⁴ Thanks to these triumphs, Eliseev's renown spread all over Russia, and he received many proposals to move to St. Petersburg. Instead, he chose to return to Ufa where he continued his job as a metalworker at the main locomotive repair shop.

Sergei Ivanovich greeted the new century with new records. In official competition, he pressed a barbell weighing 319.58 lbs., but when he was

unconstrained by the strain of contests, he could do much better. It was reported that he pressed 336.7 lbs. and clean and jerked 384.59 lbs. Had these totals been done in an official tournament, he would have had a total of over 992 lbs., a phenomenal feat for 1902.²⁵

In 1903 Eliseev participated in the professional World Weightlifting Championships in Paris, and here he took second place. The overall winner was Pierre Bonnes, who had won the competition on three previous occasions. Part of the reason for the Russian's second-place showing was that he was not even familiar with eight out of the eleven lifts which were part of the tournament. He was forced to learn them during the competition, and of course he lost precious attempts while doing so. In classical lifts like the clean and jerk, however, Eliseev was victorious. Although he lifted a sum that merely tied with that which Bonnes had managed, Eliseev was judged the winner in the classical lifts because he weighed ten kilos less than the Frenchman.²⁶

Eliseev also was also keenly alert to the records and the showy feats that were used by foreign athletes. For example, the famous German professional strongman Georg Rasso-Stangelmaier lifted a barrel filled with water (or some say beer) weighing 209 lbs., then turned it to the shoulders and pressed it overhead. When Eliseev learned of this, he ordered an exact replica of the barrel, and after training for a while, he also began to do the feat, but with one exception: his barrel weighed 273 lbs.²⁷

Despite being a successful and popular sportsman, there was another, covert side to Eliseev's life. Uncle Vanya, in his book *Heavy Athletics*, hints darkly and tersely at the political side of the strongman's character. "Life," he wrote, "which is fraught with perils, unsettled this wonderful athlete. Sergei Ivanovich Eliseev was involved in the unrest of 1905-06, and after being discharged, he disappeared from the sporting scene." Unfortunately, Lebedev could not give any more details about Eliseev's fate since his book was published in 1916 at a time when Czarist censorship was at its most virulent. Had he been permitted to tell the whole story, however, he would have shown that the man was as strong in conviction as he was in muscular power.

These were troubling times in Russia. On 9 January 1905, in St. Petersburg, there was a peaceful demonstration in the capital during which many workers were gunned down ruthlessly by government soldiers. Over 1,000 people were killed and over 5,000 were wounded. and this tragedy. together with the country's

shameful defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, brought about the first Russian Revolution of 1905.²⁸ As early as 1902 Eliseev had maintained close relationships with illegal revolutionary organizations. Ufa's locomotive repair depot was a center of revolutionary activity, and only ten days after the 1905 disturbance in St. Petersburg there was a mass meeting of workers in the train yards which drew upwards of two thousand people. By the spring and summer of 1905 the railroad workers had organized many strikes and other demonstrations: naturally, Sergei Eliseev was deeply embroiled in these and other actions. Eventually, he became the commander of a group of railroad workers who formed an armed skirmish force, and many of the guns, ammunition and propaganda leaflets were stored in Eliseev's own home.

It would have been impossible for these revolutionary activities to go unnoticed by the Czarist police, and among the local constabulary he was known by the code name "The Athlete." Somehow Eliseev always managed to stay just beyond the clutches of the gendarmerie, but in June of 1905 his luck ran out. He was transporting a load of revolutionary leaflets in a cab, and as it traversed the streets of Ufa, the vehicle was stopped by a large mob from the "Black Hundred" group. an ultra-rightist, monarchical organization. Sergei was quickly recognized and pulled out of the car. He received a serious head wound in the unequal battle that followed, but fortunately he was able to get rid the incriminating leaflets before his attack. Because of the injuries that he had sustained, he was forced to recuperate in the hospital for over a month and a half. After he had recovered sufficiently, he was arrested by the police, but thanks to the lack of firm evidence, he was released after only a few days of incarceration.²⁹

The weightlifter's problems with the authorities were far from finished, however. After a police informant was killed at a meeting of railroad workers, suspicion fell on Sergei Eliseev, and he was arrested once more. Although many people testified in his favor during his court trail, he was nevertheless sent into exile to the remote Siberian region of Yakutsk. Thus it was that Eliseev's illustrious athletic career came to an abrupt and dramatic conclusion.

It is not known exactly when he was allowed to return; probably it was not long after the October Revolution of 1917. We know only that he was employed as a metalworker in the Siberian town of Tyumen in 1919. Presumably, he also married around this time, for there is a report that early in 1922 Eliseev and his wife and two

sons moved to Tomsk, another Siberian town located on the main line of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, where the man who had once amazed the world with his lifting prowess made a meager living as a freight loader.

Life after the revolution that he had worked so hard to bring about was very difficult for poor Eliseev. He and his family suffered much, and often they had neither a roof over their heads nor enough food on the table. Incredibly, Eliseev continued to train with weights, and in fact the former champion organized a weightlifting club and trained other young athletes. Somehow Sergei Ivanovich was able to return to exhibitions and competitions, and he often performed strength shows at local festivals and at the circus.

Things seemed to have improved for him, for between 1925 and 1931 he worked as an accountant at a tannery in Tomsk. At roughly this same time, he organized other weightlifting clubs. The Tomsk Regional Council of Physical Culture gave him two large rooms in a building which overlooked the Ushaika River, it was here that Eliseev personally trained over forty pupils; this was all the more remarkable because the great weightlifter donated not only his own barbells to the club but also his time and energy since he coached his students without any pay whatsoever.³⁰

Eventually, Eliseev's life in his Siberian hometown settled into a dull routine, but for a brief, shining moment the great weightlifter was destined to taste a little of the glory from his golden days. In 1925 Uncle Vanya arrived in Tomsk bursting with a "sensational idea" which had popped into the Russian Barnum's head. He would organize a wrestling match between two former world champions. His plan was to pair the unconquerable Ivan Poddoubny with the weightlifting hero Sergei Eliseev. Both parties were agreeable, and in due course the bout took place. It was reported by the magazine *Sport*, which described it this way:

For half an hour neither one of the rivals could get an effective grip, but clearly Poddoubny had the upper hand. The 309-pound strongman lifted Eliseev twice 'to the second floor' [i.e. overhead] and then threw him to the mat, but without the expected result. Each time Eliseev landed on his feet. Nobody knew how the fight would end, but at one point a strap which was wrapped around Eliseev's wrist was broken. Since no one had a new strap, the referee declared a draw.³¹

After the fight, Poddoubny approached Eliseev and said, "You really are a tough nut, Sergei Eliseev!" He presented the smaller man with a tie-pin in the form of a golden barbell set with a gemstone, and he remarked once more, "So, Russia has a worthy rival for old Ivan Poddoubny."³²

From 1932 until 1938 Eliseev was examined regularly by doctors (he would have been 56-62 years old), since they were apparently eager to see the effects of a lifetime of heavy exercise. These physicians could find absolutely no evidence of ill health. He was a completely healthy man, and he still trained with weights on a regular basis.

Sergei Ivanovich Eliseev died in 1939, and like many aspects of his life, we know little of the exact circumstances of his demise. The Olympic weightlifter and noted sports historian, Yuri Vlasov, writes in this excellent book, *The Justice of Strength*, that Eliseev was unfairly subjected to political persecution in the late 1930's. Vlasov does not give any references for this information, but all indications tend to verify the diagnosis.³³

Twentieth century Russia has always been very rich in talented people, and many of the finest sons of Mother Russia met a similarly tragic fate. Despite his untimely end, Eliseev was able to accomplish great things. Almost certainly, it was his unique personality that drew attention to him and made the Stalinist bosses nervous. If Vlasov is correct, Eliseev was purged by the very government that he had fought so long and heroically to establish. Sacrifices on the altar of megalomania are not unique, but to lose such a man is tragic, indeed. Athletes of Eliseev's stature are rare at any time in human history.

Notes:

Much of the material in this article came from Russian works that have not been translated into English. We include here a few of the more important sources in their translated titles.

1. Anonymous article. "110 Years of Russian Weightlifting," *Olympus Magazine*, January 1995, pp. 26-7.
2. Baranov, V. "Pages from a Wonderful Life: Recollections of S.I. Eliseev," in *Russia's Strongmen*, Moscow: Soviet Russia Publishing, 1983.
3. Bonini, Gherardo. *Il primo dizionario di sollevamento pesi in Italia*, (Florence: author, 1999).
4. Borisov, Isaac. "On the Strong and the Able," in *Physical Culture and Sport* (Moscow: 1956) Chapter on "Russian Strongmen."
5. Borisov, Isaac. "Pages of Sporting Glory," in *Physical Culture and Sport* (Moscow: 1960), chapter on "Russian Strongmen."
6. Dizenko, Joseph. *Under the Alias "The Athlete"*, Ufa: Bashkirian Publishing, 1982.
7. Ivanov, Dimitry. *Strength of the Very Strong*, Moscow: Soviet Russia Publishing, 1979.

8. Lebedev, Ivan. *Heavy Athletics*, Petrograd [i.e. St. Petersburg]: Gubinsky, 1916.
9. Svub, Josef. "Russian Men of Might: Sergey Eliseyev," in *Milo*, September 2001, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 87-89.
10. Vlasov, Yuri. *The Justice of Strength*, Moscow. NKI, 1995.

Endnotes

1. Although the exact identity of General Kazarin is uncertain, the surname is derived from an ancient Turkic tribe which often attacked their Slavic neighbors. The tribe disappeared in the 10th century, but the name remained in various forms. It indicates that the General's family was almost certainly a longtime resident of the region.
2. The Old Believers, also known as Old Ritualists, came into existence as the result of a schism within the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th century. The Russian Church had adopted certain liturgical usages that differed from those of the Greeks. Patriarch Nikon (1605-1681) introduced changes intended to make Russian practices conform to Greek usage. This was offensive to some Russian Orthodox who believed that it was legitimate for the Russian Church to adopt its own traditions. Opposition coalesced around a priest named Avvakum, who was burnt at the stake in 1682. His followers became known as Old Believers—those who followed the old rituals.
3. Baranov, pp. 14 & 15.
4. *Sabanfuy* means "a celebration of the plough." It is an ancient festival held widely throughout Central Asia to commemorate the end of spring sowing when there is a little interval before haying and harvesting. The festival includes competitions, races, and *Kurash*, a form of wrestling.
5. *Kurash*: A style of wrestling popular all over Central Asia. Combatants are forbidden to lie on the ground. In fact, once even a wrestler's knee touches the floor the referee stops the action and wrestlers must begin wrestling again from the initial standing position. Wrestlers wear strong, wide belts, and opponents are required to lift one another by means of this belt. Such moves obviously require great strength.
6. "The measurements of Sergei Eliseyeff, the famous Russian athlete, were taken by Count Monticelli at the [weightlifting] competition in Milan (1897) [*sic.*] and were at that time the following: height 170 cm [5 feet 9 inches], chest (normal) 101 cm [39.7 inches], forearm 40½ cm [15.9 inches], thighs 60 cm [23.6 inches], calf 40 cm [15.9 inches], weight 84 kg. [185 lbs.]" From: *Illustrierte Athletik-Sportzeitung* (vol. 11, no. 17; April 26, 1902): 262.
7. Baranov, pp. 15-16. There is no date given for this incident.
8. *Niva* ["The Field"] was a popular magazine published by A.F. Marx in St. Petersburg between 1870-1918.
9. Although he was born in Poland, Dr. Vladislav Franzevich Krajewski (1841-1901) is considered by many to be the father of Russian weightlifting. He was a successful physician who had a large home in St. Petersburg where he trained many of the nation's finest athletes in his well equipped private gymnasium. Hackenschmidt, Lurich, Poddoubny and Aberg had all followed the doctor's system of weight training. The "The Circle of Athletic Enthusiasts" was begun by Krajewski in 1885, and this date marks the beginning of Russian weight training. (The doctor's name is often erroneously written as "von Krajewski.")
10. Ivan Vladimirovich Lebedev (May 25, 1879 - July 28, 1950) is renowned in Russia as an athlete, trainer, actor, and man of letters. When he was 17 years old, Lebedev joined Dr. Krajewski's Athletic Circle, and soon became one of the physician's favorite pupils. From 1912 to 1918 he published *Hercules*, the most popular weightlifting and wrestling magazine in Pre-Revolutionary Russia. Sometime after the October Revolution, Lebedev became a circus director; despite his duties, Lebedev managed to write many books and histories throughout his long and colorful career. His affectionate nickname, "Uncle Vanya" (Vanya is the diminutive of Ivan) seems to have been given to him around 1905 because of his age, his corpulence and his vast knowledge of athletics.
11. *Heavy Athletics*, 134.
12. The first All-Russian Athletics Championships began on April 16, 1898. In addition to losing narrowly to Hackenschmidt in the left-arm, right-arm, and two-arm jerk, Eliseev was victorious in the left-arm snatch. Although the report is discounted by some, Eliseev was said to have done a series of impressive free-style movements: he held a dumbbell weighing 137.6 lbs. on his outstretched arm, and then he did two-arm side raises with dumbbells weighting 65 and 74.4 lbs.
13. According to Svub, "Eliseyev loved to work out with traditional Russian equipment called *buliny* or *giri*, [kettlebells] and was exceptionally strong in leverage feats," p. 89.
14. *Heavy Athletics*, 135
15. These are Russian pounds which equal 409.5 grams or about 14 ounces.
16. Baranov, 17.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Allgemeine Sport Zeitung* 19 (August 6, 1898), 923-928. Quoted in Gherardo Bonini, *Il primo dizionario di sollevamento pesi in Italia* (Florence: author, 1999), 36.
19. Official IWF website [<http://www.iwf.net/results/statistics/msw.html>]. At the third Weightlifting Championships Eliseev measured 172 cm. (5 feet 6 inches) tall and 82.5 kg. [181.9 lbs.].
20. Bonini, 67.
21. "Sergei Eliseev, known as 'The Athletic Superman,' after encouraging assurances from the most famous Russian professionals Hackenschmidt and Lurich, does a two-handed lift of 340 German pounds and can press 300 pounds with effortless ease directly from his chest." *Illustrierte Athletik-Sportzeitung*, caption to cover illustration (vol. 11, no. 9; March 1, 1902).
22. "French" wrestling (i.e. Greco-Roman) limits the holds that can be used to those from the head to the waist. In "belt" wrestling, the participants wear a special, wide leather belt with protruding handles. Using these, the opponents try to pull one another to the ground. This style of fighting is particularly popular in Germany and eastern Europe.
23. Lebedev 136.
24. Baranov, 18.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Baranov, 19. Also see the letter written by the editor of the Russian journal *Sport* to the *Allgemeine Sport Zeitung* 11 (December 6, 1903) in which the obvious preference of French judges for their own countrymen is severely criticized (although the correspondent takes care not to diminish the performance of Bonnes). Eliseev's most remarkable record quoted in the letter is a two-arm clean and jerk of 353.66 lbs. Quoted in Gherardo Bonini, 48.
27. Baranov, 19. Rasso was the model for Max Klinger's statues *The Chained Samson* and *The Group with Centaurs*.
28. On Bloody Sunday in January 1905, unarmed workers demonstrating outside the Winter Palace were fired upon by czarist soldiers. There were then months of unrest throughout Russia, including Ufa, which had long been a hotbed of revolutionary sentiment.
29. Baranov, 19. The Black Hundred was a common name for a loose alliance of several pro-monarchical organizations. These organizations derived their name from Medieval Muscovy where the social classes who had to pay taxes were called "The Black Hundred."
30. Baranov, 20. The Ushaika is a smaller tributary of the River Tom that flows through Tomsk.
31. Dizenko [booklet is unpaginated].
32. Dizenko.
33. Vlasov, 305. It is impossible at the present time to get more information about Eliseev's death. Yuri Vlasov undoubtedly knows more than he said, but unfortunately he has turned his back on the sporting and journalistic communities and is rumored to live in his small village like a hermit.