

The hospital has been rebuilt, a gift from St Petersburg.

Georgi, head of the traumatology unit, tours the basement. The emergency service was held up there during the fighting in 2008.



WE CARRIED OUT 273 OPERATIONS HERE IN 4 DAYS.

With putrid pipes overhead and not the slightest protective cover.

These catacombs, stifling airless after 10 minutes, took in 500 refugees during the fighting. They had no water, food or toilets.



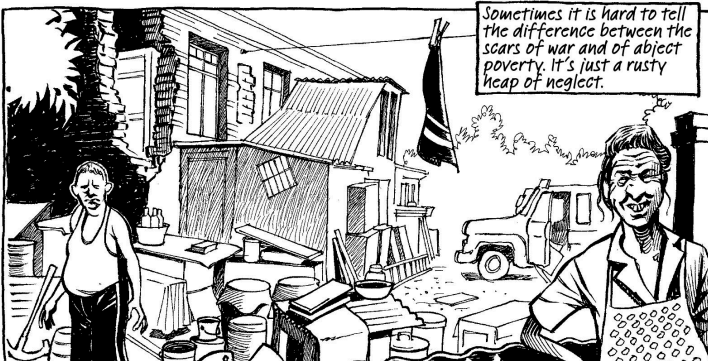
IN THE END, WE OPERATED WITHOUT ANAESTHETIC.

Georgi treated an American and a Georgian journalist. They were terrified, they thought they were being taken to the cellar to be slaughtered.

Up above, the hospital was hit by 50 rockets and 7 shells. A black and white TV was the link with the outside world.



THE WORST THING WAS TO SEE THE UN DECLARE RUSSIA THE AGGRESSOR!



Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between the scars of war and of abject poverty. It's just a rusty heap of neglect.

A strange stupor hangs over the villagers. They were given building materials before Christmas but have done nothing. The engineer who made the delivery sighs:



"FIRST, IT WAS TOO COLD. THEN TOO WET. THEN A VILLAGE FUNERAL. NOW IT'S HARVEST TIME ..."

... WHAT'S THE NEXT EXCUSE GOING TO BE?"

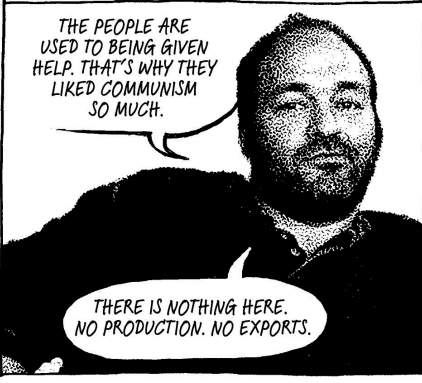
On the 100 houses hit, only one roof has been patched up - where Nona lives:



DURING THE BOMBING 20 WOMEN AND CHILDREN HID IN A CELLAR.

WE RAN OFF INTO THE FOREST, TAKING NOTHING WITH US.

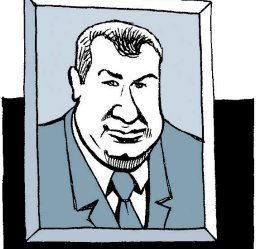
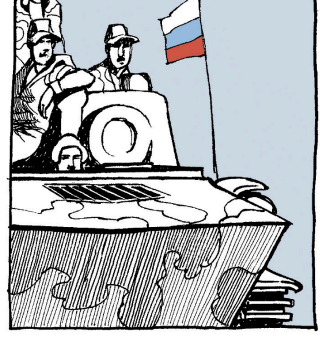
Alan Parastayev from South Ossetia, head of a Caucasian development network, is cynical:



THE PEOPLE ARE USED TO BEING GIVEN HELP. THAT'S WHY THEY LIKED COMMUNISM SO MUCH.

THERE IS NOTHING HERE. NO PRODUCTION. NO EXPORTS.

No outlook - except one: the base being built by the 58th Russian army. At least that's long term.



What happened to the millions from Russia? I couldn't ask President Kokoity; he was away on business. A Moscow protégé, this former wrestling champion elected in 2001 is still popular despite the reconstruction fiasco.



I'VE NEVER RECEIVED THE 50,000 ROUBLES PROMISED BY PUTIN!

Soslan, a retired judge, in the village of Mugut.



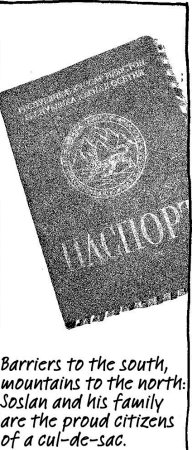
In August 2008, Saakashvili's troops came charging down this street.

THE GEORGIANS FROM THE NEXT VILLAGE CAME FIRST, SHOWING THE TANKS THE WAY! DISGUSTING!



At the end, it's Georgia. Not even a tomato gets through this sealed border. Will it be open again one day?

TIME WILL TELL. WE WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE AS TWO INDEPENDENT STATES.



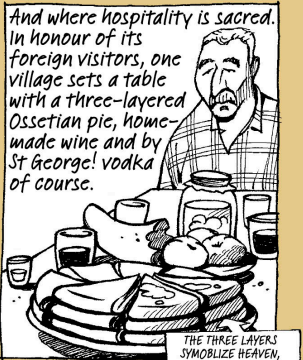
Barriers to the south, mountains to the north: Soslan and his family are the proud citizens of a cul-de-sac.

THE VODKA LITURGY

For Alexandre Dumas, the Caucasus is the story of the gods and men.



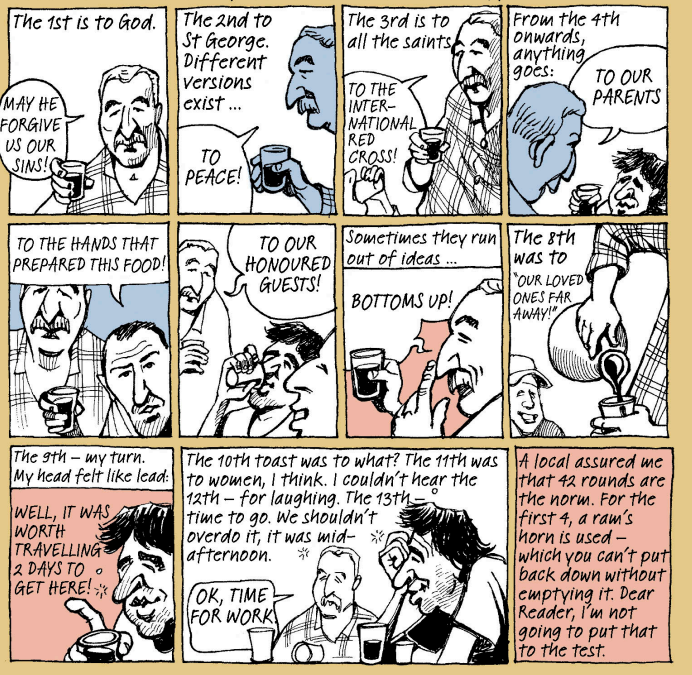
It's also where you see incredible faces.



And where hospitality is sacred. In honour of its foreign visitors, one village sets a table with a three-layered Ossetian pie, home-made wine and by St George! vodka of course.

THE THREE LAYERS SYMBOLIZE HEAVEN, EARTH AND HELL.

A friend had warned me: "HERE, THEY TAKE DRINKING SERIOUSLY, LIKE RELIGION." What's more, in Ossetian the same word means "DRINK A TOAST" and "PRAY". And the toasts follow the pattern of the Orthodox liturgy.



The 1st is to God.

The 2nd to St George. Different versions exist ...

The 3rd is to all the saints

From the 4th onwards, anything goes.

MAY HE FORGIVE US OUR SINS!

TO PEACE!

TO THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS!

TO OUR PARENTS

TO THE HANDS THAT PREPARED THIS FOOD!

TO OUR HONOURED GUESTS!

Sometimes they run out of ideas ...

The 8th was to "OUR LOVED ONES FAR AWAY!"

TO THE INTER-NATIONAL RED CROSS!

TO OUR HONOURED GUESTS!

Sometimes they run out of ideas ...

TO OUR PARENTS

The 9th - my turn. My head felt like lead.

The 10th toast was to what? The 11th was to women, I think. I couldn't hear the 12th - for laughing. The 13th - time to go. We shouldn't overdo it, it was mid-afternoon.

Sometimes they run out of ideas ...

The 8th was to "OUR LOVED ONES FAR AWAY!"

WELL, IT WAS WORTH TRAVELLING 2 DAYS TO GET HERE!

OK, TIME FOR WORK

Sometimes they run out of ideas ...

The 8th was to "OUR LOVED ONES FAR AWAY!"

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