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**April 9 and Georgian-Russian-American Relations in  
Elizabeth Scott-Tervo's Work  
"The Sun Does Not Shine Without You"**

"The Sun Does Not Shine Without You", by Elizabeth Scott-Tervo, reflects political events in 1988-89 Soviet Georgia. Eileen, the main character, like her Georgian friends, understands the role of Russia in the political life of Georgia. The exciting Georgian-American romance is ultimately hopeless, while Eileen's marriage and divorce symbolize the failed hope of reapproachment between America and Russia. The aim of this paper is to reveal the allegory and place it beside other works which use male-female relationships to reflect deeper themes. It will also explore Meko's role as the friend, as well as themes of freedom and humanity.

**Key words:** April 9, Georgian-Russian-American Relations.

**Preface:** In the screenplay "The Sun Does Not Shine Without You" by Elizabeth Scott Tervo, an American student, Eileen, becomes involved in a romantic love story which develops against the backdrop of the April 1989 political events in Georgia. The author's original wish was for the work to appear onscreen in both Georgia and the US. When Georgian writer Dato Turashvili read the work, he suggested that the author rework it into a prose text or memoir. He also floated the idea of its appearance on the Georgian stage, as he believed that the Georgian public would be very interested to see the perspective of an American exchange student on those famous political events which now belong to history. In the new project, the author decided to bring more reality to the text, removing from it those parts which were fantasy and restoring real names to the characters.

That is how we received the memoir “The Sun Does Not Shine Without You.” If it was difficult, almost impossible for the reader of the screenplay to identify the protagonists of the work, now, thanks to the memoir, it is possible to discover the real people who stand behind the fictional characters. But, of course, this is nothing compared to the real value of the text. The central idea of the text contains deep analysis. For the Georgian reader, the most important aspect of the memoir is those analytical passages, because they clarify the allegory which the author created to express a certain political message. The purpose of this article is to use the memoir as a key and identify the political message which the author transformed into allegory. At this moment the screenplay has not yet been translated into the Georgian language, but the translation of the memoir is complete and merely awaits a publication date. Therefore, I must briefly relate the content of both works.

**The plot of the screenplay:** The protagonist, the naïve American student Eileen, who dreams of changing the world for the better, comes to Georgia as an exchange student for the spring semester during Gorbachev’s *Perestroika* in 1989. She stays at the family home of her Georgian friend Meko. As tense political events unfold, a romantic but hopeless love affair begins between Meko’s friend Irakli and Eileen. Irakli, an accomplished and wellknown leader of the youth movement for independence from the USSR, does not even come to the airport to say good bye to Eileen, but Meko assures her this Irakli’s decision was correct. Desperate, Eileen very soon marries the Russian Anatoly whom she meets in Lenin-grad. This is a very strange step for her, because she witnessed the bloody suppression of the peaceful demonstrators at the Government building by Russians and has correctly understood the hidden purposes of Russia and Russia’s role in the political life of Georgia. Eileen is full of hatred against Russia, but at the same time she understands that she is helpless to intervene. She cannot communicate effectively with the Embassy of her country or find her compatriot journalists who are rumored to be staying at the *Intourist* hotels. The Russian-American marriage, not based on love, falls in ruins, and after years of separation Eileen returns to Georgia, now an independent country. The play ends with Meko’s wedding where Eileen and Irakli meet again.

**The Memoir – the key to the allegory of the screenplay:** The memoir has the same title as the screenplay and is dedicated to the victims of the April 9th Tbilisi Massacre and all heroic victims who fell or suffered under the repressions of the Soviet regime. There is another dedication as well, ‘to a little boy with a stick and an idea.’ This dedication links to an episode in the middle of the book, where the reader finds out more about the little boy. When the first tanks and soldiers drive into Tbilisi, the narrator was in the Post Office on Rustaveli Avenue and witnessed this scene: a little boy, bored waiting for his mother, suddenly found his attention caught by the rows of helmets of the Russian soldiers sitting in a row on a bench. The boy stared at the helmets and his face shone as an idea came into his mind. He came closer to the helmets and beat one with his stick. When there was no reaction, he continued down the line beating all the helmets with his stick. None of the soldiers said a word to the little boy, but the last one got angry and took the stick away. His officer calmed him down with a few words: “Not now, we have no orders yet”. The dedication to the small boy is also the author’s backhand reference to another protagonist of the book, Dato Turashvili himself, who, though a leader of his peers, was young, small, and seemingly helpless against the Soviet regime, yet had hold of an idea he refused to let go of: independence. The reader finds the conclusion of this episode at the end of the memoir, when the narrator, now back in the US, follows the news of Tiananmen Square demonstrations taking place in China which had attracted the interest of an American audience. On television, the narrator watches one of the demonstrators in China stop a tank in its tracks. Everyone was exalted, thinking that the soldier inside the tank —and perhaps the whole army— shared the peaceful wishes of students for democracy. Everyone except the narrator, who cries at the screen: “Go home, stop your protests, they have no orders yet, but tomorrow they will be back and you will die.” She turned out to be right: hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were killed and their goddess of democracy was thrown down. The events which took place in Tbilisi on April 9th influenced the narrator so much that she stopped believing that any protests could be useful, even in the U.S. The peak of her cynicism was not joining her friends at college at the demonstrations in favor of divesting from the apartheid state of South Africa. Those demonstrations did turn out to be effective in pressuring the South African state.

The demonstrations held in Tbilisi also eventually had a positive result, as they were the beginning of the end of the USSR. Later that year, the Berlin wall fell, and finally the republics of the Soviet Union got their desired independence, freedom and democracy.

In the memoir, memories are interwoven with large portions of analysis. In those analytical passages the author tries to answer questions like “Why was the West deaf to the problems of Georgia, and why did Western people not understand what was really happening in Georgia and also in other colonized countries?” The memoir ends with the episode where the narrator meets a Romanian couple in the US. When the husband finds out that the person in front of them is someone who spent 1989 in Georgia, he stops his wife, who is trying to explain to one more American what the Soviet Union really was, saying these words: “No need. She knows everything we know.” The Romanian couple and the narrator are in the same position, and all three know that it is almost impossible to explain, and so hard to change Americans’ attitude towards Soviet Union.

Americans believed that it was the free choice of people living in USSR to live in that type of country, and even the narrator’s close friends were used to comparing Soviet oppression to American imperialism in countries around the world, and tried to prove that since the US also oppresses those countries, and they as Americans had no right to blame anyone else. The author on the other hand concedes that yes, perhaps the US oppresses some countries, but at the same time the American people have a feeling of guilt about it. And this is most important. Do Russians feel the same guilt? Probably not, because the author sees how her Russian friend tries to justify the actions of soldiers on the April 9 with the following argument: “I used to serve in Soviet army and I know how the army changes you, how you are a different person during those two years.” This position, not seeing the fault, not feeling or admitting the guilt, being indifferent to the tragedy that happened in Georgia, supremely irritates the narrator.

The most difficult thing for her was to see that people in West thought Soviet way of life was just another perspective, which had its own right to exist. This view still exists. Therefore, the author has paid much attention to Russia and brings this knowledge into her work. She offers the analogy of Russia as a telescope. The lens of the telescope is thick and the mechanism complex. When looking through the lenses, the mechanism attracts

attention to itself, such that and it becomes difficult to see the small, tiny stars through it. One should start by investigating the mechanism, studying it piece by piece, otherwise it will be impossible to understand the telescope and to use it. The West looks at Georgia through Russian lenses, therefore Westerners need to understand Russia well, and this will give them the key to understand is the true origin of the problem of Georgia. Most Americans believe that without Russia they would not know anything about Georgia, and that Russia awoke Western attention towards Georgia. After the events of 1989, this perspective was no longer acceptable to the narrator, even though she used to be very much like those Americans whose position so angered her after April 9th.

The following episode illustrates her former idea. The administration of the University in Tbilisi organizes an excursion for their American guest to Gori, the town where Stalin was born. The Georgian friend of narrator is surprised because the Americans do not object to this excursion and follow the University administration like sheep. The narrator answers, that they need to know another perspective, without which it is almost impossible to study history. The Georgian friend sadly wonders what they are teaching in American schools. However, this is more than ridiculous, because if history was distorted in any curriculum in the world, it was in Soviet schools. If the same occurs in the US, it will be more than depressing for the Georgian friend.

If in the memoir the author uses the analogy of the telescope to illustrate Georgian-Russian relations, for the screenplay she chooses an allegory. In this context the love story is not just an adventure or a romantic affair but the national identity of the characters plays a crucial role. The protagonist of the screenplay, an American student, falls in love with a Georgian boy. She is ready, if it is needed, to sacrifice herself for the beloved one. She is ready to give shelter and take home with her the beloved, who is a leader of the youth movement if he is in danger. But the Georgian friend, Meko, explains to her, that Irakli would certainly refuse this offer. The reasons for this refusal are various. One reason can be considered correct from Irakli's point of view: the KGB would try to discredit Irakli's personality if he leaves the country for America, and his political colleagues would be disappointed in him. Irakli allegorically stands for Georgia, and Eileen for the US. Anatoly is a Russian and he, unlike Irakli, uses Eileen to make

his life better by marrying an American, leaving USSR. He stands for Russia in the screenplay. Eileen is a Christian believer and being young and open to everyone, she cannot imagine that anyone could be so dishonest and false. Anatoly deceives Eileen, as he understands Eileen's naivety, and pretends to be a believer. When Anatoly sees that Eileen is also interested in politics, he tells her how he got into problems after reading Nabokov secretly in class. Was this story a lie? It is for the Georgian reader today to catch this character in his little lies, but Eileen is quite convinced. She is too young to ask the right questions and she cannot possibly know that Soviet people's skill in telling lies was highly refined. Anatoly tells her that the Soviet system made people dirty and that he, being one of them, needs someone, the right person to help him to clean this dirt because he himself does not have enough power to do it alone. If Anatoly stands for Russia and Eileen for US, the reader feels angry, recognizing that the US is deceived by Russia.

The US should not be deceived by the myths invented by Russia, but regretfully it does happen. Eileen is deceived and marries Anatoly. Only after the marriage does she discover that Anatoly does not really want to be cleaned, or maybe he gave up on it because it was too difficult. This is his own tragedy: that he is perceptive enough to know that he has become warped by the Soviet system, and is always looking for something to heal him, but he will never succeed or find that magical thing, firstly because the Soviet 'dirt' runs too deep, and second because he is unwilling to put in the spiritual work required to improve himself. Eileen is unhappy when she understands that Anatoly had these plans directed at her, instead of love. Disappointed but wiser, Eileen returns to Georgia, which by this time is independent. She and Irakli meet again at Meko's wedding. The conclusion of the love story is unclear and the reader is left to write his own ending. Will Eileen and Irakli be together? Does Irakli need Eileen? Does Eileen need Irakli who once refused her love? Will Anatoly's shadow make their life together harder and the memories about him prevent the possibility of continuing life together? Will Irakli be able to leave Georgia now, when there is no more KGB and danger and the country is independent? What would Irakli's life be like in US? Or will Eileen stay in independent Georgia? Or, is the happy ending an only dream for Hollywood, while the real Irakli died in the Abkhazian war?

Eileen's whole relationship with Anatoly would be clearer if she posed the right questions to truly understand Georgia in time. The author puts those questions in the memoir book instead, where Anatoly is Alexei and Eileen is Lizi. These questions are the following: What is Russia? What is Russia for Georgia? Is it possible to put an equal sign between the policy towards Georgia (and the other republics) of Russia and of the USSR? Or is Russia also a victim of the Soviet system, as is Georgia? Maybe Russia does not do anything to Georgia which she does not do to herself first and worst? Should Alexei and people like him be considered as victims or perpetrators of Soviet deeds and politics? Do they continue the route chosen by Soviet Russia today? Is it possible that one day all these three nations could become good friends? If not, whose side should the US take, during the struggle between Georgia and Russia? And, in the end, should the US care?

The memoir, as well as the screenplay, emphasizes that the characters, both Americans and Georgian, are able to make use of the Russian language for communication, but refuse to do so. This is also allegorical. The refusal to use Russian as a tool causes misunderstanding between Eileen and Irakli, as neither of them understands the other's language well enough to understand the other person. In the beginning this is ridiculous and the reader laughs, but in the culminating moment, it is tragic. The allegory is that without knowing Russia in depth, correctly understanding what Georgia is asking is difficult and it ends tragically for the country. When Eileen returns to independent Georgia knowing the language much better, Irakli has also had time to refine his English, make it his second language, and finally say no to speaking in Russian or using Russian as a communication tool at all. It is a fact that now they should not have difficulty understanding each other. Therefore, the screenplay is hopeful, and of course the reader wants to find that hope.

But in the memoir book the relationship of Elizabeth (Eileen in the screenplay) with the Georgian youth political leader Dato Turashvili (who is the famous writer nowadays in Georgia and whose suggestion was to remake the screenplay) does not include any place for hope. Why not? Because the narrator of the memoir knows that of all the soldiers who entered Tbilisi in April 1989, each one is Alexei (Anatoly in the screenplay), and it is not their appearance – their hair colour or other characteristics

– which make them so similar. Like the soldier who took away the stick of the little boy in the post office, like all the soldiers who know that their objective is to occupy and not liberate (as they replace these verbs in war language), Alexei also knows what his final target is, when starting a relationship with an American student. He does not indeed want someone who has a personality, and a name. He looks at Elizabeth through the Russian lenses. Therefore, the narrator has included the passage where she discusses how Russians distort the proper names in purpose. In their speech, Tbilisi becomes Bilisi, Elizabeth is turned either into Liza or Lizochka. These purposely distorted names make her furious, these vocalizations irritate her, because she loves the way Georgians warmly pronounce her name, how her name Lizo becomes Lizi or Liziko in Georgian. She asks Alexei and other Russian friends to stop calling her Liza, but they do not listen. Now she, and her readers with her, understand the episode which was not quite clear earlier: when Alexei (Anatoly in the screenplay) visits her in Tbilisi, her friend's father sings after the couple as they leave the house: Шаром, братья, шаром! До самого Чикаго!" If the plans of Alexei are difficult for the narrator to see, it is clear for her Georgian friend, who knows the Russian character and its purposeful actions – if necessary he will march all the way to Chicago. Chicago here in the song is so distant that it is practically random.

Like the screenplay, the memoir also ends hopefully, even if the love story ends sadly. The end of the memoir book is not the end of the romantic affair. The reader understands that the narrator found in Georgia what she was searching for. When she makes a visit to Georgia after she is heartbroken in Russia, she understands that escape from the cage where she is locked in, is possible. She will never put herself in the position to be caught in a net of lies, again. She understands that the net of lies only prolonged the life of the USSR.

If for the readers of the screenplay it was doubtful whether the author used an allegory or not, the memoir answers these questions. But after decoding the allegory there still remains one more thing to be explained. The works, the memoir and the screenplay, are unified because they share a title, and the central word in the title is "the sun." Here is how to understand this: the action of both works start in Winter, in the second half of the academic year. The plot is developed in two cities, Leningrad and

Tbilisi. In Leningrad it is always snowy, grey weather and cold, but on the other hand in Tbilisi, even when it is snowing, there is light. The author accents that in Russia everyone dresses similarly and people have similar expressions— they all look alike. In Georgia, even though girls there love the color black, the atmosphere is colorful. The reason for the festive atmosphere and brightness is the sun. The sun warms up and lights everything. The sun is the truth. The single phrase from a Georgian song, which is one of the first sentences the narrator/protagonist studies in Georgian is “without you the sun does not shine.” It may seem that this phrase is about the one person, without whom the life of the narrator/protagonist is meaningless. But in reality, the memoir book gives the answer to this problem: the sun is the truth, and the sun and the truth are in Georgia, and by ignoring its Georgian context the West will not be able to see the truth...

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### **War, Epoch, City ...**

#### **(Severe problems of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the modern Georgian theatre directing)**

Severe political and social problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> century received a response by the Georgian Theatre with a slight delay, however still in the 90-ies. It turned out that at the end of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the problems that have been important in the 90-ies of the last cen-