

Text of Kennan Statement on the Role He Played

Following is a statement by George F. Kennan, former United States Ambassador in Moscow, on his connection with Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva:

When I learned from friends in government, one day in early March that Svetlana Alliluyeva had appeared at our embassy in New Delhi and had asked for our help, my first reaction was as a historian and my first initial feeling of concern for her future was from that standpoint.

I soon learned, however, that there was an even more important aspect of the problem and this was simply the fact that she was, in addition to being her father's daughter, a human being—a valuable human being: courageous, sincere and talented, and one who, overburdened by her sensational family connection, never before having been in the West, and being wholly without friends here, was in a peculiarly lonely and precarious position.

In her native land, she had never been fully able to establish her own identity. The shadow of her great and awesome father had lain constantly across her path and had interfered time after time with her effort to be a person in her own right and to lead a normal life. She had often been treated, as she herself complained, as a "piece of state property."



The New York Times
George F. Kennan

Now, in great travail of spirit, she had come to our embassy and placed her fate in our hands. In doing so, she had evinced a certain desperate but moving confidence in our ability and readiness to treat her in a different way: to help her to establish an identity of her own, to give her a chance to lead a normal life and pursue in a normal way the literary interests to which she is devoted.

And this, it seemed to me,

represented for us a responsibility we could not evade in view of our own traditions, our own pretensions, and the professed ideals of our society.

It was obvious that we would not be meeting this responsibility if we treated her as a "defector" in the usual "cold war" sense or if we simply delivered her up to the many people who would be interested in exploiting for commercial purposes her unusual name and experience. It seemed equally evident that what needed first to be done, in helping her to enter a new life, had best be done by private parties, not by governments or by anyone who had a commercial interest in her future.

Fine Swiss Tradition

I offered to be of such help as I could in this connection. Our own government, I am happy to say, understood the reasoning and welcomed the suggestion. The Swiss authorities, true to their own unique and fine tradition, had already granted her temporary asylum. With her assent, I was permitted to visit her in Switzerland and to assist her in making initial arrangements for a visit to this country and for publication of the literary work she had already completed.

Svetlana Alliluyeva is not primarily a political person. She is a person whose in-

terests are primarily literary and humane. She loves her country and hopes, with her writing and her activity outside Russia, to bring benefit to it and not harm. She has no desire to lend herself either to commercial or political exploitation.

Whether we in this country can take her on these terms and concede to her the necessary privacy and normality of atmosphere to permit her to function in this way, remains to be seen. It will require certain voluntary restraints, particularly in the satisfaction of public curiosity, restraints which have certainly not always been observed in comparable situations in the past.

But it will also require something more, which is an ability on our part, at this particular stage in our history, to rise above the outworn reflexes and concepts of the "cold war," to recognize that a new era is dawning and that there are situations to which these stock reactions are simply not applicable; to accept a person as a human being in herself and not just as a sort of extension of her paternity; and to concede to her the sort of fair chance that millions of other people, displaced by handicap or misfortune from their native countries, have been accorded by our society in earlier periods of our history.