

## 8.2. DECOLONISATION — AFRICA (GHANA): DEMOCRACY, DICTATORSHIP AND MILITARY GOVERNMENT (1957-69)

Brief background to independence, Nkrumah's role, reasons for his overthrow, Coup of 1966.

### Back ground

For a long time the European countries were active for possessing African countries mainly for commercial purposes. During the Scramble for Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain and France had the largest holdings, but Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal had also colonies there. As a result of colonialism, Africa lost not only its sovereignty, but also its natural resources like gold and rubber. For this, British government increasingly intervened in the affairs of Coastal Africa. In 1821, the British government took control of the Gold Coast's possession from a **private African Company of Merchants**. In 1844, Fanti, the most numerous of the coastal people rulers, signed an agreement with the British. This became the legal stepping stone to colonial status for the coastal area. Ashantis, who lived in Central Ghana, led a number of incursions which threatened commercial interests of Britain. The British forces fought a number of battles with them and ultimately the Ashanti state lost power and prestige. In Gold Coast, 1920s Britain introduced indirect rule to traditional authorities.

During the Second World War, the British African colonies fought for Allies against the Axis Powers. In the Atlantic Charter, there was one provision for the autonomy to the imperial colonies. After the Second World, the US and the African colonies put pressure on Britain to abide by the terms of the Atlantic Charter. When Churchill introduced the Charter to Parliament, he purposely mistranslated the colonies recently captured countries like Germany in order to get it passed.

After the Second World War, African nationalism spread rapidly because more and more African students were educated in Britain and the USA. There they felt the pinch of racial discrimination. Colonialism was seen as the humiliation and exploitation of the blacks by the white community. Naturally after returning from abroad, they agitated for independence and withdrawal of colonial rule.

### Beginning of Nationalist Movement

In the Gold Coast, in 1920s when Britain introduced indirect rule to traditional authorities, opposition of the nationalists began. During 1940s, the movement gained momentum for independence after police opened fired in **Accra, the capital of Ghana**, on a procession of ex-servicemen. They were carrying peacefully a petition to the Governor to seek redress of their grievances. During this time, **Joseph Danquah** and other leading nationalists founded the

United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in August, 1947 and invited **Kwame Nkrumah** to lead the campaign for representative self-government. But Nkrumah and Danquah were ultimately arrested and jailed after the troops fired on demonstrators and a riot erupted consequently in 1948.

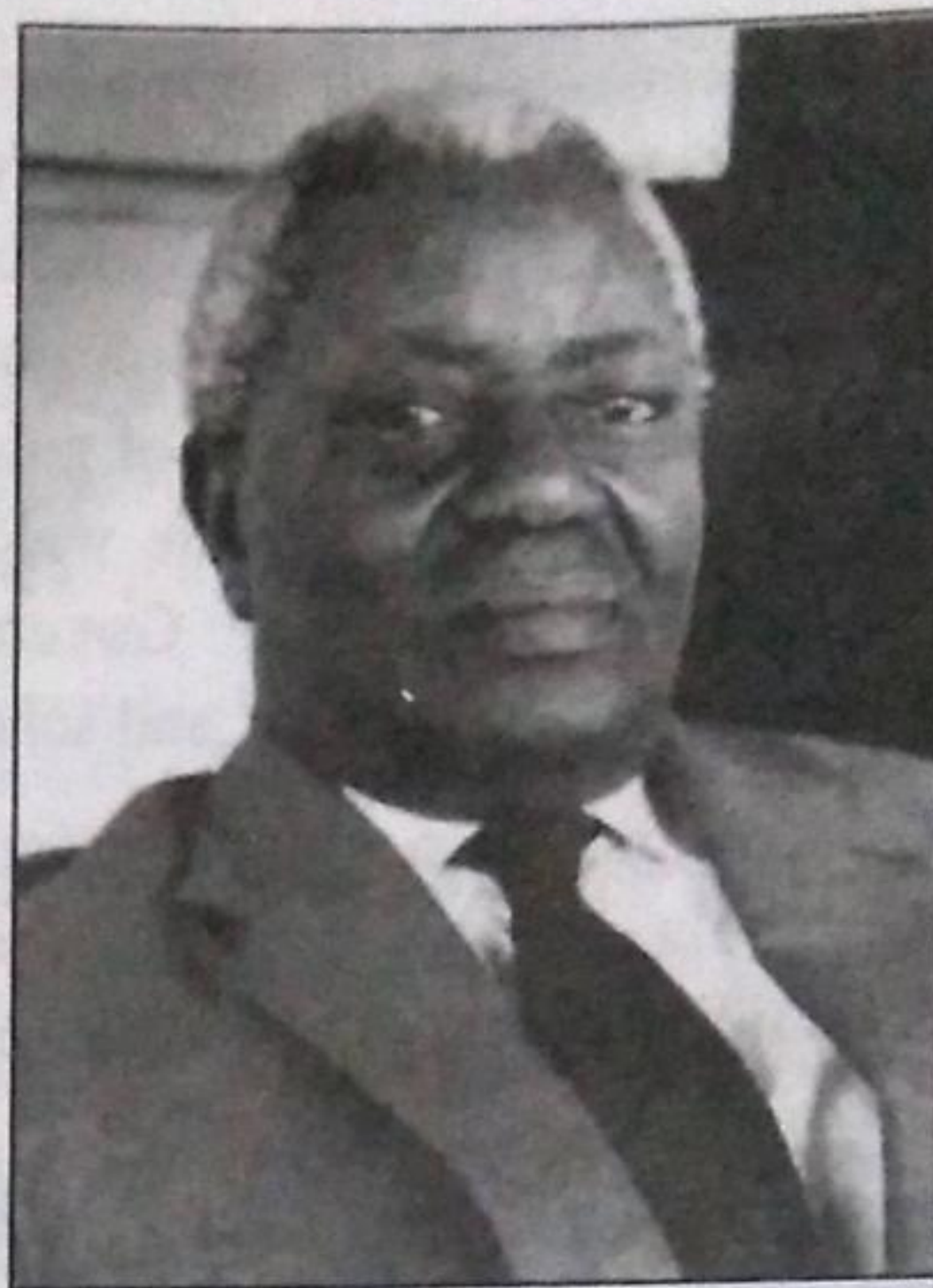
In 1949, the **Convention of People's Party (CPP)**, led by Nkrumah organized workers and farmers for the first time in a mass movement for independence. A new constitution was proposed by Nkrumah to provide direct election by universal suffrage. But this was opposed by the **National Liberation Movement (NLM)**, led by **Kofi Busia**. NLM opposed CPP for its limitation on the powers of tribal chiefs. The NLM now wanted to establish a Federal State with regional governments while CPP advocated a unitary state. Another constitution was approved on April, 1954 establishing a cabinet comprised of African ministers that were drawn from an All-African Legislature chosen by direct election. In the election, CPP won the majority seat in the new Legislative Assembly.

Prime Minister Nkrumah's Gold Coast government issued a white paper containing proposals for Gold Coast independence in May, 1956. The British government now agreed for independence when majority British Togoland residents voted for unification with an independent Gold Coast. On **6 March, 1957, the State of Ghana**, named after medieval West African Empire, became an independent country with the Common Wealth of Nations.

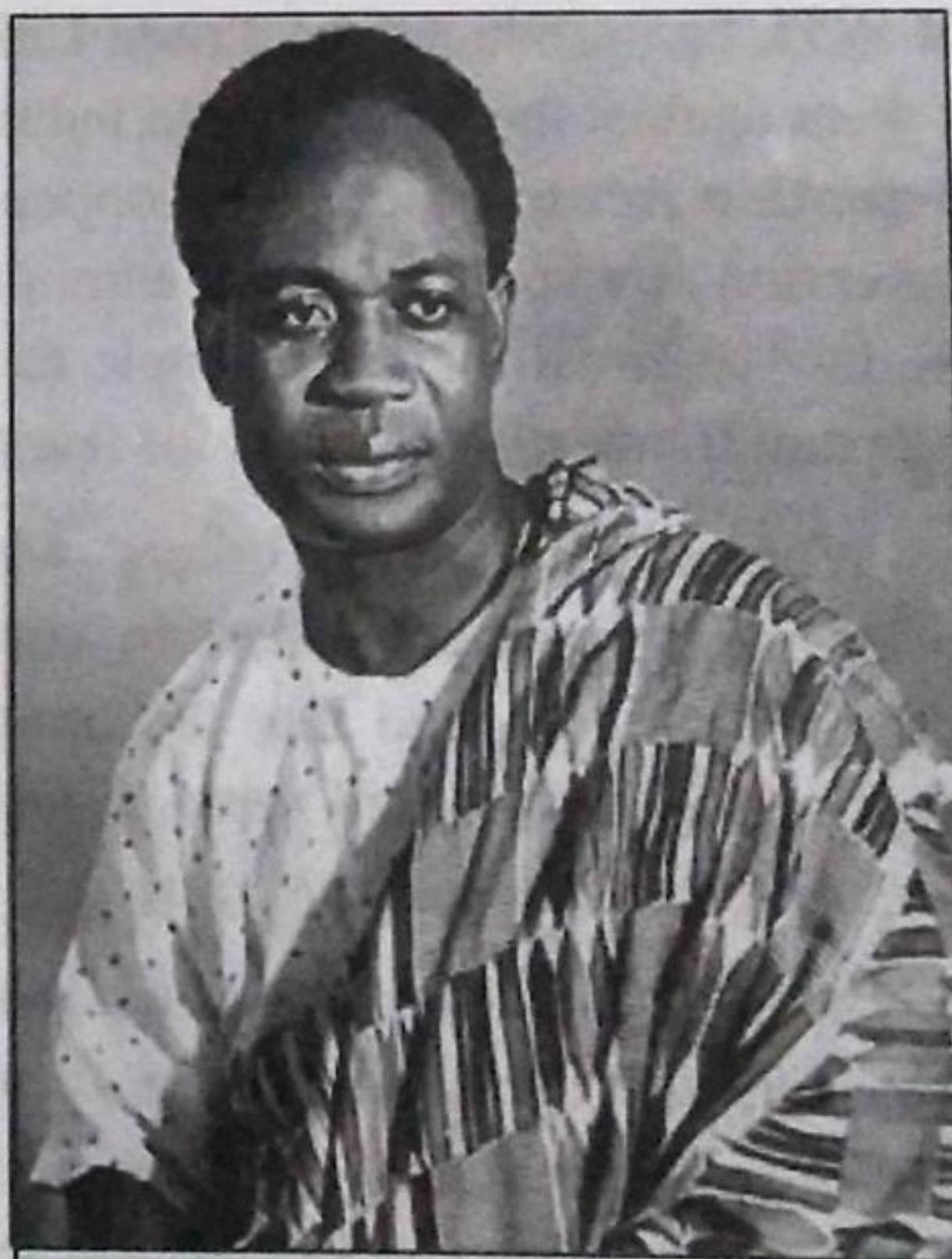
### **RULE OF NKROMAH (1957-1966)**

Nkrumah was the first Prime Minister of Ghana. He was born in 1909 and became a teacher. He completed his Bachelor of Arts in 1939 and M.A. in philosophy in 1942 from the University of Pennsylvania. He returned to London and founded the **West African National Secretariat** to work for the decolonization of Africa. He was a socialist in outlook and wanted to industrialize the country for better living conditions of the people.

As a leader of the government Nkrumah faced a number of challenges : first to learn how to govern : second how to unify the four territories of the Gold Coast and third to win his nation's complete independence from the United Kingdom. Nkrumah was successful at all three goals. On 6 March, 1960 he declared Ghana independent. The country became a Commonwealth realm. The new draft constitution



**Joseph Danquah**



**Kwame Nkrumah**

made a provision to surrender Ghanaian sovereignty to a Union of African States. The Constitution was ratified and Nkrumah was elected President of the country. Under his leadership the country adopted some socialist policies. He created a welfare system. Main export of Ghana was cocoa and its production doubled. Forestry, fishing and cattle-breeding expanded rapidly. Country's modest deposits of gold and bauxite were effectively exploited. A dam on Volta River was constructed to provide water for irrigation and hydro-electric power, producing enough electricity for the people. Government funds were also spent for village projects in which the village people built roads and schools. Free health care and education was introduced.

Nkrumah also gained prestige internationally. He strongly supported the Pan African Movement. He also supported the **Organization of African Unity** which was set up in 1963 for maintaining foreign links with the USSR and China.

### WHY WAS NKRUMAH OVERTHROWN?

Nkrumah tried to introduce industrialization very quickly and for this he borrowed huge amount of capitals from abroad, hoping to balance the budget from increased exports. He reasoned that if Ghana escaped the colonial trade system by reducing dependence on foreign capital, technology and material goods, it could become truly independent. But a sudden fall of prices of coco in world market left the country with a huge balance of payments deficit. He was criticized that too much money had been wasted on unnecessary projects like the ten mile stretch of motor way from capital Accra to Tema.

Nkrumah slowly abandoned the parliamentary form of government in favour of one party system and personal dictatorship. This was probably the most important reason of his down fall. From 1958, Nkrumah's regime became increasingly authoritarian. After the Gold Miners' strike of 1955, he introduced the **Trade Union Act** and this made strikes illegal because, in his opinion, it went against the idea of rapid industrial development. Not only that, he introduced **Preventive Detention Act** to suppress his opponents. Thus prisoners were often held without any trial. The Detention Act soon made his administration very much unpopular. Some of his associates used the law to arrest innocent people to capture their business assets. Nkrumah's advisers became reluctant to question policies for fear that they might be seen as opponents.

When the Railway Workers' went on strike in 1961, Nkrumah ordered the leaders of the strike and opposition leaders to arrest under the **Trade Union Act of 1958**. He justified his actions on the ground that the opposition parties were based on tribal differences were not constructive and wanted more powers in their own areas. Moreover they had no experience of working in a parliamentary system.

**In 1964 he amended the Constitution which made CPP the only legal party and Nkrumah the President for life of both nation and the party.** Ghana now became a one-party state since independence. The amendment thus transformed Nkrumah's presidency into a de facto legal dictatorship. The opposition leaders were arrested and imprisoned for up to five years without trial. Even the most respected opposition leader, **J.B. Danquah** was arrested and he died

in prison. In 1964 all parties except Nkrumah's own party were banned and even within his own party no criticism was allowed. Henceforth, he began to build up his image as the '**Father of the Nation**'.

Nkrumah wanted Ghana to have modern armed forces, so he acquired aircraft and ships and introduced conscription. He also gave support to rebels fighting against the government of Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, which had declared independence from Britain in 1965.

### **Fall of Nkrumah, 1966**

All these and the fact that he had acquired huge amount of personal fortune through corruption was too much for the army. On 24 February, 1966, while he was on a state visit to North Vietnam and China, his government was overthrown in a military coup led by **Emmanuel Kwasi Kotoka and the National Liberation Council**. Nkrumah never came back to Ghana. He lived in exile in Guinea as a guest of the President. As his health was deteriorating, Nkrumah went to Bucharest, Romania for medical treatment. Nkrumah died there in April, 1972, at the age of 62.

### 8.3. KENYA : CONFLICT AND INDEPENDENCE

#### BACKGROUND: CONFLICT OVER INDEPENDENCE AND ROLE OF KEYYATTA

After the end of the Second World War, De-colonization movement started in Africa. African nationalism spread rapidly after 1945. A number of Asians and Africans had left their homelands to fight in the Allied armies. They saw the contrast between the primitive conditions of Africa and the relatively comfortable conditions they experienced as members of the armed forces. This created a new feeling amongst them. On the other side, more and more Africans were being educated in Britain and the USA where they felt the pinch of racial discrimination. They felt colonialism as humiliation and exploitation of Blacks by the Whites.

There were outside pressures on the colonial powers to give up their empires. The Government of Britain was willing to allow independence and believed that they would be able to exercise control over the new states through Commonwealth. This economic control through Commonwealth was known as Neo-Colonialism. Gradually movements for independence became widespread in different parts of Africa.

#### PROBLEMS IN KENYA

In 1962 a coalition government was formed with **KANU (Kenya African National Union)** and **KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union)**. Elections were held in May, 1963. KANU then got majority in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Kenya then got internal self-government with Jomo Kenyatta as its President.

#### Kenyatta's Rise to Power

Kenyatta was born at a village named Gatundi in British East Africa now in Kenya. His date of birth is not known. His father died while he was very young. He then became a resident pupil at the Church of Scotland Mission and studied the Bible, English, Mathematics and carpentry. In 1947 Kenyatta was elected president of the Kenya African Union. He then toured the country and lectured condemning idleness, robbery, urging hard work and campaign for the return of land given to white settlers and independence within three years. In the mean time *Mau Mau* rebellion started and a state of emergency was declared on 2 October, 1952. He was arrested for association with the organization. This society was a radical anti-colonial movement engaged in rebellion against Kenya's British rulers. He was in prison till 1959. Emergency was lifted in January, 1960. There developed a strong public demand for his release. In August, 1961 he was released from jail.

The British and KANU agreed that Kenya would attain independence on 12 December, 1963 as a Commonwealth Member with Queen Elizabeth II as head of the state. In 1964 Kenya became a Republic, and constitutional changes further centralized the government. Thus elected by the National Assembly Kenyatta became head of the state, head of the government and head of the

armed forces. Thus Kenyatta automatically became President. His policy was that of continuity and gradual Africanisation of the government.

Kenya was a difficult area to deal with because there were huge numbers of white settlers who were strongly opposed to black majority rule. They were not in a mood to negotiate with the African nationalist leader **Jomo Kenyatta and his Kenya African Unity Party (KAU)**. They were determined to prolong white settler rule. Thus the white settlers started a policy of confrontation which, they thought, would easily destroy the African Party. The British government was in great pressure from the both sides because the white settlers were backed by certain big business houses of Britain. KAU was able to make little progress because the British allowed only six Africans to join the Legislative Council of fifty-four members.



Jomo Kenyatta

In this situation the impatient and the agitated Kenyan people started terrorist attacks on the European-owned farms. It was organized by the *Mau Mau* secret society whose members were mainly from the Kikuyu tribes, who had been deprived of much of their best lands by the white settlers. A state of emergency was declared in 1952 and Kenyatta and other nationalist leaders were arrested. Kenyatta was imprisoned for six years, though he had publicly condemned terrorism. The British authority commissioned huge force to suppress the terrorists, and over the next eight years some ten thousand Africans were killed and a number of people were in prison, no better than a concentration camp.

By 1960, the terrorists were defeated. The expense of anti-terrorist campaign and the change of wind brought a change in the minds of the British people. They realized that **Kenyatta** was a moderate man and allowed him to be the Prime Minister of Kenya after independence in 1963.

### Kenyatta Tenure (1963-1978)

In spite of the bad treatment by the British, Kenyatta allowed the whites to stay there provided they took Kenyan citizenship. The British government brought out the white settlers who were not willing to stay there and mostly left Kenya. The Indian minorities dominated retail business in the cities and most towns, but were deeply distrusted by the Africans. As a result, a huge number of Indians kept their old British passports. A large number left Kenya and moved to Britain.

### Foreign Policy

Independent Kenya, although officially non-aligned, adopted a pro-Western stance. Kenya worked unsuccessfully for East African union, the proposal to unite Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

did not get approval. However, the three nations formed a loose East African Community (EAC) in 1967, but this organization collapsed and officially dissolved in 1984.

### Later Change

Once in power, Kenyatta gradually changed from radical nationalist to conservative bourgeois politician. In 1969 elections, Kenyatta banned all other political parties. For all intents and purpose, Kenya became a one-party state. In 1970 he again became the President for a further term. Agitation also started because the plantations formerly owned by the white settlers were broken up and given to farmers of a particular tribe. As a result, other tribal leaders became unhappy and opposition became more and more strong. Social tension also increased due to rapid population growth, high unemployment rate and disorders in the cities. The blacks also expressed their discontent as most of the privileges were enjoyed by the Asians and the Europeans. During this time, Kenyatta died on 22 August, 1978 and the Vice-President Daniel Moi became the President of the country.

Answer the following:

1. Why was Nkrumah overthrown? Discuss it with special reference to his rule.
2. Discuss the factors which helped Kenyatta to rise to power.
3. Why did Kenyatta become so unpopular with the people?