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Biographical Sketch

OSAGYEFO DR. KWAME NKRUMAH
President of the Republic of Ghana

The biography of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (pronounced, "En-kroomah"), President of the Republic of Ghana, parallels that of modern Ghana, which he has led to independence -- and since independence, to a vital, prosperous nation and a responsible, vocal member of the world community of nations. Ghanaians call their beloved leader by an African title of high respect -- "Osagyefo" or "Deliverer".

Early Education

The son of a goldsmith, Dr. Nkrumah was born on September 21, 1909, in Nkroful, a small village in the Axim district of Ghana, then in the Western Province of the Gold Coast. He received his elementary education in mission schools and went on to the Prince of Wales College at Achimota, Ghana, where he trained as a teacher.

College Period in the US

After leaving college, Dr. Nkrumah, determined to complete his education overseas, came to the United States in 1935 to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Here he majored in economics and sociology and received his Bachelor of Arts in 1939. He then went to Lincoln Theological Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received the degrees of Bachelor of Theology and Master of Science in Education. While doing graduate work toward a Doctorate of Philosophy, Nkrumah served on the Lincoln faculty as instructor in philosophy, Negro history and Greek. Lincoln presented him with an honorary doctorate in 1951.

To help pay his way through college, Dr. Nkrumah held a variety of odd jobs, worked in shipyards and went to sea as a steward during vacations. He also spent much time preaching in Negro churches in Pennsylvania and New York.

During his period of study in the US, Nkrumah helped found the African Students' Association of the US and Canada. He was the first president of the organization and edited its publication.

London: Law and Political Activity

In 1945, Dr. Nkrumah left the US for England to study at the London School of Economics. He joined Gray's Inn and studied law, but quickly became drawn into political activity and from 1945 to 1947 served as General Secretary of the West African National Secretariat, formed with the object of working for a united Africa.

He edited the organ of the West African Students' Union and served as joint secretary of the Pan African Congress. During this time, Dr. Nkrumah also edited a pamphlet, "New Africa", which circulated in the Gold Coast in 1946.

(President Nkrumah's other publications include "Education and Nationalism in West Africa", 1943; "Towards Colonial Freedom", 1946; "What I Mean by Positive Action", 1950; and "Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah", 1957.)

From England, Dr. Nkrumah's reputation as an organizer spread to the Gold Coast, where the postwar years brought a nationwide demand for more rapid progress toward self-government, and in 1947 he was offered the position of General Secretary of the United Gold Coast Convention, a political party.

Gold Coast: UGCC & the Independence Movement

As UGCC General Secretary, Dr. Nkrumah became a popular political figure in the Gold Coast. In 1948 the UGCC General Secretary was banished, with five other members of the steering committee. Dr. Nkrumah was taken to the Northern Territories.

CPP Is Formed

In 1949, a split occurred in the United Gold Coast Convention, and Dr. Nkrumah broke away to form a party of his own -- the Convention People's Party (CPP).

During 1949, the CPP developed a campaign to demand immediate self-government and declared its intention of inaugurating a series of strikes and boycotts. Early in 1950, Nkrumah was imprisoned on a charge of sedition and of fomenting an illegal general strike during the "positive action" campaign.

"Positive action" is the term Dr. Nkrumah uses for the non-violent method by which Ghana fought for and won its independence. Dr. Nkrumah has continued to advocate the principle of positive action for solution of problems faced today by Ghana and by the world.

Victory in 1951 Elections

Dr. Nkrumah was still in prison when his party, the CPP, swept the general elections of 1951, winning 35 out of 38 seats in the Legislative Assembly. He was released from prison to head a new Government. As Leader of Government Business, he held the portfolio of Communications and Works. In 1952, by a Constitutional amendment, Dr. Nkrumah received the title and status of Prime Minister.

"Motion of Destiny", 1953

In July 1953, Prime Minister Nkrumah proposed, and the National Assembly approved, his motion for the independence of the Gold Coast, which became popularly known as "The Motion

of Destiny". As a result of the adoption of this motion, the National Assembly became an all-African Assembly of 104 and elections were held in 1954, with CPP again winning a majority. Again in 1956, the CPP won a majority. Then, despite having to face its first organized opposition -- a coalition of the National Liberation Movement (Ashanti) and the Northern Peoples Party -- the CPP won 397,941 votes to the Opposition's 298,967 votes.

Independence -- 1957

Ghana's independence was achieved on March 6th, 1957. On July 1st, 1960, the political evolution of Ghana reached its culmination, when the country became a Republic, the new Republican Constitution having received an overwhelming vote of approval from the people. With 54 percent of the voters casting ballots, more than a million voted "yes" and 131,425, "no", to the proposed Constitution. In the Presidential election held at the same time, Dr. Nkrumah received 1,016,076 votes, and his opponent, 124,623 votes. One hundred three out of 104 Constituencies voted for the Constitution, while 102 out of 104 voted for Dr. Nkrumah as first President.

Economic Development

Since Ghana became independent, Dr. Nkrumah's Government has introduced a series of economic development plans. The First and Consolidation Development Plans, covering a period of eight years from 1951, laid the groundwork for development -- emphasizing communications, public works, education and general services. The Second Development Plan, 1959-64, with a total allocation of \$980 million, accents the development of agriculture and industry.

Two mammoth undertakings initiated by President Nkrumah are the Volta River Project -- which will open up an aluminum industry for Ghana -- and the establishment of a new deep-water port and township at Tema.

African Independence -- African Unity

It is President Nkrumah's contention that, as he stated on the day Ghana became independent, "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the whole continent of Africa."

In line with this philosophy, he and his Government have encouraged the push toward independence of other African countries.

At the same time, President Nkrumah actively promotes the eventual unification of independent African states. A unified Africa, Dr. Nkrumah says, would eliminate the danger of the balkanization of the continent by foreign

powers, on whom separate, tiny states would have to depend economically for their defense. As Dr. Nkrumah has explained it, "A political union envisages a common foreign and defense policy, and rapid social, economic and industrial developments. The economic resources of Africa are immense and staggering. It is only by unity that these resources can be utilized for the progress of the continent and for the happiness of mankind."

A number of international conferences looking toward African unity have taken place in Accra, under the sponsorship of Dr. Nkrumah.

As Prime Minister of Gold Coast, Dr. Nkrumah opened, in January 1957, the first all-African trade union conference. In March 1958 he was host to 11 countries which set up an inter-African mutual assistance organization in Africa South of the Sahara. The following month he inaugurated the First Conference of Independent African States. After this conference, Dr. Nkrumah made a tour of the countries which had sent delegations to it.

Dr. Nkrumah in 1957 married an Egyptian citizen, Miss Fathia Halen Ritzk, who had been a student at the University of Cairo. The Nkrumahs have two children.

April 9, 1962.