

midwife while other nations are living in the space age and walk on the surface of the moon.

This is our greatest tribulation. How long will it last?

## NKRUMAH'S VISION FOR GHANA AND AFRICA

Kwame Nkrumah led the drive by a colonized sub-Saharan Africa to win independence and promote economic development. Better than anyone else he articulated the dreams of national and continental renewal. Nkrumah's background was typical of many leaders of the generation who were devoted to liberation: Born on Ghana's coast, he was educated in missionary schools and in 1935 went abroad (in his case the United States) for advanced education. He returned home in 1947 afire with nationalist and Marxist ideas and eager to plunge into politics. He proved an effective organizer, whose mass base intimidated British colonial authorities. In 1957 Ghana gained its independence — the first sub-Saharan country to shed colonialism — with Nkrumah its president. He would remain the dominant figure until his overthrow in a military coup in 1966.

During those nine years in power, Nkrumah had a chance to put into practice his ideas on the future of Ghana and its neighbors in black Africa. In directing his country's economic development, he followed a model that was both socialist and Western. He concentrated on cities and big industrial projects, but neglected the "backward" countryside, the home of most his people and the center of gravity of his national economy. He championed self-determination and democracy, but his Convention People's Party proved autocratic as well as corrupt — its members more preoccupied with personal gain than Nkrumah's ambitious agenda. Finally, he boldly championed decolonization elsewhere in Africa and wide-ranging cooperation among states gaining their independence. Here too his ambitions fell short, gaining the support of few other heads of state. Despite these setbacks and disappointments, Nkrumah continued to dream, even after his ouster from power. In exile in Guinea, he shifted his hopes from Ghana and Africa to the black diaspora (the communities of Africans planted overseas by the slave trade).

### 6.4

#### Independence on the Horizon

The war years were a critical seedtime for Nkrumah and many other third-world leaders. They had grown up with nationalist ideas and self-consciously readied themselves for their day of independence by studying in the West. They were galvanized by Allied propaganda promising that self-determination would be fundamental in shaping the postwar international system. Their time to lead was drawing close, prompting feverish private conversations and public conferences about the future.

Source: M. Hunt, The World Transformed

Nkrumah's writings from this period capture some of the excitement, impatience, and even anxiety of the war years. How does Nkrumah evaluate the prospects for decolonization, especially the motives of colonialists and the likelihood that they will decamp? What is his vision for post-independence Ghana? How much does his analysis echo or transcend the thinking of an older generation of nationalists represented by Mao, Ho, and Nehru (treated in chapter 3)?

Kwame Nkrumah  
*Commentary on Colonialism*  
1942–1945

The aim of all colonial governments in Africa and elsewhere has been the struggle for raw materials; and not only this, but the colonies have become the dumping ground, and colonial peoples the false recipients, of manufactured goods of the industrialists and capitalists of Great Britain, France, Belgium and other colonial powers who turn to the dependent territories which feed their industrial plants. This is colonialism in a nutshell.

The basis of colonial territorial dependence is economic, but the basis of the solution of the problem is political. Hence political independence is an indispensable step towards securing economic emancipation. This point of view irrevocably calls for an alliance of all colonial territories and dependencies. All provincial and tribal differences should be broken down completely. By operating on tribal differences and colonial provincialism, the colonial powers' age-long policy of "divide and rule" has been enhanced, while the colonial national independence movement has been obstructed and bamboozled. . . .

The idea that Britain, France or any other colonial power is holding colonies under "trusteeship" until, in their opinion, the colonies become "capable" of self-government is erroneous and misconceived. Colonial powers cannot afford to expropriate themselves. And then to imagine that these colonial powers will hand freedom and independence to their colonies on a silver platter without compulsion is the height of folly. . . .

The peoples of the colonies know precisely what they want. They wish to be free and independent, to be able to feel themselves on an equal with all other peoples, and to work out their own destiny without outside interference, and to be unrestricted to attain an advancement that will put them on a par with other technically advanced nations of the world. Outside interference does not help to develop their country. It impedes and stifles and crushes not only economic progress, but the spirit and indigenous enterprise of the peoples themselves. . . .

We therefore advance the following programme . . . :

(1) *Political Freedom*, i.e. complete and absolute independence from the control of any foreign government.

Originally published in *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1962) and reprinted in Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 15–16, 40–41.

(2) *Democratic Freedom*, i.e. freedom from political tyranny and the establishment of a democracy in which sovereignty is vested in the broad masses of the people.

(3) *Social Reconstruction*, i.e. freedom from poverty and economic exploitation and the improvement of social and economic conditions of the people so that they will be able to find better means of achieving livelihood and asserting their right to human life and happiness.