

# Mandela Ends Triumphant Visit To Britain

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LONDON, July 12 — It was officially labeled a state visit, but as it ended today, Nelson Mandela's four-day triumphal sweep through London looked more like a coronation.

From Buckingham Palace, where he stayed as the honored guest of the Queen, to the festively decorated streets of Brixton, home to one of Britain's largest black communities, Mr. Mandela was feted as a king in a country where Margaret Thatcher once called him a "terrorist" and dismissed the possibility that he could one day govern South Africa as a pipe dream out of "cloud-cuckoo land."

In his first state visit to Britain as South Africa's president, the 78-year-old Mr. Mandela was not only assiduously courted by royalty, but also honored by academics (who conferred eight honorary degrees upon him), lionized in Parliament, pursued by business leaders and worshiped as a hero by the Britons.

He took it all in stride.

Thursday night, as he repaid the Queen's hospitality with a party of music and dance at the Royal Albert Hall, which he referred to as "this big round building," he had the Queen and Prince Charles on their feet.

Mr. Mandela, dressed in a black silk shirt, and the Prince of Wales were swaying and clapping to the music, joined by the Queen, "who has seldom been known to boogie in public," according to this morning's Daily Telegraph.

As he has done throughout the visit, he broke away from rules of protocol. Instead of a traditional state dinner to return the Queen's hospitality, he chose the party, organized to raise money for his Nations Trust to help schoolchildren in South Africa. Phil Collins, Quincy Jones, Tony Bennett and Hugh Masekela performed.

From Britain's ruling establishment and the press there was nothing but respect. If there were dissidents, their voices were not raised. Newspapers described him as "the man who kept his halo bright" and politicians used words like "brilliant" and "splendid" to describe his every comment.

Addressing a joint meeting of Parliament at Westminster Hall on Thursday, he walked into a room that had not been so full since Charles de Gaulle came here to speak

30 years ago. Members of Parliament brought their wives, mothers and children.

President Mandela, in a dark suit, white shirt and a green polka-dot tie, limped to the rostrum holding the hand of the strong-minded Laborite Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, who introduced him by saying, “You spent more than a third of your life in prison, though your spirit was freer there than those of your captors outside.”

Commentators pointed out that Mr. Mandela addressed members of Parliament in the 900-year-old Westminster Hall while President Clinton and the French President, Jacques Chirac, were assigned to the Royal Gallery of the Lords for their addresses.

“It was fitting,” said The Guardian today. “The Gallery is a fake, Victorian idea of monarchical splendor. Westminster Hall is the real thing.”

Again, Mr. Mandela seemed unfazed by the pomp, ceremony and high emotions. While courteous, he was unflinching.

Reminding all that the African National Congress, which he led for many years while in jail, had come to Britain to seek justice and had been turned away, Mr. Mandela said: “We return to this honored place neither with pikes, nor a desire for revenge, nor even a plea to assuage our hunger.”

But staring at the members of the Houses of Commons and Lords with an emotionless face, he went on to make it clear that while he has forgiven he has not forgotten.

“Racism,” he said, “is a blight on the human conscience. The idea that any people can be inferior to another, to the point where those who consider themselves superior define and treat the rest as sub-human, denies the humanity even of those who elevate themselves to the status of gods.”

This morning he carried the forgiving further, inviting Lady Thatcher — who as Prime Minister in the 1980’s refused to endorse international sanctions against the white supremacist government — to Buckingham Palace, where they held a 20-minute chat.

No details were released, but when he was asked earlier in the week about her stand, Mr. Mandela said, “Let bygones be bygones.” Lady Thatcher said nothing.

But it was in Brixton, torn by race riots in the 1980’s, where Mr. Mandela was unambiguously treated as a living legend.

Having insisted on taking a stroll, he was given a rapturous welcome by a crowd standing 10-deep on the sidewalks and streets.

Balconies, roofs and store fronts were covered with welcome signs. Thousands of people wearing Mandela T-shirts jammed the streets: mothers carrying babies, couples holding hands, school boys and girls climbing to the highest vantage points.

Long before he arrived at 11 A.M., the whole of Brixton reverberated to reggae music. When he did arrive, walking with his bodyguards and framed by policemen riding huge horses, he was still tall enough for people to see him.

Darting from one spot to another as she jumped up to catch a glimpse, Diane Cambel, a 24-year-old physical education teacher, said: “This is the best day for Brixton. This is lovely. This should be a day on which we do something special from now on. He just blessed Brixton.”

Laura MacArdale, an 11-year-old who was one of 400 schoolchildren who sang for him at Brixton’s recreational center at the start of his 80-minute tour, giggled as she said she wished he would take her and her friends and “put us in his pocket.”