

Mandela Gets An Emotional New York City Welcome

By **JOHN KIFNER**

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Nelson Mandela, the living symbol of resistance to South African apartheid, swept tired but triumphant yesterday into an emotional New York welcome.

During Mr. Mandela's first hours in the United States at the start of an eight-city visit, tens of thousands of people in the black Brooklyn neighborhoods of Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York and Fort Greene lined the sidewalks, wildly cheering the honored guest's motorcade and brandishing clenched fists.

In Lower Manhattan huge clumps of computer printouts tumbled to the streets of the financial district in place of ticker tape, made obsolete by electronics, in the city's traditional hero's greeting.

"Apartheid is doomed," Mr. Mandela said at the end of brief, graceful remarks at a City Hall welcoming ceremony. "South Africa will be free. The struggle continues." For the city's blacks it was a particularly compelling moment.

"I felt a blessing from God that I could be part of this," said Taraja Samuel, an administrator with the city's Board of Education, who took her 15-year-old son Taiye to the City Hall ceremony. "I came of age in the 1960's, but the regret of my life is I never met Dr. King or Malcolm. I told my son today to be in the presence of Nelson Mandela was an honor.

"This makes me able to go back to the board, despite all the problems, and know that I can make a difference," she said. "This man is an inspiration."

As Mr. Mandela praised David N. Dinkins as New York's first black mayor, Deputy Mayor Bill Lynch, who managed Mr. Dinkins's campaign and played a major role in organizing Mr. Mandela's visit, wept in the row behind them.

The police estimated that 750,000 people saw Mr. Mandela at one point or another — 50,000 in Queens at Kennedy International Airport and along the route, 100,000 as he passed through Brooklyn, 400,000 along the ticker-tape parade and 200,000 in the ceremony at City Hall. Hundreds of thousands more saw the events broadcast live on local television.

Police helicopters flew overhead, and Mr. Mandela's 40-car motorcade bristling with police and State Department security officers was led by two dozen police motorcycles. As part of a huge security operation, traffic was frozen as the motorcade passed.

As the day progressed, there was increasing concern for the health of Mr. Mandela, the deputy president of the African National Congress, who will turn 72 years of age next month and was released less than five months ago after 27 years in prison. He is in the midst of a six-week, 14-nation tour and at the beginning of a hastily arranged visit to the United States, where he is seeking financial support and the continuation of economic sanctions against the white regime in South Africa.

Last night, an exhausted Mr. Mandela canceled several scheduled events, including meetings with black journalists and exiled South Africans, and even the scaled-down, intimate family meal at Gracie Mansion that had replaced plans for a 22-person dinner went by the boards.

Roger Wilkins, the national coordinator of the trip, told journalists last night that the Dinkinses were eating downstairs while Mr. Mandela remained in the guest suite upstairs.

After the City Hall ceremonies, Mr. Wilkins said: "It was clear he reached the limit where he should not be pushed. The man is tired."

Earlier, Zwelakhe Sisulu, Mr. Mandela's press secretary and the director of information of the African National Congress, told reporters that Mr. Mandela was "quite tired after such a hectic day."

Mr. Wilkins had said at the earlier news briefing: "The fact that we express our concerns doesn't mean we have a sick man on our hands. It just means that we are being realistic about a very strenuous program for a 71-year-old man."

Mr. Mandela arrived from Canada almost two hours behind schedule yesterday morning in order to get extra rest, and by the end of the day he was visibly worn.

As Mr. Mandela rode up Broadway, he was encased in an odd vehicle immediately dubbed the "Mandelamobile." A small bulletproof glass shelter with a peaked roof was built atop a police flatbed truck. Spotlights fixed to the corners of the roof give it an uncanny resemblance to a prison watchtower.

But all the security was virtually swept aside at one point as hundreds of excited black teen-agers surrounded the motorcade when it left Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn, running, whooping and cheering alongside the cars. State Department security officers paled and their eyes widened at the sight.

The major political goal of Mr. Mandela's trip is to keep economic sanctions on South Africa in hope of creating pressure for greater social change. African National

Congress leaders say they fear that the limited reforms instituted by the government of President F. W. de Klerk could be used to justify a lifting of sanctions.

President Bush, who opposed sanctions, told reporters somewhat wistfully yesterday that he is precluded from removing any of the sanctions. Under the law enacted in 1986 over the veto of President Ronald Reagan, the sanctions may not be lifted until a series of specific conditions are met, and the Bush Administration acknowledges that has not yet happened.

“I can’t lift the sanctions under existing U.S. law,” Mr. Bush said at a news conference in Huntsville, Ala. But he said he intended to take the issue up with Mr. Mandela when they meet at the White House on Monday.

“I look forward to talking to Mr. Mandela about this,” the president said. “There are black leaders in South Africa that disagree with him on this question of sanctions.”

The President added that his administration was looking for ways to demonstrate its support of Mr. de Klerk’s government.

“I’d like to find a way to show Mr. de Klerk that we, the United States, are grateful for this new approach that is having South Africa evolve to a much more open society and hopefully one day to one which is color blind in terms of participation in the political process,” he said.

Mr. Mandela’s red and white plane, a Canadian military transport, touched down just after 11:30 A.M. at Kennedy, where several hundred elected officials, community advocates, African National Congress members and supporters and journalists had been waiting for hours, most of them, it seemed, talking on cellular telephones.

Mr. Wilkins, the writer and educator who is running the American trip, called in the middle of the night, a senior aide to Mr. Dinkins said, to tell Harry Belafonte, the singer who is one of the main organizers here, that Mr. Mandela was tired and needed more rest. Mr. Wilkins said the African National Congress wanted to cancel the visit to Boys and Girls High School, the mayoral aide said, but Mr. Lynch, the deputy mayor, insisted that it go forward.

But Mr. Mandela appeared almost radiant as he stepped from the hatch of the airplane, a tall figure in a conservative gray suit, blue shirt and dark-patterned tie. He would soon be wearing a gold “Big Apple” pin in his lapel. Behind him, Winnie Mandela, wearing purple and white traditional African dress with a matching head wrap, raised a clenched fist.

“I saw astounded people; I saw euphoric people,” Mr. Wilkins said at the end of the day. “I saw a nearly 72-year-old man tired from a very emotional day. But when I was

running by that security vehicle, I looked up, and the smile on his face was like a child at Christmas.”

A receiving line of about 50 dignitaries, including the Mayor and his wife, Joyce, and Govs. Mario M. Cuomo of New York and Jim Florio of New Jersey, was stretched along a red carpet to a speakers stand where the African National Congress’s black, green and yellow flag stood along with city, state and American flags.

But Mr. Mandela first stooped down, his hands on his knees, and gave his undivided attention to two young girls, members of the African National Congress, who tied scarves in the group’s colors, bandana style, around his and his wife’s necks in greeting.

Then, moving with the dignified, almost regal bearing — he is a hereditary tribal chief — that he would maintain, Mr. Mandela took 10 minutes to work his way through the receiving line and then swept past the speakers stand to greet the crowd of several hundred supporters.

“It is a source of tremendous joy and strength for us, my wife, our delegation, to be received with such a rousing welcome by the people of the city,” he said in brief remarks after being welcomed by the mayor and both governors.

“Join us in the international actions we are taking. The only way we can walk together on this difficult road is for you to insure that sanctions are applied,” he added in what he said would be his main message throughout his visit.

Roadside crowds gradually swelled as Mr. Mandela’s motorcade raced from Queens into predominantly black sections of Brooklyn, with schoolchildren neatly lined behind banners. People waved portraits of Mr. Mandela and posters or makeshift signs welcoming him.

But in the predominantly white communities of Howard Beach and Ozone Park, Queens, there were a few rude gestures, and one man with a video camera held his hand in front of the lens with a finger raised, so that the motorcade became the background for an obscene gesture.

Some 3,000 people, a predominantly black crowd, were waiting on the athletic field of Boys and Girls High on Fulton Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant when the motorcade arrived shortly after one o’clock. At times they seemed to be a sea of yellow signs that said “Free South Africa,” red-black-and- green liberation flags, dazzling multicolor headdresses of African and Caribbean design and T-shirts with Mr. Mandela’s face.

“Mandela, Mandela,” the crowd cheered, surging forward in the muggy sunlight as Mr. Mandela and his wife climbed the makeshift stage of an 18-wheel truck. “Keep the pressure on.”

“We in South Africa have always known that we have loyal friends among the

people of New York, but we have no idea that we were perceived with such love and warmth,” Mr. Mandela said in a slow, deliberate voice, each word punching through the public address system. With little further ado, he began an appeal to raise money to build schools in South Africa.

As the motorcade left, many in the crowd raced out of the schoolyard and into the streets, slowing the pace to a crawl. Many raced along with the cars on foot or on bicycles until they could speed up.

The sidewalk crowds swelled as the motorcade moved through Bedford-Stuyvesant, with welcoming banners like “Forward to Victory” stretched across Fulton Street.

Mr. Mandela paused briefly for lunch at the Coast Guard Station at the Battery and an almost obligatory photo opportunity with the Statue of Liberty in the background. Then he climbed into the odd-looking Mandelamobile for the ticker-tape parade.

As 3 P.M. approached, the crowd was beginning to thin along Broadway. People looked at their watches, stood on tiptoes and, where space and dress allowed, slumped to the curb to rest. Executives kicked their wingtips at the paper underfoot and secretaries moaned for their Nikes.

Then, in a wail of sirens and a shower of saved-up confetti, the motorcade appeared.

The canyon of tall buildings presented a strange sight. Instead of the familiar ticker tape of parades past, rectangles of paper floated down and the police and sanitation workers lining the streets had to kick through thick wads of computer printouts.

“It was worth waiting for,” Henrietta Wilson, an officer’s assistant at Chemical Bank, said as she rushed back toward the Battery to work. “That was history.”