

Mail &amp; Guardian June 27 to July 3 2003

AP 2003-1-6-27

# Ideology is dead, long live ID-ology

The launch of the Independent Democrats marks the end of an era, write **Rapule Tabane** and **Ferial Haffajee**

**'W'**e are not going to be a radical communist, socialist or capitalist. We are going to be constitutionalists."

So said Patricia de Lille at the launch of her Independent Democrats party last week.

The comment signals a trend in South African politics: the end of ideology.

The new party's motto of "back to basics" doesn't define the "basics", but neither does the ruling African National Congress define what it means by its identity as "racial democratic".

The six new parties formed during the defection period are similarly woolly — all purveyors of "good governance", "job creation" and a "crime-free" South Africa.

Meanwhile, the black left is in stasis, its black consciousness and pan-African philosophy stolen from under it by President Thabo Mbeki's New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and his stewardship of the African Union.

Moreover, the Pan Africanist Congress, the Azanian Peoples Organisation (Azapo) and the Socialist Party of Azania (Sopa) have not made their socialist principles relevant to a globalised, post-Cold War era.

"People do not have to understand ideology, but just what it means for them. We cannot simply talk of black consciousness and socialism without talking about their suffering. People define themselves in terms of their experiences and it will be clear who is affected by landlessness and hunger," says Dan Hlabedi, Azapo's secretary-general.

The era of genuinely competing ideas, of ferment and debate has spluttered to its close through the Nineties — its demise attributed both to the end of the Cold War and the peculiarities of South African electoral politics.

Its replacement is a form of hybrid or mixed politics: everyone is pan-Africanist and all want to protect the "macro-economic fundamentals".

The Democratic Alliance (DA) supports both the basic income grants and privatisation. De Lille's party launch reverberated to the sounds of the struggle-era Vava, Vicky Sampson's *My African Dream* and "For she's a jolly good fellow".

"There has been a narrowing of the

ideological divide," says Professor Adam Habib of the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Natal. "All parliamentary parties have agreed on the parameters."

"The real tragedy of the South African parliamentary opposition context is the failure to fill the gap to the left of the ANC [where the issues are] jobs, unemployment, land and the abandonment of the Reconstruction and Development Programme," he adds.

With her history as an active trade unionist, De Lille's early policy bases are remarkably centrist — in fact, she is at one with the ANC on key policies such as economic and health and jobs, though she differs on HIV/AIDS.

"Some policies are good, but there are failures of implementation. We will not rejoice in government messing things up and we will not allow anyone to mess up this country, not government or the opposition," said De Lille, positioning her party midway between the New National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party, which are in coalition with the ANC, and the DA which is a traditional opposition.

What of the black left? Though these parties theoretically offer the best ideological alternative to the ANC, they have failed to win the support of South Africa's working class.

Parties like the PAC, Azapo and Sopa all articulate a socialist alternative that will put the interest of black Africans first, but their message has either been ignored by the electorate or has just not been properly marketed.

Vista University academic and PAC activist Thami ka Ptshatle says the former liberation movements have failed to sustain the message of the importance of ideology.

"Some among us have conveyed the incorrect message that our struggle was to end apartheid and once that was achieved we were finished."

"We are now paying the price in the form of depoliticisation of our society. If people are depoliticised they become increasingly vulnerable to the emergence of charismatic parties and personalities. Personal popularity is now crystallised into customised political brands that emerge everywhere," says Ka Ptshatle, who recently pulled out of the race for the PAC's presidency.

What is the future of this political spectrum?

"They need to say at what point



Patricia de Lille and her new Independent Democrats are positioning themselves midway between the New National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party. Photograph: Paul Notes

they are going to be antagonistic to the ANC and at what point they will be complementary. Individually these parties are not strong enough but collectively they could challenge the ANC. Maybe these parties are not desperate enough yet to realise the importance of unity," says Ka Ptshatle.

He denies that Mbeki has pulled the rug from under their feet with his African Renaissance.

Professor Bob Mates of the Centre of Social Science Research in Cape Town said it was natural in a maturing democracy for political parties to de-emphasise ideology.

"In a growing democracy such as ours it sometimes becomes difficult to stay consistent to ideology."

The ANC is an increasingly managerial party — its policies and debates are now an alphabet soup of development-speak.

Rather than a discussion of ideas,

its conferences and meetings are about managing the implementing of policy, of getting delivery (of houses, public works, food aid, electricity and water) to work as the third general election looms.

Habib says the only consistently left alternative is extra-parliamentary.

"Within the ANC, the real discourse is at the Tripartite Alliance level articulated by the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party."

But even then, says Habib, debate is constrained by a "need to blur the divides" among the three parties.

"When the chips are down, there is always the fear of a divide in the ANC and things are patched up."

## Enter the divine De Lille

Ferial Haffajee

Supporters unhappy about corruption and the high life of those in office are being drawn to Patricia de Lille's party, the Independent Democrats, conveniently abbreviated as ID and inaugurated on Gauteng's Rust Rand at the weekend.

"The African National Congress? They're too corrupt. Look at the Yengeni business. Look at the Lekota business," complained Phiso Phiso of the North West, joining delegations from the eight other provinces.

The ID claims a signed up membership of 13 000 — a huge growth since its formation in March. De Lille is targeting 5% of the vote in the next election, to give her 20 MPs. More vitally, the party has provincial and branch structures. Rantso Holomisa's United Democratic Movement, for example, has frayed because it does not have a solid political organisation.

And the ID has established a presence in Holomisa's Eastern Cape stronghold. Drawn in a fusion-Xhosa-contemporary outfit with vukhokho marks dotted elegantly around her eyes, 20-year-old Dudu Shabangu from Port Elizabeth was enthusiastic.

"I was not an ANC member, but I grew up in the Saseo [South African Students Congress] tradition. We looked to people like Tiny Yengeni as role models. Now we have lost hope and faith."

Last week's launch was a racially representative assembly. The numbers of young people like Shabangu stood out. Capitalising on a reputation spawned during the arms deal imbroglio as an anti-corruption campaigner, De Lille has made this her big ticket.

The second issue this 32-year-old former unionist and pan-Africanist will campaign on is HIV/AIDS. "Thousands of our people die of HIV/AIDS each year; millions more will die in the next 15 years. At least three HIV-positive people will sit in the leadership of this party," she said, to applause from launch supporters.

Another theme De Lille will play to is the growing sense of disenfranchisement that people feel from politicians; a sense that you have to be in the inner circle or be nowhere at all.

"We must stop regarding people as prominent and credible on the basis of their family connections to the liberation struggle," said De Lille. It was the line in her speech that attracted the loudest applause and shouts of "Yehh".

Besides AIDS and an aversion to avarice in public office, what else does De Lille offer? Something the ruling ANC does not have in great oodles — politicians with personal appeal.

"There's this aura around her. It's like Nelson Mandela and Breyton Paulse. I can say there's something in her that draws you to her," says Rodney Lantini, who helps run the ID's Western Cape nerve-centre.

A survey last year found De Lille is among the country's top 10 favourite politicians and her PR material is shameless about using her magnetism. "She is Nelson Mandela's favourite opposition MP, so shouldn't she be yours?"

**We will not rejoice in government messing things up and we will not allow anyone to mess up this country, not government or the opposition**



Mail &amp; Guardian June 27 to July 3 2003

# No more talk of the devil

ANC in bid to wreck budding romance between Inkatha and the DA

Jagmeet Kundra

The African National Congress in KwaZulu-Natal moved to defuse tensions between itself and the Inkatha Freedom Party this week by getting senior leader Dumisani Makhaye to withdraw his description in November last year of Premier Lionel Mchunu as a "devil".

With two weeks to go before the IFP decides on its continued participation in national government, the ANC focused on driving a wedge into the blossoming relationship between the IFP and the Democratic Alliance.

It was a week of high drama in the province as the IFP and the DA allegedly put pressure on the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) to withdraw its motion this week asking for the removal of the KwaZulu-Natal speaker, though the Christian party maintains it made the decision for the sake of "peace and stability".

ACDP member of the provincial parliament Jo-Anne Durns was to have tabled the motion against speaker Bonga Mdlleshe of the IFP on Monday.

The motion, which would have had ANC support, would have ensured

Mdlleshe's removal. On Tuesday Durns tabled a modified motion taking a shot at both the ANC and the IFP.

But by then Makhaye's decision to address the House ahead of the debate on the ACDP motion on Wednesday had already managed to defuse tempers on either side, to an extent.

Makhaye, who was alleged to have described Mchunu as a "devil" and "Hitler" denied that the words were meant for the premier. Makhaye told the House that he had merely drawn an analogy and if his remarks had caused offence,

he would like to withdraw them. An IFP MP described Makhaye's statement as "sweet".

Another IFP MP said Makhaye's apology gave the party fewer reasons to withdraw from participating in the national and provincial governments, pulling the fragile

coalition back from the brink again. Last week the *Mail & Guardian* revealed that IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthe would seriously consider pulling out of the national government at the party's national conference in Uthungu next month.

This week the IFP began showing its hand on what it will take to keep it in national and provincial government. During a legislative debate, a party traditionalist, Faith Gasa, said the IFP was unhappy with the ANC-led government's failure to consider the rights of traditional leaders, though she pledged unity.

But anger still simmers on the surface. The IFP's Maudia Makhosana was expelled from the House for refusing to withdraw certain allegations made against ANC leader Sibusiso Nkomo, while the ANC's Bheki Cele had a go at the IFP's abuse of the "amakhothi" as a "political weapon".

The ANC's overarching provincial strategy is to end the footsie-footsie between the IFP and the DA.

Chief whip Ina Cronje made public allegedly "anti-African" remarks noted in the reported minutes of "a DA sub-committee".

Durns and Makhaye has apologised to Mchunu.

Photo: Rajesh Jarrilal

held in May last year. Reading the parliamentary motion out on Tuesday, Cronje quoted the "minutes" which apparently read: "For the DA it was desirable to break the IFP-ANC cooperation at provincial and national level" and "that an Africanist, poor-people agenda could leave the DA alone and exposed".

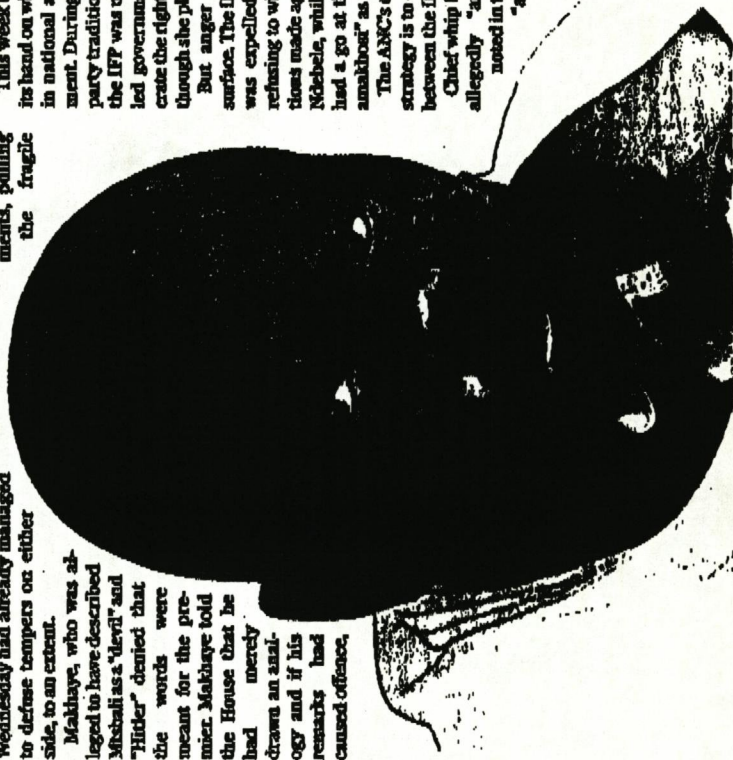
She then called on the House to condemn the "cynical anti-African utterances by the DA and their desire to drive a wedge between the ANC and the IFP and the blatant manner in which the DA uses and abuses the IFP to further their own political agenda at the expense of the poor people of this country".

The ANC strategy continued where the party also tried to expose the DA's newfound commitment to traditional leadership as flimsy.

The ANC's Semo Mchunu cited yet another allegedly DA document that states that the DA is "the only party fully and totally committed not to accept traditional leaders in a democratic framework of government but as a traditional structure maintained by those amongst the Zulu who want them".

Mchunu urged the House to condemn this "derogatory and racist statement by the DA on traditional leaders and the Zulu-speaking people in the strongest possible terms" and called on the IFP to distance itself from "such colonial utterances".

An ANC insider said: "We are playing this all very tactically".





*Mail & Guardian* June 27 to July 3 2003

## 30 000 Zulus pile in for king's feast

**Jaspreet Kindra**

The KwaZulu-Natal government threw a R1.5-million party on the occasion of the handing over of the R5-million Ondini palace to King Goodwill Zwelithini last week.

The party, held in Ulundi last Friday, was attended by the Minister of Home Affairs Mangosuthu Buthelezi, among other dignitaries.

Mahlathi Tembe, the spokesperson for Premier Lionel Mtshali, said the cost included that of cattle and catering for about 30 000 people who attended the function — held in a tent.

A prominent dignitary who attended Friday's function, however,

put the number of guests at between 3 500 and 4 000, not the 30 000 claimed.

The dignitary, who did not wish to be identified, said: "The tent that they had put up for the function did not have the capacity to hold even 10 000 people."

He said the organisers even roped in children from a nearby school to increase the numbers.

The ceremony included speeches, traditional songs and dances. The dignitary described the function as "lacklustre" and said: "There was nothing extraordinary about it."

Food was apparently served late in the afternoon.

The palace — Zwelithini's seventh —

is a redbrick building with five bedrooms, a laundry, library, two double garages and several guest houses with gardens.

Tembe said the handing over of the palace signified the "restoration of the dignity to the Zulu people".

Ondini palace, the traditional home of the Zulu king, was destroyed by British forces in 1879, during the reign of King Cetshwayo. Buthelezi rebuilt the palace in 1993, when he was head of the erstwhile KwaZulu homeland.

But the palace could not be handed over because of a political feud between Buthelezi and Zwelithini.

The rift between the Zulu king and Buthelezi, who is also the traditional

prime minister of the Zulus, was only healed after the two swallowed ashes in Nongoma last year. The king, seen as important as provincial and national elections approach, is being wooed by Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party.

Among the dignitaries who attended the function was the Prince of Thailand, whose name, Mtshali's department said, has been lost in the records of the function that have gone missing. Also at the function was a chief from Ghana and the Zambian ambassador to South Africa, S Mubukwana.

Attempts to get a breakdown of the cost of the party from the royal household were not successful.