

Left of what's right

Commissars, comrades and cadres, dance the night away in the Sleepy Hollow, toyi-toyi timelessly, crack workplace rain checks, but our jurists in silk gowns will not be swayed via trial-by-media or the pandemonium of protests outside the high streets of justice



By: Marlan Padayachee

TWENTY-TWO years ago, a leading anti-apartheid activist blew the whistle on the new democratic government's first toxic courtship with arms deals corruption with the highest bidders.

In Cape Town's Parliament's Square in 1994, after the first, democratic elections in which prisoner-turned-president Nelson Mandela piloted the outlawed ANC into a new brand of parliamentary politics, I met Patricia De (née Lindt), Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) diehard after she was sworn in as one of the new Members of Parliament. Within this precinct of a party, I was in the company of Ivan Fallon, CEO of Independent Newspapers, whose Irish-owned Test rugby-playing chairman bought Argus Newspapers as an investment empowerment deal. We both chatted with MP

De Lille – then much younger, looking smarter, strident and sophisticated in her African braided hair: she spoke eloquently about her political vision for the rainbow nation. Despite the aura and politically fashionable image of the ANC, the PAC led by Robert Sobukwe in the 1960s, and Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement, enjoyed a huge appeal and following, among the likes of De Lille, Benny Alexander, Gora Ebrahim, and thousands of activists. Now, De Lille, or as they call her in her native Cape Town, as "Aunty Pat", is no political pushover or pussycat, and she does not pussyfoot when it comes to fighting corruption, defending and deepening democracy and joining the picket lines to raise her Black-power fist against human rights abuse or social injustices. Five years in Parliament, MP De Lille blew the top on the arms deal scandal involving high-ranking ANC officials, ministers and securocrats in the first biggest procurement scandal that rocked the Thabo Mbeki Administration.

National Prosecutions Authority investigations fingered Jacob Zuma and French arms manufacturer Thales in the probe. Since then De Lille has shown a politically divisive and socially and economically unequal country that she enjoyed strong grassroots support from her home-base constituencies – especially thousands of Coloured women and girls who look up to her no-nonsense political style and swash-buckling sway. Yes, she has flip-flopped in two decades in the frontline of parliamentary politics: she turned her back on the infighting



WHISTLE BLOWER NUMBER ONE: Good Party leader, MP and Minister of Public Works has been cautioned to appear in the High Court in Pietermaritzburg on 26 May to give evidence against Jacob Zuma and Thales in the arms deal corruption case.

"The ANC is accused number one for corruption. We must acknowledge that our movement has been and remains deeply implicated in SA's corruption problems." – ANC president Cyril Ramaphosa at the Commission of Inquiry chaired by Judge Raymond Zondo

PAC, launched her Independent Democrats, threw in her voting constituency bloc into the Democratic Alliance, elected Cape Town's mayor, and then cocked a snook at the DA liberal conservatives, and launched the Good Party – establishing a bench-mark as one of the few MPs to return to Parliament each time from the polls.

But the never-say-die De Lille soon had one-time comrades in the liberation struggle licking their wounds when President Cyril – the ANC MPs ousted sitting president Zuma – appointed De Lille in his 2018 Cabinet. And true to commitment, 70-year-old De Lille, a non-ANC Minister of Public Works, pitched up in the High Pietermaritzburg as Witness Number One in Zuma-Thales's arms-deal corruption case, rolled over and over again, delayed, postponed over 15 years. The media corp queued up to ask De Lille some questions: "I have waited 22 years and I am here to give evidence in this trial." De Lille recalled how the arms deal dossier landed on her lap in Parliament –

she was vilified and called nasty names for having blown the whistle and how Zuma, his cronies and comrades benefited from the Parisian cash flush Francs.

Here are some insights ahead of the 26 May court battle royale:

- In court papers, Thales stand accused of bribing Deputy President Zuma – spanning 20 years – allegedly conspiring with the KZN ANC strongman's former financial adviser, Schabir Shaik and his Durban-based Nkobi Holdings for a half-million rand cash bank-rolling handouts as a quid-pro-quo for protection for the French arms company while the investigations deepened.

- Apart from Shaik – jailed and curiously paroled – Thales fixer, Ajay Sooklal, also from Durban, is said to have allegedly booked flights, fancy clothes, legal fees and lavish hotel stay-overs in Europe for Zuma when the arms deal corruption charges were linked him to the ex-KZN MEC.

FOOTNOTE:

Let's then stand by for the side show, featuring the ANC step-aside accused brigade, with controversial cheerleader Carl Niehaus orchestrating the song-and-dance post-liberation war talk and dances.

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FROM GOOSE STEPS TO STEP-ASIDE FOOTWORK: A typical outdated military stance of the ANC's military wing, uMkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation or MK) still out on parade at court houses and protests despite being defunct in the 1990s - popular at any demos and protests involving renegade or rebel former leaders of the ANC or government.