

NOTE

Carrot & Stick

A B writes

MAMATA BANERJEE'S Jangalmahal visit and her promises to the people there have received wide publicity in the press. Her exhortation to the CPI(Maoist) to lay aside their guns is not, however, going to make much of an impact. This outfit has a politics of its own, and their policy of collaboration with the Trinamul Congress was bound to evaporate. What is most intriguing is the promise to recruit ten thousand home guards, NVF personnel and police constables from the Jangal Mahal region. There are so many state departments; then why the police department only? The *Salwa Judum*, was formed by recruiting the selfish and lumpenized elements of the adivasis of Chhatishgarh to serve the interests of corporate capital. Does the new Chief Minister of West Bengal want to form another organization of the same type with public money?

The Chief Minister has found it convenient to forget that she and her party, for quite some time before the polls, had been raising the demand for the withdrawal of central forces from the Jangal Mahal region. She now wants to keep the force. The purpose is obvious; just as the CPI(M) used the central forces to its advantage, Mamata Banerjee wishes to use them for advancing her party interests. Despite their tyrannical nature, the central forces achieved a limited measure of success because of the direction-less activities of the CPI(Maoist)—they tried to exterminate all who had the slightest difference with them—caused a rift in the popular movement against police atrocities. Now Mamata Banerjee, while dangling carrots, wishes to retain the stick of state repression.

In the Jhargram-Gopiballavpur region, the so-called Maoists did not allow anybody except the Trinamul Congress to campaign during the last polls. Even the local leader of the anti-pollution movement became their target. Mamata Banerjee's men naturally relished the situation. Now the brief honeymoon is over and the Mamata Banerjee's outfit finds it difficult to digest the bitter pill the Maoists have offered. That is possibly why the promise of 10,000 jobs in the police department has been dangled.

Another interesting point needs to be mentioned. In her public meeting at Lalgarh on 9 August 2010, Mamata Banerjee raised the demand for an investigation into the killing of Azad along with a journalist. Ever since the killing, many voices of protest and indignation were raised all through the country. The demand for an independent probe continues till date. But Mamata Banerjee, after her Lalgarh mass meeting, has preferred to keep silent. She rather became circumspect. The reason was simple. Persisting with the demand might break her coalition with Manmohan-Chidambaram & Co. It is also intriguing and somewhat amusing that some members of the Bandi Mukti Committee (Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners), long after Mamata Banerjee had stopped talking on the issue, went on highlighting her mention of Azad at the Lalgarh rally of 9 August, possibly trying to suggest that the nationwide protest made by countless other persons have no value whatsoever. Whatever the effort of these apologists to project Mamata Banerjee as a champion of civil liberties, the clauses serving as the guidelines of the so-called review committee have made matters amply clear. The committee will judge whether the person concerned, after his/her release, will be loyal to the political cause he/she has stood for, and he/she will have to

abjure violence. What remains of the 'unconditional release of political prisoners', while Chhatradhar Mahato is in jail is sure to be interesting to watch. □□□