

# Green Desperation Fuels Red Fascism

Andreas Malm's Authoritarian Leftist Agenda

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## Note from *Return Fire*

It's time again to confront the authoritarian turn brewing on the fringes of the climate movement, and here Klokkeblomst reminds us why. The essay's subject – the academic Andreas Malm, who blows hot air about why pipelines should be blown up but also about the need for a new 'War Communism' of harsh State interventions in the face of the ecological (or, in his reductive terms, 'climate') crisis – can serve as an initial target, but we publish this contribution we received in the hope that it will also speak to the tendency that is latent in the current atmosphere of desperation, which we should expect to grow regardless of the influence of this particular figure. (While seeming less influential as yet in radical circles, Malm is wooed by certain establishment media in his native Sweden where he cuts the figure of the militant parading his support for Hamas and other authoritarian groups for a bourgeois audience; suggesting, as with his fellow academic – and fellow apologist for the atrocities of State communism – Slavoj Žižek, he seeks his main recognition in an arena that is not involved in the complicated dynamics of actually trying to effect revolutionary action.)

While in this case in favour of such actions (purely theoretically) if only they fit into his hierarchical schema, we can place Malm on the same spectrum as the UK academics Paul Gill, Zoe Marchment and Arlene Robinson of University College London's 'Department of Security and Crime Science', who published a paper last year written to offer clear recommendations to the repressive organs of the State as to how to equate anarchist sabotages – legally and propagandistically – with terrorism: he is an enemy of our struggle. His vision insists on quantifiable movement growth as standard for an action's effectiveness rather than chaotic flows of desire and affect which these sabotages often spring from, achieve, and unpredictably inspire; instead insisting on seeing their 'results' in a vacuum (following the well-trod elitist path of other eco-authoritarians Deep Green Resistance). As such he's a good example of Leftist (and sometimes Left-anarchist) obsession with what the author of excellent third part of 'After the Crest' series – reproduced in a forthcoming chapter of volume 6 of *Return Fire* – calls 'geometrical growth', a logic of accumulation: in resistance like in capital.

Now like always, justification is never lacking for his politics of 'emergency' that would justify totalitarian State measures; once you've accepted the price of such intervention as justified and likely to achieve the results you want, in today's world there's no shortage of issues to tack this lust for iron-fisted measures on to. The logic of urgency, however, is a poor metric for the ecological struggles we need. The idea that we have only so many years, decades, or "chances" left only obscures the effects of the crisis that are already happening; just disproportionately to the poor, non-Western, non-human. Such clock-watchers base their forecasts on technocratic measures like CO2 particles that are determined on levels utterly out of our participation, leading us directly away from our own judgment and experience: for instance, in the ongoing struggles to defend land and simultaneously rejoin the life of what actually sustains us beyond the supermarket and internet, or against capitalist extraction projects; which such academics and (wannabe-)politicians haven't been positively contributing to but now want to co-opt and lead, straight into the dust. And, as this reduces the successfulness of these resistances when we let this happen, it gives even more grounds to the authoritarians (Left or Right) who propose their more 'radical' solutions...

In Malm's take, the anti-nuclear movement is 'naïve'; yet his model rests on technologies that don't even exist yet in forms that have shown results, and he ignores efforts like re-vitalisation

of indigenous lifeways, restorative agro-ecology, commoning, etc. This isn't surprising for the legacy he likes to see himself as representing: the Leftist project of seizing the reins of a global industrial order, the results of which he hypocritically decries; yet remains utterly attached to its world. This is far from an isolated symptom these days; it hits a nerve for the terrified citizens who buy his books. Furthermore, his strident defence of the State – and insistence on the primacy of its agency vis-a-vis the ecological crisis – comes at a time of a crisis of governance worldwide which anarchists would do well to push away from the State-form; but Malm offers the contenders for the outcome of this power vacuum a new legitimacy, an 'eco-Marxist' flavour serviceable for the same project of infinite technocratic accounting that the progressive (we don't mean this in a positive light) parts of the capitalist system are already clamouring for. He ignores the actual fault-lines like borders – which, as a Statist, he can only favour – which have been and will be some of the first flash-points as ecological collapse gains speed. Each argument for totalitarian responses invigorates others; we can see for example how in Germany among the supporters of the most restrictive COVID-19 regulations was the federal leader of the Green Party, proposing the governance of the state of emergency as “the model” for “the configuration of climate change”, praising Chinese “management of the pandemic”...

While we disagree that the struggles Malm should support instead should be “non-violent (but not pacifist)” because we do not find it to be a useful conception or restriction, as we've made clear since our very first chapter, and we're not sure exactly what “climate justice” would mean in this context, we find it important to extend the reach of this piece as much as possible; including, to the degree we can, to the youth and others recently becoming active in the fight for a dignified life and a flourishing ecology we could call home. Artwork was supplied by the author, with a couple of additions from us. We welcome feedback at [returnfire@riseup.net](mailto:returnfire@riseup.net) – also, to see the articles referenced by title throughout this text in *[square brackets]*, consult chapters of the current volume of *Return Fire (vol.6)*. PDFs of *Return Fire* and related publications can be read, downloaded and printed by visiting our website.\*

– R.F., Winter Solstice 2021  
\* [returnfire.noblogs.org](http://returnfire.noblogs.org)

## Introduction

Authoritarianism is on the rise as a key talking point when it comes to finding solutions to the ecological crisis. The same attributes that predominate technological society – apathy, fear, cognitive overload and feeling a lack of agency<sup>1</sup> – are more and more reflected in the mainstream environmental movement, leading us to believe in new leaders, figureheads and ideas, such as green growth.<sup>2</sup> More on this later.

Lately, I have come across multiple texts by Andreas Malm, author and associate senior lecturer at Lund University, who is one such authoritarian calling for an “Ecological Leninism”.

In his recent interview with Verso books<sup>3</sup> he was asked:

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<sup>1</sup> [medium.com/@fulalas/from-dispersion-to-apathy-how-technology-makes-us-lonely-1d489ee6004f](https://medium.com/@fulalas/from-dispersion-to-apathy-how-technology-makes-us-lonely-1d489ee6004f)

<sup>2</sup> Hickel J. (2020) *Less is more: How degrowth will save the world*, London: Random House.

<sup>3</sup> [versobooks.com/blogs/4450-it-is-time-to-try-out-an-ecological-leninism-interview-with-andreas-malm](https://versobooks.com/blogs/4450-it-is-time-to-try-out-an-ecological-leninism-interview-with-andreas-malm)

How do you explain the gap between the relative dynamism of ecological Marxist theories – in Anglo-Saxon countries in particular – and the weakness of the political intervention of Marxists in these movements?

Malm answers:

Ecological Marxism has a tendency to cripple itself by staying inside academia. It needs to engage with and reach out to the actual movements in the field. Anarchist ideas should be combated; they will take us nowhere. I think it's time to start experimenting with things like ecological Leninism or Luxemburgism or Blanquism. But the weakness of Marxism in ecological politics is of course inextricable from its nearly universal weakness at this moment in time (i.e., one symptom of the crisis of humanity, alongside acidification of the oceans and everything else).

Malm represents a Nordic example of eco-modernist [R.F. – see *The Decoupling Thesis*] authoritarian thought. Establishing a false dichotomy (e.g. centralized vs decentralized) between anarchistic approaches to change making, Malm meanwhile fails to reflect on the impacts of authoritarian systems in any honest way. This combines with a detached and warped perception of the environmental movement's recent history.

In *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, Malm advocates, but also shits on direct action. Clearly detached from ecological struggles, referring to anarchists attacks as not big enough, he draws on the work of Micheal Loadenthal who documented “27,100 actions between 1973 and 2010,” in an attempt to discredit decentralized action.<sup>4</sup>

*“All those thousands of monkeywrenching actions achieved little if anything,”* explains Malm, *“and had no lasting gains to show for them. They were not performed in a dynamic relation to a mass movement, but largely in a void.”*

Ignoring the actions of the remaining Leftist governments (Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, etc.), it is clear Malm has no idea what these actions advocate, let alone the continuation and intensification of eco-anarchist attacks in Europe and the rest of the world between 2010–2016 (see *Return Fire* magazine, 325, *Act for Freedom Now*, *Avalanche* etc.). More still, many of these actions, especially Earth Liberation Front (ELF) actions, were supported by local struggles.<sup>5</sup>

He conveniently forgets all the direct actions and sabotage in direct connection to popular movements that helped save wetlands and stop motorways across the UK [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg89*], or the vital role decentralized direct action and sabotage play in the highly effective struggle of the Mapuche people to recover their territory [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg59*], to name just two examples – and there are countless.

And because environmental justice and social justice go hand in hand, we shouldn't forget the vital role that arson attacks and other major decentralized sabotage actions had in the divestment campaign against the apartheid government of South Africa in the 1980s, or the change in public attitudes towards the racist police in the United States accomplished by direct and decentralized attacks across that country [R.F. – see *The Siege of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis*].

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<sup>4</sup> [researchgate.net/publication/328887527\\_Contemporary\\_Questions\\_on\\_Eco-terrorism\\_with\\_Michael\\_Loadenthal](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328887527_Contemporary_Questions_on_Eco-terrorism_with_Michael_Loadenthal)

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Pickering (2003) *Earth Liberation Front 1997–2002*

Popular rejection of the police is now so strong, many cities face a shortage of recruits for their police forces, even as local governments fight to expand funding. This example shows the relative merits of the decentralized, grassroots action that Malm derides, versus the government action pushed by leftwing parties. It is also worth noting that Malm is decidedly uninterested in and uninformed regarding antiracist struggles, while also using racist tropes and promoting the technocratic, institutional framework of colonialism in his writings.

Malm's limited view is not just a defect of his own thinking. The tendency of technocrats to reduce the interrelated problems of widespread ecological devastation, borders and migration, global hunger and lack of food sovereignty caused by the so-called Green Revolution, is a huge problem.

It opens the door to eco-fascism, and gives the fascists and other racists a seat at the table. If we only think about climate, as though it were distinct from all the other entangled social and ecological problems, then we are forced to focus narrowly on bringing down Co2 within the existing institutional framework of states, NGOs, and corporations. This means that ultimately, each state (as the chief administrative unit) is responsible for bringing down its own emissions.

This leads to an entire accounting game of pushing off emissions responsibility onto poorer countries, closing borders, blaming immigrants, promoting socially and ecologically destructive technologies (e.g. 'smart' cities [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg31*], low-carbon infrastructures, idiotic conservation schemes). From Austria to the UK, Green Parties and mainstream environmental movements have already been making alliances of convenience with far right parties and organizations. Now, Malm is trying to put Leninism back on the table, mirroring the resurgence of classical fascist groups and authoritarian governments.

Malm unapologetically remains politically naïve to the realities of repression and state violence endured by people engaging in non-violent sabotage and vandalism actions. In a review by Gabriel Kuhn, an Austrian political author based in Sweden, he calls Malm's ignorance of struggles and movements "offensive," pointing out how he ignores "The Green Scare" [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg82*] and how, despite minimizing decentralized action, the ELF and eco-anarchist actions were labeled by the FBI as the "number one domestic terrorist threat."<sup>6</sup>

People are fighting, dying [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg56*], and serving extended sentences in prison (9–22 years, see June11.org or any Anarchist Black Cross), which Malm flagrantly disrespects for his pseudo-academic circus and attempted revival of Leninism. More importantly, however, many fighters are getting away with these actions inflicting economic costs and real delays. Right now, supposedly ecologically militant people like Malm, should be working to socially normalize committed non-violent (but not pacifist) struggles and spread it to this new generations of "climate youth" continues who are eager to make a difference. Yet Malm instead vomits political ignorance, authoritarian romantics, flagrant disrespect and concerted hostility to the people engaged in this fight.

Malm does not have to be a self-absorbed academic unaccountable to reality. All of us, instead, can think like outlaws, like feral cats, and organize with our friends to destroy what destroys us. While I am unsure if their actions were "performed in a dynamic relation to a mass movement" (whatever that means), most participants were entrenched in various "activist" or non-activist communities (for better and worse).<sup>7</sup> There is a relatively small, but viral movement – everywhere

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<sup>6</sup> kersplebedeb.com/posts/ecological-leninism-friend-or-foe

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous. (2018) Against the World Builders. Black Seed #6 : 84–108.

– already in place risking life and limb to confront mines, pipelines, energy infrastructure and the authoritarian systems that maintain them.

Malm’s analysis widely ignores how environmental struggles have so far required all kinds of actors, from saboteurs to lawyers, journalists and lawmakers: There is no either/or. Rather than making a career out of bashing them and for a perverse authoritarian leftist agenda, Malm should be part of organizing prisoner support for eco-warriors, curating information nights on struggles, securing lawyers, influencing public policy to eliminate terrorism enhancement charges and so on. There is so much people can do in general, but also established academics. Why not support Indigenous land defense, eco-anarchist attack and actually begin organizing against the sources of ecological degradation, instead of promoting some hair brained Leninist scheme? The Trotskyites at Verso should also take a good look into the mirror and reconsider their political values, but more so it seems unwise to publish and give a platform to uneducated and poorly researched work like this. Where is the pushback?

## Solutions?

In a video interview with Critical Theory in Berlin<sup>8</sup> he proposes to set up a planned economy to reduce emissions yearly and instate sanctions forcing corporations to pursue technocratic solutions (e.g. drawing down Co2 from the atmosphere) in a bid to recuperate the power of the state for planetary salvation.

In a co-authored editorial *Seize the Means of Carbon Removal: The Political Economy of Direct Air Capture*,<sup>9</sup> he plays through different scenarios of carbon removal from the air and demands that the “the left” confront it. Natural carbon sinks cannot possibly do all the work, so what remains apparent is the inherent need for new technological advancements and centralized planning to make capture solutions viable.

Malm, however, believes if the “means of removal” were socialised, capital accumulation could be off the table and the process would help repair climate damage, never mind the ecological and energetic costs of those technologies.

To be clear, large-scale carbon capture and storage technology is merely a hype, not a viable technology at our disposal. It remains unproven at scale, with current test facilities shutting down due to repeated mechanical failures<sup>10</sup> and exorbitant operating costs.<sup>11</sup>

It requires vast industrial complexes and a further scarring of the environment, all the while releasing more Co2 to the atmosphere than sequestered (as seen in Norway’s Sleipner Facility,<sup>12</sup> currently the best facility on Earth).

From geoengineering [*R.F. – see Return Fire vol.3 pg8*] utopia, Malm continues during his interview, and I am paraphrasing: If we can lock up people inside their houses for a period of time, surely we can say you can’t eat beef from Brazil any longer. Even if a State is able to stop industrial beef production in the tropics for all groups and people, is this really the way to

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<sup>8</sup> [youtu.be/8LSQLBFQruo?t=1675](https://youtu.be/8LSQLBFQruo?t=1675)

<sup>9</sup> [portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/96341244/HM\\_DAC.pdf](https://portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/96341244/HM_DAC.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [reuters.com/article/us-usa-energy-carbon-capture-idUSKCN2523K8](https://reuters.com/article/us-usa-energy-carbon-capture-idUSKCN2523K8)

<sup>11</sup> [ecostandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CCS-false-solution-food-water-action-europe.pdf](https://ecostandard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CCS-false-solution-food-water-action-europe.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [cleantechica.com/2019/06/12/best-carbon-capture-facility-in-world-emits-25-times-more-co2-than-sequestered](https://cleantechica.com/2019/06/12/best-carbon-capture-facility-in-world-emits-25-times-more-co2-than-sequestered)

create lasting social change? Swedish authoritarianism, and the state naiveté fabricated by social democracy, shines through his political theory.

Malm's authoritarian desires continue in *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency*. Here he plays with ideas such as "mandatory global veganism"<sup>13</sup> and invokes the "duty" of the "richest countries" to "lead and assist a global turn to plant-based protein" to oppose the consumption of "bushmeat"<sup>14</sup> in other parts of the world. "Bushmeat" here, refers to how Indigenous people, farmers and low-income households hunt and subsist on local animals (e.g. rabbits, snakes, iguanas, deer, gazelle, etc.), as they have for centuries. Malm exhibits colonial hubris, meanwhile demonstrating an uncritical belief in industrial food systems and the relationships they engender.

The careless, and ultimately Eurocentric and racist, assertions by Malm are even more dumbfounding considering his credentials as a human geographer, situated at one of among Sweden's most prestigious universities. Human geography research is famous for revealing the ecological harms of colonial land management schemes and, later, "fortress" and "community" conservation programs.<sup>15</sup> These programs have been largely ineffective, failing to curtail "commercial poaching" and intensifying attacks on Indigenous people, militarizing forests and regimenting ecologically destructive practices.<sup>16</sup> Enforcing authoritarian relationships over land, especially against so-called "subsistence poachers" – or acquiring "bushmeat" in Malm's words – has been a resolute disaster extending colonial practices of land control, degradation and warfare into nature.<sup>17</sup>

This insanity extends to silence regarding the Indigenous people under constant attack by mines and wind turbines in Sweden. As Kuhn points out, Malm "does not mention the Sámi with a single word", although they see themselves as "radical environmentalists by the very nature of their traditional livelihood". Kuhn explains this might be because "all Swedish leftists do" this, or because it is "easier to point to struggles far away", or even that he has "political reasons" for ignoring them (e.g. them not talking about "fossil capital"?). At the same time, he goes into great length telling of his own involvement in an action group horribly named "*Indians of the Concrete Jungle*". In essence, he likes Indigenous peoples when they resist in attention-grabbing news headlines, but demonstrates radical disinterest, if not contempt, for their lifeways, culture and autonomy with his political philosophy and proposals.

## Climate Justice is Anti-Authoritarian

In many Native struggles, colonial states employ divide and conquer strategies and violent tactics as a means to gain access and control over indigenous territories. Historically, "[patriarchy] is a system of oppression that precedes and can exist independently of the State," remaining one of the first steps of colonization undertaken by Europeans to break apart pre-existing social fabrics.<sup>18</sup> Nowadays, government funding for Native bureaucracies and corporate bribing of local

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<sup>13</sup> Andreas Malm, (2020) *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency – War Communism in the Twenty-First Century*, p. 89

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Fairhead, James, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones. 2012. "Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of Nature?"

<sup>16</sup> Duffy, Rosaleen. 2016. "War, by Conservation." *Geoforum* 69 (1): 238–248.

<sup>17</sup> Kelly, Alice. 2013. "Property and Negotiation in Waza National Park." Land Deal Politics Initiative (LDPI), UK.

<sup>18</sup> Gelderloos P. (2017) *Worshipping Power: An Anarchist View of Early State Formation*, Oakland: AK Press. [theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-gelderloos-worshipping-power](http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/peter-gelderloos-worshipping-power)



leaders is a factor dividing struggles against infrastructure projects, resulting in internal conflicts that hamper organized resistance.<sup>19</sup>

Within the Northern European movement however, one might feel hopelessness when confronted with police batons and long-winded court cases, or, rather, in my circles, overwhelming amounts of scientific reports foreshadowing ecosystem collapse and doom.

Unfortunately, some also develop these feelings towards the people inside decentralized movements themselves, viewing their actions as ineffective, disorderly and naïve. The failure that some people perceive is because of the way it is dealing with urgency and climate science, leaving only fleeting opportunities for change. Yet, we must ask: who is actually disrupting and destroying the means – logistics – of extraction, political control and profit and who is reproducing and maintaining it?

The question whether to prevent further harm to ecosystems arrives not from numbers, hours or levels of urgency. This means ending our habits as consumers and dependents on states and corporations, and reconnecting with ourselves, our place [*R.F. – see ‘Dispassion & Timelessness’*] and, in many instances, ancestral knowledge.

It helps to recognize where our actual strengths lie. From northern France to the outskirts of Moscow to Lakota territory occupied by the US to Mapuche territory occupied by Chile and Indigenous communities in Borneo, the movements that have actually stopped extractive industries and destructive infrastructure projects have been decentralized and anti-authoritarian, often led by Indigenous peoples in resistance.

Meanwhile, many of the ecocidal projects that have been halted, from industrial wind farms to forestry plantations and palm oil biofuel plantations, are actually a part of the so-called solution being proposed by academics, NGOs, and other technocrats flush with corporate money.

People must know themselves first, really ask why they are struggling and deliberate on the question: “*How shall I live my life?*”

## The Many Faces of Authority

The complicity of nation-states, NGOs and corporations in creating ecological degradation showed itself again recently, when Denmark announced its plans (praised by Greenpeace as a historic event) to phase out oil drilling in the North Sea by 2050.<sup>20</sup> Parallel to their ambitious goals, Denmark builds hundreds of kilometers of new infrastructure for fossil fuels with the European Baltic Pipe project.<sup>21</sup> This project will also connect to Danish sugar factories on Lolland,<sup>22</sup> an industry releasing the second highest Co2 emissions in Denmark,<sup>23</sup> making it clear that Denmark’s ‘green’ ambitions are heavily misrepresented.

Green NGOs like Greenpeace continue to keep inventory on the destruction of nature and bargain the details of destruction with corporations. In 2010 Greenpeace entered an agreement supporting logging companies in the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement<sup>24</sup> and, recently, praised

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<sup>19</sup> Dunlap A. (2020) The Politics of Ecocide, Genocide and Megaprojects: Interrogating Natural Resource Extraction, Identity and the Normalization of Erasure.

<sup>20</sup> euobserver.com/nordic/150287

<sup>21</sup> offshore-energy.biz/saipem-lays-more-than-100km-of-baltic-pipe-pipeline

<sup>22</sup> energinet.dk/Anlaeg-og-projekter/Projektliste/Groen-gas-Lolland-Falster

<sup>23</sup> tv2east.dk/guldborgsund/sukkerfabrikker-udleder-naestmest-co2-i-danmark-er-gas-eller-el-loesningen

<sup>24</sup> canfor.com/sustainability-report/environment/canadian-boreal-forest-agreement

Mærsk – the planet’s largest shipping company and, until 2017,<sup>25</sup> a big player in the oil industry – merely for refusing to ship a specific Antarctic toothfish.<sup>26</sup> NGOs collaborate with state and capital constantly; they are businesses in and of themselves and constantly sell out movements defending forests, rivers and marine ecosystems [R.F. – see *Green Capital & Environmental “Leaders” Won’t Save Us*].

Promoting a notion of “net zero” emissions and subsequent carbon trading schemes is leading to a major land grab in the Global South. Industrial scale green energies, which increase the total energy market rather than decreasing fossil fuels, also lead to new profits for energy companies and devastate vast sacrifice zones in poor areas. It is no coincidence that all these technocratic solutions proposed by green NGOs are also supported by energy corporations.

The guises of authoritarianism are plenty and its attempts to resolve environmental issues have failed and led to increased degradation. Representative democracy, and other systems based on bureaucratic authority, have taught us change comes through politicians, corporations, NGOs and, of course, personal consumer choice [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg65*]. The underlying implication of this narrative is that chaotic organizing, viral direct action (and unrestrained) and immediate change in conduct is not the answer.

We need to recognize that authoritarianism and human-centric claims to supremacy over the earth have been and continue to be the root of socio-ecological crisis. This happens via the church, the State, urbanization and modern mechanical science,<sup>27</sup> all of which seek domination and control over the systems of our planet. This is not to say modern science is not useful, but to remember that it comes at a material and energetic cost [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.5 pg33*].

## Leninism: Why Not

Red Fascism has its roots in Leninist thought, an analysis dating back to critiques in 1939 with *The Struggle Against Fascism Begins with the Struggle Against Bolshevism* by Otto Rühle<sup>28</sup> and 1921 *The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party* by “Four Moscow Anarchists”.<sup>29</sup> The latter states:

[State Communism] is not and can never become the threshold of a free, voluntary, non-authoritarian Communist society, because the very essence and nature of governmental, compulsory Communism excludes such an evolution. Its consistent economic and political centralization, its governmentalization and bureaucratization of every sphere of human activity and effort, its inevitable militarization and degradation of the human spirit mechanically destroy every germ of new life and extinguish the stimuli of creative, constructive work.

As Gabriel Kuhn declares in his review of Malm’s recent publications:

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<sup>25</sup> [totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/total-acquires-maersk-oil-for-7-45-billion-dollars-in-share-and-debt-transaction](http://totalenergies.com/media/news/press-releases/total-acquires-maersk-oil-for-7-45-billion-dollars-in-share-and-debt-transaction)

<sup>26</sup> [greenpeace.org/usa/maersk-stands-up-for-the-oceans](http://greenpeace.org/usa/maersk-stands-up-for-the-oceans)

<sup>27</sup> Shiva V. (2002 [1989]) *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*, Carolyn Merchants (1983) *The Death of Nature*, Sullivan S. (2010) ‘Ecosystem service commodities’ – a new imperial ecology? Implications for animist immanent ecologies, with Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>28</sup> [marxists.org/archive/ruhle/1939/ruhle01.htm](http://marxists.org/archive/ruhle/1939/ruhle01.htm)

<sup>29</sup> [marx.libcom.org/library/russian-revolution-communist-party-alexander-berkman](http://marx.libcom.org/library/russian-revolution-communist-party-alexander-berkman)

As long as it is not clear how future Leninism of any stripe – anti-Stalinist, ecological, whatever – will be able to avoid these pitfalls, I really don't find it terribly reassuring to suggest that, well, somehow it'll turn out alright this time.

In a similar fashion, Malm does not add new elements to the discussions on escalation of tactics in the environmental movement, contrary to his book's promise. It might be this hollow radicality that entertains bourgeois circles and will grant him a broad audience separate from the core of radical change.

Furthermore, his ability to brag about his own past flirtations with direct action, from the comfort of middle-class existence in a social democracy, shows that he really has no understanding of ecological struggle. People who actually risk themselves struggling for their land, their survival, our planet, face death or decades in prison. They do not get to put their actions on their resumé to sell books after just a few years. To put it plainly, Malm does not know the meaning of struggle. His expertise is in writing academic papers, securing a comfortable, privileged existence for himself, and climbing the class ladder.

Malm tries to ridicule James C. Scott for his not very popular nor influential book *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (2012), where he makes silly comments on traffic lights. If you're familiar with Scott's work, it becomes apparent that Malm's attack might be caused by Scott's critique of Lenin in *Seeing like a State* (1998), exposing Lenin as controlling and elitist. Scott's work will be mentioned further in the next sections.

## Malm & the State

While anarchists will always threaten Malm's imaginary Leninist regime and that might be reason enough for him to oppose them, another reason is the myth that state power is the driver of history. Academic research into history and early state formation often talk about the creation of the nation-state to be a process that started in ancient Mesopotamia and has since shown itself to be the pinnacle of social organization, largely unchallenged, and therefore we have to work within it.<sup>30</sup>

However, research into state legitimacy is never unbiased or objective. The idea of a linear path in history (e.g. from worse to better) is an incredibly eurocentric approach to the reality we are experiencing and in great extent fuel for white supremacist thinking. Just as much as academia and mechanical sciences have been deeply rooted in projects of domination.

Authors like Peter Gelderloos or James C. Scott have been offering anarchist perspectives on early state formation.<sup>31</sup> They have been voicing that state building happens everywhere, over and over again, and there is no deadlock. Groups organizing non-hierarchically throughout time will experience coercion and domination by neighbouring states and will be forced to give in under the immense pressure, just to spring up again in new ways down the line, returning to other ways of social organization. Just as frequently throughout history, states have been overthrown by their own subjects and non-hierarchical societies have been able to successfully resist state formation or defend themselves from neighbouring states.

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<sup>30</sup> P. Gelderloos (2010) *Worshipping Power*

<sup>31</sup> Scott JC. (2017) *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*, New Haven: Yale University Press.  
Gelderloos P. (2017) *Worshipping Power*.

Anarchism, therefore, has been able to grow beyond the workers' movement in which it first gained a reputation, to recognize parallel roots in anti-authoritarian struggles on other continents, to become a part of early anti-colonial struggles, and to play a leading role in the fight against patriarchy.<sup>32</sup>

In opposition to states, horizontal organisation, local ownership of low-level power structures, and community empowerment are highly sustainable and peaceful forces. All the while, these structures are the ones actively resisting mega-projects and protecting habitats. In a much simpler sense, and this might surprise detached academics: *We are already fighting for the world we want to live in. Where are you?*

## It Sure Won't Be Televised

A lack of affinity with long-standing cultures of resistance and even knowledge of other struggles enforces an alienation and helplessness taught to people throughout their entire lives, especially in areas where colonization is entrenched and consolidated, such as Northern Europe [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.3 pg87*]. The marketing and cultural promotion of institutionalization, and disbelief in self-organization, leads people to political submission, accomplishing the work of state powers: political order and pacification of the population.

We should value climate science, but we must look at the origin, history and reality of this accounting – or the lack thereof – as record heat and marine die-offs in the Western Americas and flooding in Germany, Belgium and France have recently demonstrated. Only after such record-breaking natural disasters hitting home have newspapers started to call into question climate sciences projections as underestimated.<sup>33</sup>

While Greta [R.F. – *highly mediatic Swedish youth climate activist*] is invited to elite conferences, the cases of two women (Jessica Rae Reznicek and Ruby Katherine Montoya), sabotaging the Dakota Access Pipeline [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.4 pg16*] around 2016/2017<sup>34</sup> on multiple occasions, however, went unmentioned by most news outlets, along with countless other actions (see [warriorup.noblogs.org](http://warriorup.noblogs.org)). The networks of autonomous ZADs, 'Zones to Defend' in Western Europe opposing new large and useless development projects [R.F. – see *Return Fire vol.1 pg81*] also goes largely unnoticed in international media. With the Zapatistas [R.F. – see "*It Was Wartime*"] as an exception, there are hundreds of struggles for Indigenous autonomy against infrastructure and mining projects across the world that go unnoticed by the what the media calls climate 'youth' and 'justice' activists [R.F. – see *Rebellion Extinction*].

When high expectations are met with incomplete storytelling by news outlets and academics, desperation takes hold. Lack of information regarding resistance and alternatives to corporate and state obedience is no coincidence. Desperation, fear and lack of self-confidence creates an opening for authoritarian ideologues to take hold within decentralized movements, selling false hopes and answers through their utopian techno-fixes and megalomania, big and small.

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<sup>32</sup> A. Dunlap (2020) *Compost the Colony: Exploring Anarchist Decolonization*, see [theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-dunlap-compost-the-colony-exploring-anarchist-decolonization](http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexander-dunlap-compost-the-colony-exploring-anarchist-decolonization)

<sup>33</sup> [theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/16/climate-scientists-shocked-by-scale-of-floods-in-germany](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/16/climate-scientists-shocked-by-scale-of-floods-in-germany)

<sup>34</sup> [grist.org/protest/dakota-access-pipeline-activists-property-destruction](https://grist.org/protest/dakota-access-pipeline-activists-property-destruction) [grist.org/protest/dakota-access-pipeline-activists-property-destruction](https://grist.org/protest/dakota-access-pipeline-activists-property-destruction) [R.F. It turns out that Ruby has turned snitch, and is cooperating with cops and investigators.]

If this desperation remains unchecked, people will submit to the existing as well as their institutional conditioning and look to authorities or leaders. It seems, at times, people just want some authority to tell them “everything will be okay” so they do not have change their habits, let alone take direct action.

## The Bottom Line

The effectiveness of our actions cannot be measured in the same terms we measure the decline of our ecosystems. Life, and especially living resistance, is so much more than actions taken to influence a scientists’ interpretation of climate meta data and feedback loops. Measuring our efforts by their effectiveness on the scales of dominant society is falling for the same ‘return on investment’ paradigm that has allowed the looting of our habitats.

As long as we do not see our struggles as the continuation of an age-old fight against domination and state coercion [*R.F. – see 23 Theses Concerning Revolt*], we will be setting forth on half measures leaving the old powers alive underneath the surface, which has only led to an intensification of authoritarianism, ecological degradation and now climate crisis.

Decentralized organizing, non-hierarchical networks and joyful resistance have been and will be the most effective tools to fight the builders of this ecocidal world and to live a life free of oppression. We don’t need political parties or professional leaders to pacify these struggles. We need to support them, help them grow and connect, and show how they already contain the solutions to the interrelated problems of ecological collapse, poverty, and exploitation.

Situations of desperation and perceived emergency create opportunities for authoritarians to increase their power [*R.F. – see “The Difference Between “Just Coping” & “Not Coping at All”*], and mislead efforts of decentralized movements towards tech-fixes that accelerate neo-colonial extractivism. If people have a desire to attempt to appropriate the state to create more favorable policy conditions for land defenders and ecosystems or become lawyers, this is understandable. The battle against ecological and climate catastrophe already exists, the problem is there are few actually fighting it and taking this battle seriously.

If you are reading this, you are the resistance to ecological catastrophe and the authoritarianism that put the world in this desperate situation.

...*“Just as we  
refuse to be ruled,  
we refuse to rule  
over anyone else”...*  
(Peter Gelderloos)

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