

Speed Kills

Snuff Capitalist Acceleration

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Whether we like it or not, capital is accelerationist. Speed-up is built right into the very engine of capitalism. Capital's drive for accumulation, in competition with other capital for profit, means that it must always go faster, must always accelerate exploitation and value extraction. This is the drive behind the ceaseless, permanent, push for technological advance, from motors to assembly lines to robots to computers, to AI, and beyond.

Speed is the means by which capital beats its competitors in extracting value. More surplus value in an ever-shorter period of time. Any worker knows the tyranny of the clock in the capitalist workplace. Marx suggests that this surplus value extraction is either absolute, the lengthening of the working day, so we work longer beyond the point that we produce the value equivalent to our wages or relative, narrowing the time it takes us to produce the equivalent of our wages. Relative surplus value is the logic of the speed up—using technology to get us producing more and faster. Both forms of extraction, though, dominate the worker's lifetime. Denying us rest, breaks, mealtimes, or even bathroom breaks. Stealing our life times— time away from family, from loved ones, from ourselves.

Speed also, significantly, overcomes obstacles—first and foremost among them the slowness built into human labor by the physical and mental limits and frailties of our bodies. Technological acceleration is therefore about overcoming the human element in labor. It is about controlling us too, taking initiative away from us.

Reducing and then replacing our numbers, and our capacities to resist or control the labor process. Fundamentally it is about rendering our human labor irrelevant, while doing the same to the embodiment of that labor itself—us.

Capital has used speed to overcome the limitations posed by workers on value extraction and accumulation. But under current and emerging conditions of accelerating electronicization (AI and its ilk are exemplars), capital is accelerating, not with workers, but without us. The working class becomes an obstacle to be overcome, not only at work but increasingly outside of work. The living bodies of the working class slow down the circuits of capital in distribution (consumption) as well as in production. Capital moves quickly from stealing our life times to stealing our life itself.

The elimination of jobs at the workplace now coincides with the elimination of former workers outside the workplace under snuff capitalism. And this elimination too must be done at accelerating rates. Time, as always, is money from capital's perspective.

From Social Services to Snuff Services

Those expelled from production and (simultaneously) from consumption are too costly for capital, too much of an obstacle to accumulation. As capital becomes more desperate it increasingly sees any supports that might sustain the unemployed, such as welfare, unemployment insurance, social housing, health care, as a transfer of wealth by the state away from capital and to the unproductive and unnecessary. They are, from capital's perspective, expendable. They must be eliminated. This is the impetus, and organizing principle, of snuff capitalism.

Like production and consumption themselves, this elimination must be done quickly, at accelerating speeds. Every day the unneeded are kept around is an impediment to accumulation, a drain on capital.

This elimination must at least keep pace with the elimination of jobs, of workers from work, of consumers from consumption. Time, as always for capital, is money. First and foremost.

This is driving expansion of and innovation in snuff industries, innovation and expansion of murder infrastructures, innovation and transformation of capital's states from neoliberal tools (of crisis) to democidal weapons (of extermination).

This is made to happen through the dual spheres of the state as usual, through law (legality) and force (police). Increasingly it will happen through what were once called social services—health care as assisted suicide and coercive detention, social assistance as death camp labor and medical experimentation.

One focus of democidal states has been the removal of laws and regulations that would impede capital or slow its circulation, such as environmental or workplace protections. While writing this piece the US Supreme Court issued a decision protecting Bayer from lawsuits over cancer related to glyphosate, the active ingredient in the company's Roundup weedkiller. Ominously, it protects capital from having to warn about deadly ingredients in their products. Why worry about warnings when death is the point?

Snuff capital cannot even wait for people to die before treating them as if they are dead—killing them legislatively. The same month it was learned that the Trump administration had plans to falsely declare 2.7 million people dead as part of the government's mass deportation efforts. According to a whistle blower, the White House planned to have people's names and Social Security numbers added to the Death Master File which tracks when a person has died in order to stop government benefits.

While this was not implemented (this time) it shows us a workable model for future democidal policy under snuff capitalism. It can be done that quickly—with the stroke of a pen you are legally dead. Then, of course, literally.

This is the mindset of snuff. We must not be mistaken in the false hope that these experiments, intentions, innovations will stay at the level of the snuff fantasies of madmen.

In the realm of state force, we have already seen the death squads of ICE in action. Rapid and mobile murder infrastructures. Organized state gangsterism, the mode of the democidal state.

The Speed of Death

The litany of atrocities, and the ever-growing roster getting set to launch from the starting blocks, come at us faster than we can enumerate. Every day, new horrors are announced to a reeling public. And that is as intended. We are meant to recoil in horror. Acceleration is the point and the way. It cannot be otherwise for capital desperate to accumulate, despairing for still more. It will not slow down. From the perspective of capital, it must not.

Acceleration itself is an attack on life. Humans (and other living beings for that matter) are not meant to live our lives at ever increasing speed. We are not built for it. It breaks us down mentally and physically. We cannot process, integrate, and act at the speed capital requires. We are built to live according to celestial time, not capital time.

The toll on life built into capitalist accelerationism is expressed in growing levels of physical ailment and disability (which have long been linked to capitalist time, like heart disease) and in epidemics of mental health problems, such as depression and suicide.

We see it too in the severe negative impacts on health, including deaths, associated with capital's great rush to return to business as (more than) usual before COVID was over with and while it is still killing people. Capital moved with a speed that led many to forget COVID, to act as if it is no longer dealing death. But for snuff capital, dealing death is the order of the day so what does it matter?

What some refer to, rather cynically, as compassion fatigue is not really about compassion at all. It is a reflection of people being overwhelmed psychologically and emotionally by the waves in which atrocities are unleashed against us. The rapid streams of horrors we are faced with, even only as images and reports, overwhelm the senses. We cannot properly process them. Our capacities for understanding are flooded.

Acceleration confronts us with new disasters, crises, atrocities, while we are still trying to analyze those that have already trampled us. At the same time democidal states cynically refer to compassion fatigue in justifying cuts to social services that might benefit the working class, especially the excluded sectors of the working class. People are tired of tax dollars going to support the "unproductive," they tell us. We can no longer afford sympathy for programs to help those who will not help themselves. Far from reflecting compassion fatigue among the working class broadly, these reflect the views of capital. Though we may recognize that some workers, having bought into the dog-eat-dog priorities of capital and its states, turning to fascist survivalism in the false hope of buying themselves some time.

Creating Roadblocks to Capitalist Accelerationism

One outcome, of course, is fatalism, demoralization, defeatism—what some today call "doomersim" or the all pervading belief that we are all condemned, no matter what we do. We have to avoid doomerism, but at the same time be honest about what confronts us. These are the realities we must face, and against which we must be fierce. Unfortunately, movements (anarchist as well as leftist) are still moving at the speed of a glacier.

Movements are still oriented towards literal dead ends. Social democracy, electoralism, "green new deals," symbolic protests, demonstrations, making moral appeals to the immoral. Slow march politics that do nothing to stop the fast march to the graveyard.

Snuff capital is not open to reform. It has no interest in bargaining. And why should it, given the current imbalance of power in its favor? It is fully dedicated to the path it is, with full awareness and intent, pursuing. There is no reforming a system operated by and according to those who have determined that their existence is predicated on our extermination. In any event, you do not reform snuff. We must be clear that we cannot pursue our aims through the dominant, traditional structures of working class organizing—most notably through mainstream trade unions. Unions have been vehicles for negotiation with capital—vehicles for capitulation, accommodation, and containment within contractualism.

We have long seen union responses to earlier forms of mechanization and automation—negotiated layoffs and severance packages. Unions will cling to hopes of bargaining with snuff right up until the last worker is out the door. An illusion that you can slow the culling, while still allowing the culling to occur.

We need to remember once-familiar militant working-class methods from slow downs to sit downs, strikes and occupations. These are the great (often literal) roadblocks to capitalist

speed. The sabotage that derails and dismantles. These are the exploited and oppressed pulling the emergency break. Not asking for capital to take its foot off the gas pedal.

Revolutionary rank-and-file action will be key as part of this, while we still have access to workplaces that we could win control of away from capital. And shut down as necessary. Before our place as workers is eliminated. Syndicalism, which has always taken a class-wide approach, is necessary as are its preferred tactics of militant direct action against (not in negotiation with) capital. To end the labor-capital structure. To snuff out capitalism before it snuffs out us.

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