

3.4.1 Thoughts to the text

The text by Cohen on Marx, is discussing Marx „Development“ and „Primacy Thesis“, in two specific ways: 1. Cohen tries to prove, that Marx himself held this claims and 2. Cohen tries to defend the Thesis.

Broadly outlined, the thesis claims that the productive forces will continue developing and that the productive relations can be explained by the productive forces giving the latter a »primacy« over the former. Ultimately Marx (and Cohen) argue, that the relations of production, or a economical system has a maximum of productivity or development which the productive forces may reach and that a) a economical system only „perishes“, when these have developed to their full extend (t.i. to the maximum extend they *are able* to develop to in the current economical system) and b) that „new, higher relations of production“, only emerge, *after* this full extend is reached.

In my opinion the example of the Soviet Union comes to mind quite quickly when hearing this. It seems quit clear, that for the Soviet Union or former Russian these conditions had not been met and that the Russian revolution took place in despite of the full extend of the productive forces not yet been reached and thus in contradiction to the claims of Marx.

However on page 142 Cohen writes „[t]he arrival of the new society may be delayed, and there may be some backward steps on the way to it, but come it must in the end“. Could the epoch of the Soviet Union be seen as such a step on the path from feudalism to capitalism? I admit, that this is a very bold claim, which Marx would probably not have supported.

Another solution to the contradiction which seems to come up when looking at the Soviet Union (or also China), I heard discussed in a podcast once, is that the Russian epoch of the Soviet Union and or Chinas communism, took the place, which the „ursprüngliche Akkumulation“, held in Europe and America: in the same way that laws and violence freed the labor forces from their feudal entanglement, the era of communism did so in Russia and China.