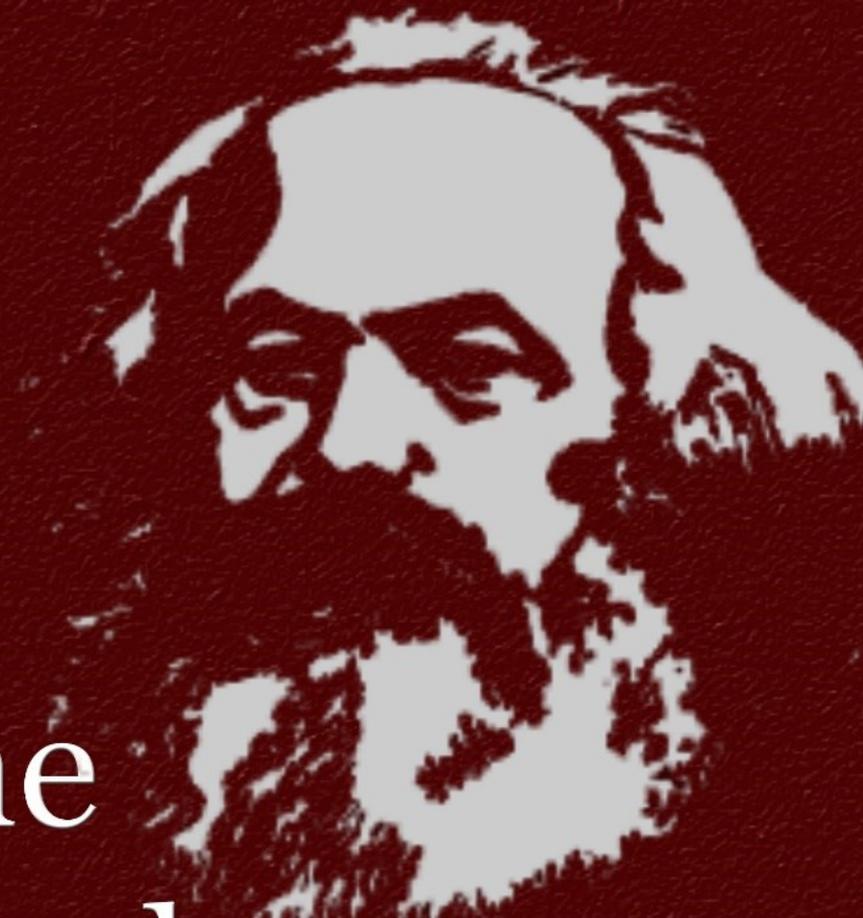


A. Leontiev



The
Algebra
of Revolution





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(75th Anniversary of the Publication of *A Contribution to
the Critique of political Economy*)

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In June 1859, there was published in Berlin *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, by Karl Marx. Three quarters of a century is a long time, but the last three quarters of a century occupy a unique place in the history of humanity. Time has proved itself to be a strict judge of the numerous publications of this epoch. But Marx's *Critique* is as fresh to-day as it was on the day it first appeared. The secret of this fact is that Marx placed the whole power of his genius, the revolutionary passion of his heart; the whole strength of his spirit in the service of the proletariat, in the service of the class which win free humanity from the yoke of exploitation, the class to which belongs the future.

Already at the commencement of his social-political activity, Marx joined the revolutionary movement. Having arrived at the sphere of "material interests" and of the class struggle connected with it, Marx occupied himself with a thorough study of political economy. In the middle of the forties of last century he worked out, together with his friend *Friedrich Engels*, the foundations of *scientific*

Communism. Convinced that only the working class constituted the powerful revolutionary force which is called upon to renew the world, Marx took any active part in the proletarian organisations and soon became one of their foremost leaders.

On the eve of the revolution of 1848, the *Communist Manifesto*, this immortal herald of the proletarian revolution, was published. Marx was feverishly active at that time. He organised the first troops of the class-conscious proletariat and conducted a ruthless fight against the betrayers and pseudo-friends of the people. Marx made use of the period following the revolution of 1848 for intensified work in order to forge the theoretical weapon of the proletariat. He had to work under conditions of terrible poverty and was forced to wage a bitter fight for existence.

In a letter to Engels, Marx jestingly wrote that one who possessed no money whatever could hardly deal with the theory of money. In a letter, he wrote that he was compelled to occupy himself not so much with political economy as with his personal economy.

I hope to achieve a scientific victory for our Party, wrote Marx to his friend, Weidemayer, when informing him of the approaching publication of the *Critique*. Marx's expectations could scarcely have been more magnificently fulfilled. This work was, and remains, a *powerful theoretical weapon of world Communism*.

The Preface to the *Critique* occupies a prominent place in the treasury of Marxism. Here there are

given in laconic form the foundations of the teachings of Marxism. Not a few “critics” of Marxism have broken their heads on the granite wall of this *Preface*. A number of generations of proletarian revolutionaries learned the art of class struggle from this *Algebra or Revolution*. Marx formulated the “general result” at which he had arrived in the following words:

“In the social production of the means of life, human beings enter into definite and necessary relations which are independent of their will—production relations which correspond to a definite stage of the development or their productive forces. The totality of these production relations constitute the economic structure of society, the real basis upon which a legal and political superstructure arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of the material means of life determined, in general, the social, political, and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of human beings that determines their existence, but conversely, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with existing production relations, or, what is but a legal expression for the same thing, with the property relations within which they have hitherto moved. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations turn into their fetters. A period of social revolution then begins.” (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Preface.)

Bourgeois society develops the class antagonisms to the extreme; the gulf between the classes becomes ever wider. At the same time, however, bourgeois production relations are the last antagonistic form of the social mode of production, for, said Marx, the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create at the same time the material preconditions for the solution of this antagonism.

In his review of Marx's *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Engels wrote that with the further development of our materialistic thesis and with its application to the present, there is suddenly opened before us as the perspective of a great revolution, the greatest of all times.

The greatest revolution of all times, which was foreseen then by Marx and Engels, has become the great reality of our time. The proletarian revolution has triumphed in an enormous country. Marx prophecy, that capitalism closes the pre-history of human society, has proved true. The construction of socialism in the Soviet Union gives from year to year and from day to day ever-clearer proofs of the gigantic advantages for the trilling masses connected with this ending of the pre-history of humanity. The building of the classless socialist society in the Soviet Union means this great transition to the actual history of humanity, a humanity free from the abominations and barbarism of exploitation.

Marx published his *Critique* as the first edition of his main work, with which he aimed at discovering the economic laws of motion of modern society. Marx

worked with extraordinary exactness and constantly revised his manuscripts. Thus the first volume of *Capital*, with the sub-title *Critique of Political Economy* did not appear until eight years later. The second and third volumes of *Capital* were published by Engels after the death of Marx. But already at the time of the appearance of the *Critique* all the important parts of the great work *Capital* had been outlined by Marx. This fact is proved by many manuscripts written at that time.

Some published portions of these manuscripts, in particular the brilliant *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* are of enormous value. Marx had already sketched out the plan of his whole work before he published the first part. Several variants of this plan were drafted by him in preparatory manuscripts, in a number of letters Marx mentioned its most important points. The plan was a programme of “anatomical” investigation of bourgeois society, beginning with its simplest cell, the commodity, and ending with its crowning in the shape of the world market, produced by the capitalist mode of production. In one variant of the plan, the following points were noted in connection with the world market: Crisis, disintegration of the method of production and of the social order which are based on exchange value, real transformation of individual work into social work and vice versa. In this variant of the plan, therefore, Marx had in mind for the concluding portion of his researches an investigation of crises, these *memento mori* of capitalism, and of

the preconditions for the rise of the socialist society on the ruins of capitalism.

The inevitability of the decline of capitalism and thy victory of the socialist order — this idea runs like a red thread through all Marx's economic researches. In a letter to Engels, Marx humorously remarks that there is no mention in his *Critique* of capital, although it bore the sub-title of *First Book on Capital*. This edition dealt only with the commodity (first chapter) and money (second chapter). Marx wanted to deal with capital in a third chapter, which should appear in the next edition. Nevertheless, the *Critique* constitutes a work of outstanding interest for our time, for the epoch of the decline of capitalism and the victory of Socialism. In investigating the nature of *Commodity*, Marx exposed in this economic cell of bourgeois society the germs of the contradiction which myth finally bring about the collapse of the capitalist system. Money meant the further development of these contradictions. *Money*, as the highest product of commodity production and of exchange, serves at the same time as a starting point for *Capital*.

Capitalism, which at the time of Marx was still in full vigor, is now mortally wounded. But the old robber is not yet dead: it is exerting all its forces in the fight against the proletarian revolution; it is causing incalculable suffering to toiling humanity; it is taking toll of innumerable victims from the ranks of the working class. Therefore, the pages of the *Critique*, in which Marx, with the whole thoroughness of his genius and the passion of a great

revolutionary, discovered the profoundest secrets of the economic structure of bourgeois society and the most hidden main springs of its economic mechanism, are of the greatest importance at the present time.

At the beginning of 1859, when he was preparing the manuscript of the *Critique* for the press, Marx expected a new upsurge of the revolutionary wave in Europe. In a letter, he remarked that he reckoned stormy events would prevent him from concluding his work after 15 years of labour. He said that if he thereby came too late to interest the world in such things, the fault would be only his own.

The present epoch is the epoch of the powerful creations of the revolution, which Marx foresaw. And in spite of this, “such things” as are dealt with in the *Critique* still interest the world and will interest it for a long time, for the ideas worked out by Marx have long become the material force dominating the masses numbering millions, and the theories of Marx and Engels, further developed by Lenin and Stalin, serve as an indispensable weapon to the masses who are proceeding to storm the citadels of capital. This theory is the weapon of millions who are building up Socialism in the Soviet Union.

When the *Critique* appeared, the bourgeoisie attempted to kill this work of Marx by a conspiracy of silence. The ruling class, however, was soon compelled to adopt more elastic tactics. They could not kill Marx by means of silence, for his teachings had found their way deep into the working masses.

In place of the conspiracy of silence there was used the secret poison of *revisionism*.

At the present time the bourgeoisie, like a savage animal, is resorting to the most ruthless means of fighting. In Berlin, where the *Critique* was first published 75 years ago, the fascist vandals are burning the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. But the bonfires on which these books are burnt at the same time herald the approaching doom of capitalism; they cannot conceal the class struggle which is raging under the fascist dictatorship.

“It is said that in the West, in some countries, Marxism he already been destroyed. It is said that it was destroyed by the bourgeois-nationalist trend known as fascism. That is nonsense, of course. Only those who are ignorant of history can talk like that. Marxism is the scientific expression of the fundamental interests of the working class. In order to destroy Marxism the working class must be destroyed. And it is impossible to destroy the working class. More than 80 years have passed since Marxism stepped into the arena. During this time, scores and hundreds of bourgeois governments have tried to destroy Marxism. And what happened? Bourgeois government have come and gone, but Marxism still goes.” (Stalin).

