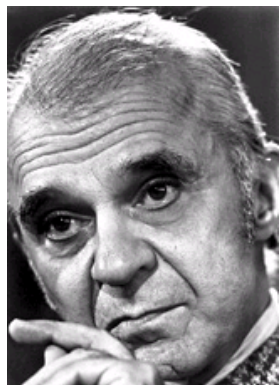




Wassily Leontief

The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 1973

Autobiography



I was born August 5, 1906, and spent my childhood and youth in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) where my father was a professor of economics.* Among my early indelible memories are: the country plunged into deep mourning the day of Leo Tolstoy's death; stray bullets whistling by during the first days of the February Revolution; Lenin addressing a mass meeting from a high tribune in front of the Winter Palace.

Entered the University of Leningrad in 1921. After studying philosophy, sociology and finally economics, I received the degree of Learned Economist in 1925.

Continued my studies at the University of Berlin with Werner Sombart and Ladislaus Bortiewicz, and received the Ph.D. degree, having submitted a dissertation on the theoretical subject "Wirtschaft als Kreislauf." As member of the staff of the Institute for World Economics at the University of Kiel from 1927 to 1930, engaged in research on derivation of statistical demand and supply curves. This academic work was interrupted in 1929 by a twelve-month stay in China as advisor to the Ministry of Railroads. Moved to the National Bureau of Economic Research in New York in 1931 and to the Department of Economics at Harvard University in 1932. Became Professor of Economics in 1946; organized the Harvard Economic Research Project in 1948, and served as its Director until 1973; have been Chairman of the Harvard Society of Fellows since 1965.

Married Estelle Marks, who is a poet, in 1932. A daughter, Svetlana Alpers, is now Professor of the History of Arts at the University of California, Berkeley.

Having come to the conclusion that so-called partial analysis cannot provide a sufficiently broad basis for fundamental understanding of the structure and operation of economic systems, I set out in 1931 to formulate a general equilibrium theory capable of empirical implementation. Received a research grant for compilation of the first input-output tables of the American economy (for the years 1919 and 1929) in 1932. Began to make use of a large scale mechanical computing machine in 1935 and Mark I (the first large-scale electronic computer) in 1943.




After publication of *Structure of the American Economy, 1919-1929* in 1941, I continued working on the development of the input-output theory and of its various applications. The first international conference on inter-industrial relations was held at Dreibergen, Holland, in 1950; the sixth will be in Vienna in 1974.

In recent years I have been centering my attention on analysis of environmental disruption and economic growth, while maintaining, at the same time, active interest in wider problems of scientific methodology and broader issues of social and economic policies, and of evolutionary and revolutionary change.



Memberships

- American Economic Association (President, 1970)
- Econometric Society (President, 1954)
- American Philosophical Society
- American Academy of Arts and Sciences
- International Statistical Institute
- Honorary Member, Japan Economic Research Center, Tokyo
- Honorary Fellow, Royal Statistical Society, London
- Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy, 1970
- Corresponding Member of the Institut de France, 1968.

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Order of the Cherubim, University of Pisa, 1953

Doctor *honoris causa*, University of Brussels, 1962

Doctor of the University, University of York, 1967

Officer of the French Legion d'Honneur, 1968

Bernhard-Harms Prize Economics, West Germany, 1970

Doctor *honoris causa*, University of Louvain, 1971

Doctor *honoris causa*, University of Paris I (Sorbonne), 1972.

From *Nobel Lectures, Economics 1969-1980*, Editor Assar Lindbeck, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1992

This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series *Les Prix Nobel*. It was later edited and republished in *Nobel Lectures*. To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.

* Recent information sets his year of birth to 1905, in Munich.

Wassily Leontief died on February 5, 1999.

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