

Imperialism • Acts, Facts, and Records



Gennady Maltsev

# An Illusion of Equal Rights



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Gennady Maltsev

# An Illusion of Equal Rights

(Legal Inequality  
in the Capitalist World)



Progress Publishers

Moscow

Translated from the Russian by *Frances Longman*  
Designed by *Vadim Kuleshov*

ГЕННАДИЙ МАЛЬЦЕВ

ИЛЛЮЗИИ РАВНОПРАВИЯ

(Правовое неравенство в мире капитала)

*На английском языке*

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English translation of the revised Russian text

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## FROM THE AUTHOR

This book is devoted to one of the most acute and complex problems of present-day world development, the achievement of genuine equal rights for all people as individuals, the establishment of class equality and equal relations between peoples, nations and states. For centuries humanity has been trying to solve these problems and has been striving for a just and harmonious organisation of human affairs based on the domination not of brute force but of reason, not of enmity and hatred but of benevolence and mutual understanding, not of oppression and exploitation but of collective cooperation for the sake of happiness, well-being, peace and social progress. Noble ideals of equality inspired the thinkers of the past to create theories which, however, contained much that was unfeasible, fantastic and unrealistic. The so-called utopias and illusions concerning social equality, that is ideas which, for social reasons, could not be put into practice, continue to this day to provoke disappointment and scepticism in the bourgeois world. Certain contemporary bourgeois ideologists, attempting forever to preserve the existing social inequalities between people and between nations and to perpetuate the superiority of the wealthy, openly reject the ideals of equality and equal rights, believing that humanity is incapable of implementing them.

It is vital to oppose in the international arena the growing bourgeois anti-egalitarianism and reaction against progressive ideologies and movements for social equality and equal rights, with the firm conviction of world public opinion and the clear and precise understanding that the *equality* of individuals, classes, peoples, nations and races is both *possible* and *achievable*, and that the present era of revolutionary reforms and scientific and technological progress has created prerequisites and means which humanity has never before possessed to attain this goal.

One of the main ideas of this book is that the establishment of equal relations and equal rights between individuals and between nations is a real and urgent contemporary issue. It is also clear that it cannot be solved without taking account of global factors connected with the existence of the two opposing social systems of socialism and capitalism, the confrontation between them and the preservation in many areas of the world of various types of pre-capitalist social relations.

Humanity is going through a complicated and extremely critical stage in its history. Events have taken place in the 20th century cardinally changing the world and laying the foundations for its revolutionary renewal and for an era of transition from the capitalist social system to socialism and communism. A real opportunity has opened up for people to create a new type of civilisation on Earth, based on peaceful labour, freedom, equality, brotherhood and happiness for all peoples.

The course of history has doomed the capitalist system to inevitable defeat, but contemporary capitalism is trying as hard as it can to hold on to its posi-

tions, showing greater aggressiveness towards the socialist and most of the developing countries and conducting anti-popular and imperialist home and foreign policies. The sphere of imperialist domination in the world has diminished and the inherent contradictions in the capitalist countries have intensified, as has rivalry between these countries. The aggressiveness of imperialist policy, especially American, has been sharply increased.

Evidence of the deepening general crisis of capitalism is the growth of social inequalities in the capitalist world, which are emerging and becoming deeper because of the aggravation of diverse contradictions both within bourgeois society and in the international arena—between the imperialist powers, the developed capitalist and the developing countries. The glaring inequalities that exist between people in the economic, social, political, cultural and other spheres of life, the disproportionate distribution of the material and spiritual wealth of society and the continuing polarisation of poverty and affluence, are inherent features of capitalism which demonstrate the many faults of the bourgeois social system. Added to the various forms of social inequality under capitalism is the legal inequality of citizens who are formally recognised as possessing equal rights.

Instead of real legal equality, i.e., where a citizen actually possesses equal rights and opportunities, there is an illusion of equality.

The spreading of illusions is a weapon for deceiving the masses, a means of mystifying public opinion. Illusions appear where the bourgeoisie tries to present actual processes in a false light and to force people to see what does not exist and not to notice what ex-



ists. The ultimate objective of bourgeois ideologists who spread illusions is to manipulate the minds and feelings of the people.

Illusions of the equality of rights are essential for big capital in order to stop the working people's social protest against inequality and to take the heat out of the class struggle and anti-imperialist campaigns. Bourgeois ideologists have some hard problems to solve. It is difficult, in the teeth of blatant facts (some of which will be mentioned later), to assert that citizens in a capitalist society are equal in a socio-economic or political respect. But it appears that one can make people believe that even if they are not equal, they do have equal rights.

With the aid of illusions of equal rights, big capital attempts to conceal people's real legal inequality, the advantages of some and discrimination against other categories of citizens. In a society where property and power are distributed extremely unfairly between classes and social groups and where there are rich and poor, the inadequacy of rights and opportunities of citizens on the lower rungs of the social ladder is inevitable. In other words, legal inequality is a logical result of social inequality and no constitutional formulations of equal rights can stop this. The campaigns of progressive, anti-imperialist forces in the contemporary capitalist world are clear confirmation that bourgeois society has not provided its citizens with genuine equality. These forces have never ceased the struggle for real equal rights for people belonging to various classes and social groups, for men and women and for each and every race, nation, nationality, ethnic group, etc. The demand for equal rights for all working people plays an im-

portant part in the international revolutionary working-class movement today and in the programmes of communist and workers' parties which voice the desire of peoples for basic social change.

The problem of equal rights for all has acquired particular significance at the stage of the general crisis of capitalism. It has emerged, as it were, at the intersection of two great and age-old aspirations of progressive humanity for social equality and human rights. The working masses and the general public are making increasing demands on the qualitative content of rights and freedoms. Nowadays few people are satisfied with merely formal, partial, "conceded" or "granted" rights. It is genuinely human rights that have acquired most value and have become the objective of the conscious aspirations of progressive forces working for peace, democracy and socialism.

To have not simply rights, but equal rights, has been the cherished desire of the exploited classes and one of the most important slogans of their political struggle. The equal rights of people, irrespective of their origin, social and property status, sex, race, national affiliation, skin colour, language, education, religious affiliation, type of occupation, citizenship, place of residence and other circumstances, become real when the members of society are granted broad rights and possess equal opportunities of realising them. On the other hand, the working people of capitalist countries are struggling to achieve guarantees against the existing social inequalities that form as a result of the operation of numerous objective and subjective factors. The experience of socialism is for them a source of belief in the truth

of the great cause of liberating people from the oppression of capitalist exploitation.

Today socialism and capitalism are travelling along opposite paths of development. Whereas one of these social systems, the socialist, steadily and reliably secures the equality and equal rights of all members of society, the other essentially pushes these problems into deadlock. The policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet state is aimed at reinforcing the social homogeneity of society—through erasing class distinctions and the essential distinctions between town and country and mental and physical labour, and through the all-round development and convergence of all nations and nationalities of the USSR. The 26th Congress of the CPSU, which took place in February-March 1981, planned the main trends of the economic and social development of Soviet society for the forthcoming five-year period and for the eighties as a whole, and set specific new social-policy tasks.

The practice of socialist development in the Soviet Union and in other countries has fully confirmed the great truth that the socialist social system is particularly interested in the development of rights and freedoms of the individual and that profound objective reasons lie at the basis of this concern, extending far beyond the limits of relations between states with different social systems, and of ideological struggle. What makes the problem of human rights essential and topical under socialism is precisely the objective laws, tendencies and real requirements of the socio-economic, political and cultural development of society. Socialist society cannot successfully move forward without solving the problems of educating a

new man and the comprehensive development of the personality and without perfecting the system of civil rights and freedoms.

Human rights have long been a basic part of the theory and practice of real socialism and are deeply rooted in it. The recently formed socialist concept of human rights is a vital element of Marxism-Leninism.

The peoples of the world realise that socialism is fulfilling a great historical mission by delivering people from their rightless state and from social inequality and all forms of oppression and exploitation of man by man. The capitalist system has other, directly opposite functions, which will be discussed in the course of this book.