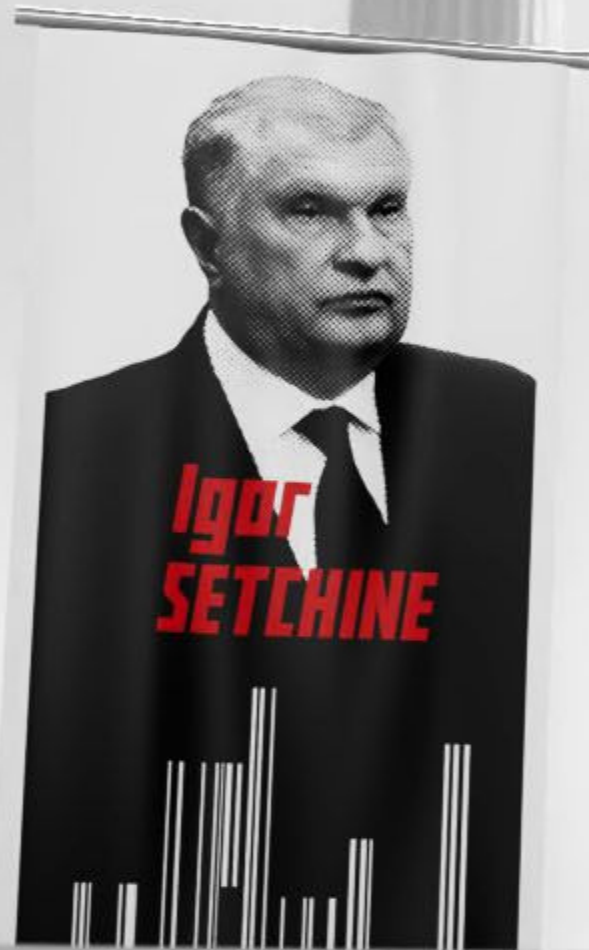


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OIL OLIGARCHS

Corrupting the West

A 3 x 52' documentary series by Jerome FRITEL & Marc ROCHE



SYNOPSIS

This 3-part 52-minute documentary series offers a unique behind-the-scenes look into the fascinating world of Russian oligarchs. Full of accounts and archival footage, every one of these films shows how a handful of men, who all have different backgrounds and whose destinies are intertwined, took control of the Russian economy. To do so, they established themselves as partners of the major Western powers, first for their own benefit, and finally, so they could serve Vladimir Putin's ambitions. The series focuses on what is fuelling war, both literally and figuratively:: fossil fuels. This is where the strategies of multinational companies and governments are most closely intertwined. This colossal and almost limitless financial wealth has never been reinvested in Russia. It has become, and still is today, a tool to serve very specific global geopolitical goals: infiltrate, corrupt and make Western countries dependent on Russian oil and gas and then rebuild an empire. Ever since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, fossil fuels have become the only income generated by a total war economy.

By looking into their stories, their motivations, methods and ambitions, we show how this mafia-like economic system ensures its survival, how it reproduces like a tentacled octopus, and how it adapts in order to survive geopolitical upheavals. This international investigation tells the story of four decades of Russia's economic and financial history, through the birth, rise, fall and, in all likelihood, rebirth of the oligarchs.

Directed just like a thriller movie, these films make a bitter Russian novel that turns Russia into a mafia-like petro-monarchy, where cynicism, violence, greed and the thirst for power seem to have no limits.



Thursday, February 24, 2022, The Hall of the Order of St. Catherine, Grand Kremlin Palace

On the evening following the first day of Russia's so-called "special military operation" in Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin summoned the country's wealthiest and most powerful business leaders, asking them to pledge their allegiance to him and requesting their financial support. A picture then went viral: that of 40 Russian oligarchs, all wearing black suits and ties, sitting on chairs with their hands on their knees, just like model students, facing Vladimir Putin. These men, whose power can only be matched by their wealth, are reduced to puppets with the Russian head of state pulling the strings. The world then saw the faces of those who have been known for decades as the **oligarchs**, who were better known until that day for their outrageous behaviors and dreadful reputations.

Including those of most of the oil and gas oligarchs - in other words, the main characters of our story.



THE EPISODES —

EPISODE 1
THE "SEVEN BANKERS" (1985-2003)

EPISODE 2
HOW THE WEST WAS WON (2003-2014)

EPISODE 3
THE "OCTOPUS" KNIGHTS (2014-2023)



EPISODE 1 – THE “SEVEN BANKERS” (1985–2003)

When **Gorbachev** was elected president of the Soviet Union, fossil fuels such as oil and gas - were the treasures of a centralized Soviet economy in shambles. As they took advantage of both privatizations that took place in 1993 and 1996 (which were totally biased), those who would later become the oil and gas oligarchs were the first to realize that a new era had begun. Despite their different backgrounds, they were all caught up in the same frenzy that was triggered by a more open market economy. None of them knew what was in store for the Soviet Union, but they all knew that the time of Russian capitalism had yet to be invented.

The oligarchs, who at the time, were also known as **the "seven bankers"** took over these gold mines, sharing out the state-owned oilfields, refineries and pipelines which, until then, had been run by the Russian government. They had laid the groundwork by creating, with Gorbachev's blessing and the exchange controls liberalization, group purchasing organizations that were in charge of buying the technology the USSR needed from abroad. The next step was to create a bank to serve as a stepping stone for the acquisition of state property for a small amount of money.

For **Boris Eltsine**, who was mostly advised by the United States, the challenge was to deconstruct the Communist system irreversibly. The change was so sudden as to allow lawless entrepreneurs to get their hands on the only national wealth (except for metals), in this case energy, through corruption and their connections with criminal organizations.



Mikhail Khodorkovski



Vladimir Potanin



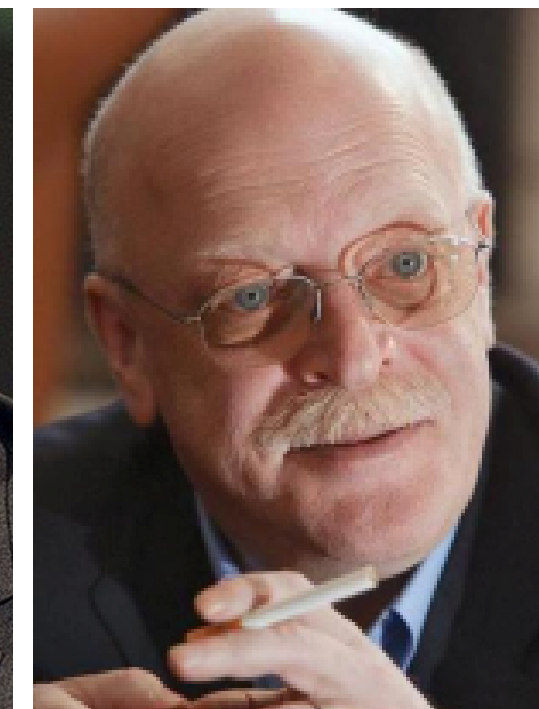
Mikhail Fridman



Boris Berezovski



Vladimir Gusinsky



Alexander Smolenski



Vladimir Vinogradov



EPISODE 2 - HOW THE WEST WAS WON (2003-2014)

Although gas remains nationalized at the outset, while oil is de facto privatized, in the end, both of these sectors are part of the same imperial vision to dominate the West. In order to achieve this, Putin is creating a new, loyal Russian state oligarchy. It practices entryism in the English, German and French establishment and controls the **partnerships that are signed with the leading Western oil-producing countries** (BP, ExxonMobil, Shell, Total, etc).

The bridgehead of this all-out offensive is "**Londongrad**". That's how the British capital came to be known. It's the Trojan horse of this vast corruption enterprise, of which the **City** is the nerve center.



EPISODE 3 – THE “OCTOPUS” KNIGHTS (2014–2023)

In 2014, the Russian Federation invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula,. But for the West, **it was just business as usual**. The son of a former KGB officer being nominated for a life peerage and entering the Lords, the Nord Stream 2 project being carried out and Yamal LNG project (Gazprom-Total) being officially launched are all proof of that. **The oligarchs** started to keep their distance from the Kremlin, gradually withdrawing from the oil and gas sector and **establishing themselves in the West**. They succeeded in providing a future for their children, who were trained in the best private schools and universities in the West. From now on, they'll be taking over.



Putin officially launches Yamal LNG project in Artic



Evgeny Lebedev, son of Alexander Lebedev, a Russian oligarch, and Boris Johnson



Evgeny Lebedev was nominated for a life peerage and has sat in the House of Lords as a crossbench life peer since 2020

THE INVESTIGATION



Oil Oligarchs: Corrupting the West is the third part of the financial trilogy Marc Roche and Jérôme Fritel started in 2010, and focuses on the flaws in the world of finance.

As a London-based financial journalist who has been working since 1985, MARC ROCHE, the film's co-writer, has witnessed first-hand the rise of the oligarchs and the corruption of the British elite. This former Le Monde journalist, who is now a columnist for Le Point, Le Soir and the BBC, is the author of four investigative books on the financial world, including *La Banque, comment Goldman Sachs dirige le monde* (Albin Michel, 2010), 2010 Prix du livre d'économie.

As a journalist and filmmaker, **JÉRÔME FRITEL** has produced many economic and financial documentaries. His most notable films include:

- *Goldman Sachs, la banque qui dirige le monde* (ARTE, 2012, co-written with Marc Roche, Special Jury Prize at FIGRA)
- *Mittal, la face cachée de l'Empire* (ARTE, 2014)
- *HSBC : les gangsters de la finance* (ARTE, 2017, co-written with Marc Roche, (prix Scam at FIGRA)
- *Main basse sur l'eau* (ARTE, 2019, Jury Prize at the Festival du Film Vert (Green Film Festival))

CONTACT INFORMATION——

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