

# Their oligarchs and ours

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Jeff Bezos' \$500 million yacht – too large to move without tearing out a bridge in Rotterdam.

Jeff Bezos' \$500 million yacht was a hot news item back in February. The ship was so large that in order to move it from a Dutch shipyard a bridge in Rotterdam would

have to be disassembled.

That obscene display of wealth by the union-busting Amazon boss could easily have built housing for over a thousand homeless families. Yet the media is now silent about Bezos' yacht.

Instead the internet is buzzing about yachts belonging to Russian billionaires being seized. Why are rich Russian scoundrels called "oligarchs" while U.S. billionaires are treated like movie stars?

The different treatment even extends to dictionaries. The Oxford dictionary featured by the Google search engine gives this definition for oligarch: "(especially in Russia) a very rich business leader with a great deal of political influence."

Who has more political influence than U.S. billionaires? They control the U.S. government from the top to bottom.

They often run for office themselves like the former money bags mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg. Supreme Court justices are groomed in their corporate law firms and Ivy League law schools.

The wealthy and powerful have been running the U.S. since before 1776. Nearly three out of four signers of the Declaration of Independence owned enslaved Africans.

The U.S. Constitution was largely written by those who had a financial interest in the government taking over the debts of the states. This was shown by historian Charles Beard in "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States."

Red, white and blue oligarchs are immensely richer than the Russian variety. The [400 richest](#) U.S. billionaires last year had a total wealth of \$4.5 trillion.

That's 12 times as much as [the \\$375 billion stash](#) of Russia's billionaires.

Wall Street's empire controls vast areas that the Roman emperors never even knew existed. The U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet threatens China while throttling the Pacific Ocean like it's Lake Michigan.

## **Fortunes are theft**

The French novelist Balzac allegedly wrote that "behind every great fortune lies a great crime." Gustavus Myers wanted to see if that was true.

Apologists for the super rich claimed that they got their dough honestly by hard work and smarts. Myers found otherwise in his "History of the Great American Fortunes," published a century ago.

U.S. tycoons got to the top of the heap not only from slavery, child labor, low wages, broken strikes and dangerous working conditions. Myers' investigation proved that just as crucial for the captains of industry was breaking laws and stealing from other capitalists.

John D. Rockefeller — the founder of Big Oil who became the world's first billionaire — had his brother bomb a rival oil refinery in Buffalo, New York.

The Astors become the hemisphere's biggest slumlords by taking the profits stolen from Indigenous nations in the fur trade and investing it in New York City real estate. Also necessary was bribing Michigan territorial governor Lewis Cass. New York city council members were paid off in a waterfront land grab.

A whole series of U.S. billionaires are war profiteers. The Du Ponts' fortune hit the big time with World War I. They used the profits to buy up General Motors.

In the years leading up to his presidency, Donald Trump was so tied in to organized

crime that the state of New Jersey refused at first to give him a gambling license.

The Hearst family's media fortune includes the San Francisco Chronicle, 23 other newspapers, dozens of TV stations and ESPN, which is jointly owned with Disney. These outlets attack Russia and ignore the neo-Nazi gangs in Ukraine that function like a Ku Klux Klan.

According to "Citizen Hearst," by W. A. Swanberg, the Hearst riches began before the U.S. Civil War in a Missouri lead mine. George Hearst didn't hire miners; he bought miners who were enslaved Africans.

If an honest title search was conducted into the origins of the biggest fortunes it would find that they were based on theft. It's tens of millions of unpaid and underpaid workers who actually produced their wealth.

## **Birth of the oligarchs**

Karl Marx pointed out that it was the African Holocaust and the genocide of Indigenous peoples in the Americas that jumpstarted the capitalist world market. He [described capitalism's birth](#) as "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."

The origin of the Russian billionaires is much more recent. It was the U.S. capitalist government that's responsible. The Pentagon spent [at least \\$5.5 trillion on nuclear weapons](#) aimed at the Soviet Union.

Under this unrelenting pressure, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev threw in the towel. The door was open for overthrowing socialism. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund demanded the privatization of the industries that had been built by the working class.

Russian oligarchs never would have been able to steal trillions of dollars of socialist

property without Boris Yeltsin's assault on the Congress of People's Deputies. Hundreds of people were killed there in October 1993.

The U.S. media either applauded the massacre or were silent about it. Their attitude was much the same about the bloody U.S. wars against Panama, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Yemen.

Yet we're supposed to believe them when they tell us the Russian Federation is committing war crimes in Ukraine.

The 1993 massacre allowed a fire sale of Soviet assets that were gobbled up by the new Russian tycoons. One of the reasons the wealthy hate Belarus is that it was the only former Soviet Republic that didn't give away the bulk of its nationalized property.

The Russian billionaires have invested hundreds of billions in London and New York City money markets. This flight of capital helped prop up the U.S. dollar and British pound.

The oligarchs in the former Soviet Republics are justly hated by the poor and working people there. The working class there will have to deal with them like the workers did in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

We have our own oligarchs to deal with. They own half the earth and are the enemies of humankind.

Don't let our struggle against racism and poverty be derailed by a war drive against Russia.

