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Berezovsky Calls Abramovich 'Not Smart'

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LONDON — Self-exiled tycoon Boris Berezovsky dismissed rival tycoon Roman Abramovich as not "smart" in a London court hearing of a $5 billion legal battle between the two businessmen.

Speaking in a courtroom packed with stern-looking bodyguards and armies of lawyers and aides, Berezovsky said late last week that Abramovich would have gotten nowhere without his political connections in the 1990s, when one had to be "smart" to be successful.

"He was not so," said Berezovsky, who spoke in heavily accented English but occasionally conferred with a Russian interpreter. "To get leverage you need to be smart," he said. Abramovich was not like the first-level businessmen of the time, he added.

Sitting at the opposite end of the courtroom, Abramovich showed no emotion as he listened to the Russian translation of the proceedings through headphones.

Berezovsky also said Russia has become increasingly corrupt over the past decade, describing corruption as between three and four out of 10 in the 1990s, and as 10 out of 10 now. "I am not corrupt and I didn't bribe anybody," he added.

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