

Bill Browder Escapes Again

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [History](#)

There was some good and bad news last week. The good news was that William Browder, a London-based investor and dedicated foe of Russian President Vladimir V. Putin [was arrested by the Spanish police](#) on Wednesday. The bad news is that even though Russia has on six occasions requested Browder's arrest through Interpol for tax fraud, the Spanish national police determined that Browder had been detained in error because the international warrant was no longer valid and released him.

Interpol, an organization of 190 countries cannot legally enforce any action of a "political character." This can make it difficult to obtain red notices such as those being sought by Russia on Browder, which are the equivalent of international arrest warrants.

One might reasonably ask why there is a crisis in US-Russia relations at all since Washington and Moscow have much more in common than not, to include confronting international terrorism, stabilizing Syria and other parts of the world that are in turmoil, and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In spite of all that, the U.S. and Russia are currently locked in a tit-for-tat unfriendly relationship somewhat reminiscent of the Cold War and it is only getting worse as self-appointed "experts" including Browder continue to prowl the fringes of policy making. Browder was in Spain to testify in a case against several Russian companies.

That William Browder might be regarded as controversial is somewhat of an understatement. Many who regard him as a crook serving as a catalyst for the bad policies relating to the U.S.-Russia relationship would like to see him in jail. Israel Shamir, [a keen observer](#) of the American-Russian relationship, and celebrated American journalist [Robert Parry both think](#) that Browder single-handedly deserves much of the credit for the new Cold War.

William Browder, the grandson of Earl Browder, former head of the American Communist Party, is a hedge fund operator who made his fortune in the corrupt 1990s world of Russian commodities trading. One of many Jewish profiteers who descended on Russia, his current role is symptomatic of why the United States government is so poorly informed about overseas developments as he appears before Congress frequently and is the source of much of the "testimony" contributing to the current bad international climate. He has somehow emerged as a trusted source in spite of the fact that he has considerable interest in cultivating a certain outcome favorable to himself. Also ignored is his renunciation of American citizenship in 1998, reportedly to avoid taxes. He is now a British citizen.

Browder is notoriously the man behind the 2012 Magnitsky Act, which exploited Congressional willingness to demonize Russia and has done so much to poison relations between Washington and Moscow. The Act has sanctioned individual Russian officials, which

Moscow has rightly seen as unwarranted interference in the operation of its judicial system.

Browder, a media favorite who self-promotes as “Putin’s enemy #1,” portrays himself as a selfless human rights advocate, but is he? He has used his fortune to threaten lawsuits for anyone who challenges his version of events, effectively silencing many critics. He claims that his accountant Sergei Magnitsky was a crusading “lawyer” who discovered a \$230 million tax-fraud scheme that involved the Browder business interest Hermitage Capital but was, in fact, engineered by corrupt Russian police officers who arrested Magnitsky and enabled his death in a Russian jail.

Many have been skeptical of the Browder narrative, suspecting that the fraud was in fact concocted by Browder and his accountant Magnitsky. A Russian court [has supported](#) that alternative narrative, ruling in late December 2013 that Browder had deliberately bankrupted his company and engaged in tax evasion. He was sentenced to nine years prison in absentia.

William Browder has also been regularly in the news in connection with testimony related to [Russiagate](#). On December 16, 2017 Senator Diane Feinstein of the Senate Judiciary Committee released [the transcript](#) of the testimony provided by Glenn Simpson, founder of Fusion GPS. [According to James Carden](#), Browder was mentioned 50 times, but the repeated citations apparently did not merit inclusion in media coverage of the story by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Politico*. Browder has become such an essential asset in the media story about “evil” Russia that he has become in a certain sense bullet proof in spite of his own personal very questionable history.

Fusion GPS, which was involved in the research producing [the Steele Dossier used to discredit Donald Trump](#), was also retained to provide investigative services relating to a lawsuit in New York City involving a Russian company called Prevezon. As information provided by Browder was the basis of the lawsuit, his company and business practices while in Russia became part of the investigation. Simmons maintained that Browder proved to be somewhat evasive and his accounts of his activities were inconsistent. He claimed never to visit the United States and not own property or do business there, all of which were untrue, to include his ownership through a shell company of a \$10 million house in Aspen Colorado. He repeatedly [ran away](#), literally, from attempts to subpoena him so he would have to testify under oath.

Per Simmons, in Russia, Browder used shell companies locally and also worldwide to avoid taxes and conceal ownership, suggesting that he was likely one of many corrupt businessmen operating in what was a wild west business environment. My question is, “Why was such a man granted credibility and allowed a free run to poison the vitally important US-Russia relationship?” The answer might be follow the money. Israel Shamir [reports that](#) Browder was a major contributor to Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland, who was the major force behind the Magnitsky Act.

Cardin and others in Congress have made Russia the *bete noir* of American politics, finding it convenient to scapegoat Moscow for the failure of the United States to put together a coherent and functioning foreign policy. Bill Browder is an essential component in that effort. Perhaps someone should ask him how he became a billionaire in a corrupt Russia going through political crisis and democratization in the 1990s. It would be interesting to learn what he has to say in his defense.

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