

Billionaire Businessman Says Putin Sent "From God"

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Gazprom contractor and billionaire Arkady Rotenberg, 60, has said that his childhood friend President Vladimir Putin was sent to Russia "from God."

Rotenberg, a longtime judo sparring partner of Putin's who has investments in the construction and finance industries, is ranked as Russia's 94th wealthiest man by Forbes with a personal fortune of \$1 billion.

"Friendship never hurt anyone," Rotenberg told the Financial Times in an interview. "I have great respect for this person, and I consider that this is a person sent to our country from God."

Kremlin analysts frequently place Rotenberg among a group of oligarchs with close ties to Putin who have amassed huge fortunes over the last decade. Other members often named in that group include oil trader Gennady Timchenko and banker Yury Kovalchuk.

But Rotenberg denied that his relationship with Putin had been instrumental in his business success.

"You can't just go to him and ask for something," he told the Financial Times. "Firstly, this is not my style and secondly, he wouldn't even let me through the door."

Rotenberg controls Stroigazmontazh, one of Gazprom's biggest subcontractors, holds 26 percent of road builder Mostotrest and has a stake in SMP Bank with his younger brother, Boris Rotenberg.

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