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Russian Billionaires Slip Down Forbes Rich List

By The Moscow Times

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Russian billionaire Vladimir Potanin

A ranking of the world's richest billionaires by Forbes magazine published Monday showed how Russia's dour economic climate has battered the country's elite — with Russians accounting for many of this year's drop-offs.

Vladimir Potanin topped Forbes' annual list of richest Russians, placing 60th out of 1,826 billionaires worldwide with a net worth of $15.4 billion.

The 54-year-old chief executive and co-owner of Norilsk Nickel — the world's largest producer of nickel and palladium — last year ranked eighth on Russia's richest list.

The runner-up Russian billionaire was oligarch Mikhail Fridman, with a net worth of $14.6 billion. Telecoms and Internet magnate Alisher Usmanov — last year's wealthiest Russian — placed third in the Forbes ranking.

Hit by falling oil prices, a struggling currency and Western sanctions over the crisis in Ukraine, Russia saw the total number of billionaires on the world list fall to 88 from 111 last year, Forbes said.

Last year's richest Russian also ranked comparatively higher on the overall ranking in 40th place.

The Forbes list also reflected the dramatic state seizure of oil company Bashneft from Vladimir Yevtushenkov last year, with Yevtushenkov falling from 15th to 35th place on Russia's richest list.

With a $79.2 billion net worth, Bill Gates was once again ranked the richest man on the planet, Mexican telecoms mogul Carlos Slim Helu ranked second and Berkshire Hathaway chief Warren Buffett came in third.

The United States had the most billionaires, 536, followed by China at 213 and Germany at 103, Forbes said.

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