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Western corporations should train a class of business leaders in ex-communist states

From Mr Bijan-Daniel Khezri.

Sir, I read with interest Michael Prowse's article ("Slim pickings for the hungry bear", August 14) on the depth of Russia's economic crisis.

The question it raises is whether western aid to Russia is adequate. He argues that the G7 could have created a new organisation dedicated solely to assisting the formerly communist countries.

Unfortunately, his propositions only echo the inadequacies of the west's involvement in the reform process. It has been following a perspective of systems and institutions which, among others, emphasises the role of the IMF. We should, rather, be looking more at aid at the grassroots level.

A grassroots approach, such

as the temporary integration of students and young managers from former communist countries into western corporations, should be expanded. The extension of such a programme could make an important contribution to reform.

The experience gained in western business would allow the students to develop a practical approach and obtain a working understanding of the close links between a free-market economy and democracy.

Western corporations should consider the integration of qualified students from former communist countries during the summer as a business strategy, rather than as a philanthropic gesture. Successful interns could become prospective management employees at

the companies' branches in the former communist countries.

It would also benefit the reform process if more western students and young managers participated in a similar internship programme in the former communist countries.

This is preferable to smothering former communists with advice and pumping billions of dollars into non-existent macroeconomic structures.

Financial aid alone will not establish the macroeconomic structures that are so urgently needed for the establishment of a free market.

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