
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Russia should liberalise before WTO accession

From Messrs Christopher Roberts and Robert Vastine.

Sir, The article "Help Russia to graduate" by Padma Desai of Columbia University (July 11) makes the same arguments used to justify the accession of China to the World Trade Organisation well before the time China was able to make serious commitments to liberalisation. The world trading system, and especially China, is better for having withstood the political arguments for China's early efforts to accede without meaningful internal reforms.

It is the same with Russia. The WTO would be doing Russia no favours by permitting an accession without liberalisation, especially in key services sectors, and there is some indication that Russia's leadership has accepted this. Like the Chinese leadership, they can use the disciplines of the WTO as an invaluable lever to pry open their internal markets.

The European Union, the US and other WTO members are right to insist that Russia's accession should entail meaningful liberalisation. This

is a matter of political will and we have faith that Russia's leadership will be able to come to the table with acceptable offers simply because it is in their own best interest to do so.

Christopher Roberts,
Chairman, Policy Committee,
European Services Forum,
London WC2, UK

Robert Vastine,
President,
US Coalition of Service
Industries, US