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Dear Friend of the American Economic Foundation,

When I was growing up, I learned about free enterprise before I knew what to call it.

As a small child, I found out about supply and demand from a lemonade stand in my front yard. (My family drank plenty of leftover lemonade that week.)

Growing up, I saw that my willingness to perform household chores had a direct impact on the size of my allowance.

And in high school, I watched a fellow student turn lawn-mowing into a business that employed six other teens and paid for most of his college education.

Over the past two years, however, I've had occasion to reflect on how different my experiences would have been in the former Soviet Union.

I, and the rest of my family, would have known work -- but would have learned few positive lessons from it. The nature of our work would have been directed by the state, as opposed to dictated by the market. Our ability to earn a modest living would have been governed by showing up, not working hard. And no financial gain would have resulted from an enterprising new idea for providing a badly-needed product or service.

Yet, since December, 1991, citizens of the former Soviet republics have been told that they are to turn from working in a controlled economy to prospering -- or failing -- in a free market economy. Which is like being handed soil and told to invent the tool to till and plant it.

The plain, unvarnished truth is this: If the people of this vast Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are to succeed in their quest for a free economy, they must have a basic understanding of how free economies work. As you will