Symposium honors Sakharov

By Susan Hagadone

U.S. Congressman Barney Frank, Andrei Sakharov's daughter, Alla Alyasheva, and two MIT professors were among the participants in a symposium entitled "Human Rights, the Crisis in Eastern Europe." The conference, held Friday in the Student Center to mark the second year of an endowed course for graduate students, was co-sponsored by MIT Hilledge and Amnesty International.

"We're here because the Russians wish we weren't here," said Frank. "What are we doing here?" The Soviets monitor the world press, Frank continued, and are embarrassed by public criticism; drawing attention to Soviet human rights violations helps to ease pressure on the victims. "This is both a dramatic and a moral victory. [Although it's] hard to cheer when you persuade someone to stop stealing on someone's neck," he added.

Biologist Professor David Baltimore described a private meeting he attended in 1975 of "refuseniks," dissident Soviet students, in the Pantheon. In 1980, he was co-sponsored by the conference. "We're here because the Russian government is not limiting its strict, limited system," and the limits on international acceptance are "too humble to pour into the higher education." The college board test scores of foreign applicants are so high that choosing between them is very difficult, according to Jones; hence, the personality ratings become very important in making admission decisions on foreign applicants. She said the admissions officers keep in mind that students in different countries have differing opportunities for participating in extracurricular activities. "We expect to see different pictures," she continued, when reading applications from different countries.

The essays become very important," said Jones, but depending only on them is impractical since some students--especially those from the Far East--are too humble to pour their personalities into the applications. Each student has to be given special time and attention, concluded Jones, "and we give it to them."

The TOEFL is required from graduate school applicants, in addition to the essays, if required by the graduate school in which the student is applying. The country from which an applicant gets the undergraduate degree does not affect the admissions, according to Chamberlain. He noted that approximately two-thirds of the graduate students at MIT receive their undergraduate degrees from universities in their home countries.

Most of the applicants from each country are graduates of well-known high schools. Jones attributed this to the reputation of MIT among students and college counselors of these high schools. When MIT admits a student from a particular high school or country, that high school or college frequently numbers of applicants frequently increases, according to Jones.

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