Soviet dissidents need United States support

To the Editor:

I recently read information about Hanna Mykhaylenko gathered by Amnesty International. Since 1980, when she was charged with "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda," Hanna has been imprisoned in mental hospitals and has repeatedly been subjected to large doses of powerful neuroleptic drugs. Although it is technically illegal for a sane Soviet citizen to be imprisoned in a mental hospital, they are often used to confine political prisoners.

Vladimir Bukovsky, another dissident who served time in mental hospitals, wrote a horrifying account of his experience in his book To Build a Castle. He told how sane people unjustly imprisoned in mental hospitals have repeat-
ted a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the Soviet Union signed but never honored. Although it includes assertions of such rights as that of every citizen to leave his country and to take part in peaceful protests, these rights are nonexistent in the Soviet Union. Hanna is 58 years old and in known to be in extremely poor health. To be over 55 in the Soviet Union is considered a "criminal". She has had surgery for breast cancer and has asthma and a heart condition. The lengthy and appalling conditions of her sentence threaten her life. There are things that you can do to help Hanna, including writing to Gen-

eral Secretary Mikhail Gorbatov, calling for her release.

Many former prisoners have said that letter-writing campaigns have improved their situations and in some cases even led to their releases. Alternately, you can let your politicians know that you are concerned about human rights violations in the Soviet Union and in the rest of the world. I also urge anybody who is concerned with the fate of human rights in the Soviet Union to begin following the news of the dissidents' struggles and to read the books so carefully written, so painfully smuggled out, and so overwhelmingly ignored in the West.

Ellise Spertus '96

MIT tries to improve engineering education

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the letter written by David Goldstone '89 ("MIT has lost its identity, "+ May 3). I would like to present a few facts which I believe David has overlooked, and would like to ask David some questions.

When William Barton Rogers founded this institution, he envis-
iaged that the purpose of MIT should be "... to furnish a gen-
eral education, founded upon the Mathematical, Physical, and Nat-
ural Sciences, as shall form a fit-
ting preparation for any of the departments of active life" (1865). He also described an MIT which would "... expand into a great institution comprehending the whole field of physical science and arts with the auxiliary branches of mathematics and modern languages..." (1866). Engineering was not a common word back then, but I think I can safely say that Rogers would have incorporated it into his academic vision. The MIT described here seems more suited to the well-rounded student than it does to the engineer. As times change, so must MIT to keep in line with its original purposes.

We must, therefore, ask our-selves what our ultimate goal is or should be as an engineer. Da-

vid, do you seek money? Engine-

ers' salaries tend to level off after a few years. Maybe you should consider studying law. Da-

vid, do you seek power? Engi-
niers seek restricted to positions of little authority. Maybe you should consider studying business. At the very least, consider these facts: There are more law-

yers than engineers in the United States. Less than four percent of our congressmen and senators have engineering backgrounds, yet forty percent of the budgetary decisions they make deal directly with technology. Only one engi-
near, Jimmy Carter, has ever been president of the United States. The percentage of US pat-
tents filed by US citizens has dropped from 92 percent in 1976 to 54 percent in 1985. Engineer-
ing is in one of the least respected, albeit least understood, profes-
sions in the United States. In fact, most kids still think that all engineers drive trains. I believe that this is an indica-
tion that something is wrong with our present system, and I believe that MIT should try to do some-
thing about it. Did you ever won-
der why there are no Nobel Prizes for engineering? The fu-
ture of our country depends largely on engineering and tech-

ology, yet engineering is taken for granted by this country. As engineers, we have a responsibil-
ity in determining this future.

If admitting more well-round-
ed students to MIT can do some-
things to effect positive change in the pursuit and perception of engineering, then I applaud the decision. I believe that MIT needs to admit more well-round-
ed students so that MIT can graduate more well-rounded engi-
nearers, engineers who have an au-
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