feedback

Very little humor in column

To the Editor:

Anne Lumsdaine '85 voiced her opinion (Feedback, Feb. 11) about Robert E. Malchman's column [Jan. 18]. She rushes to Malchman's aid to help him in the defense against the assorted critics offered space in the Jan. 25 issue. Lumsdaine makes it easy for herself. She simply states: "Angry replies to this article (Malchman) about the US were not necessary or appropriate."

The reason for this, she argues, is that Malchman's column is written with a certain very American humor that foreigners cannot perceive. Indeed Malchman touches some subjects such as "toilet seats" and "pinching women" which might cause naive readers to smile, but his prose is hardly humorous when it comes to comparing France and the United States. "My friend (American) assured me that constant criticism is an accepted practice among the French students. The teachers do not care about anything that does not concern their research. My friend stated Tufts, his American school, is better academically None of this should be too surprising when one considers the culture. The French are an arrogant lot."

Funny? I must admit that I find it very difficult to see the humor in this situation (which is large is typical) anywhere else in Malchman's column. Whether the facts are true or not is very understandable that a French native feels offended by the article as did Philippe Dondel G (Feedback, Jan. 25). Just in case the "humor argument" would not suffice, Lumsdaine concludes her letter with bombastic and educating statements like: "Everyone, including both the French and the Americans, have their faults."

Oh, is that so?

"In my own home, I may criticize my house, but when one is a guest, the criticism come across as ingratitude or hostility." French natives should apparently not defend themselves when assailed officially in the United States. Finally the whole discussion becomes embarrassing in its immaturity. When reviewing this sequence of articles it is obvious that the reason for bad feelings is the lack of what is necessary for a subject like the one chosen by Malchman: humor! If Malchman would have skipped the patriotic comparison with the United States and concentrated on characterizing the French with some more humorous touch the article could have even been funny. It might even have been considered as a good piece of "tongue in cheek" or satire. As now presented Malchman's column was simply a very poor piece of art which intentions easily could be, and certainly were misunderstood. It is awkward for Malchman that he does not apologize or declare his intentions with the column. However, one is led to assume that he agrees with Lumsdaine since he does not take the opportunity to supplement her letter with his own view of the matter. (Malchman is editor in chief of The Tech.)

If the views presented by Malchman and Lumsdaine were rare exceptions they would not have been worth commenting. However, the opinion expressed in the articles is a sign of the rising nationalism in the United States, a country which takes pride in things like the invasion of Grenada and simultaneously is the leading superpower. That scares me.

Anders Wasterlid

Editor's note: Wasterlid is an exchange student studying at MIT.

Robert E. Malchman replies: I do not feel any particular awkwardness, but since Wasterlid's letter asks for clarification, I am happy to oblige. The column was actually a cross between Lumsdaine's and Wasterlid's assertions: It was a humorous piece, though evidently one not well executed, which poked fun at chauvinistic, which succeeded in spurring a few to write to this newspaper. My actual feeling is that France — like most places — is a nice place to visit, but I would not want to live there.

The Hassle-Free Trips

Problems of any kind on your trip abroad can be a big hassle. Who needs it? Traveling abroad is not as simple as it may seem. There's a lot more to it than just buying a ticket, grabbing your passport and lining up to board the plane. You need to plan carefully, prepare yourself, and get some advance preparation. That's why the U.S. Department of State has prepared a booklet, "Your Trip Abroad." Single copies are free and filled with facts and tips like these:

The Management Information Systems Department of

MORGAN STANLEY & CO. Incorporated

invites all seniors, of all majors, especially those pursuing honors degrees, to a presentation on our M.I.S. Training Program

February 15, 1984
Building 4, Room 149
7:00-9:00 P.M.

Our program offers the following benefits:

• Interaction with innovative and exceptionally talented securities industry professionals.

• A chance to begin a career in M.I.S. at one of Wall Street's leading investment banking firms.

• Guaranteed and rapid career progression in a challenging, fast paced environment.

• An outstanding compensation program for those who meet the challenge.

Contact the Career Services Office for additional information.

Morgan Stanley is an Equal Opportunity Employer

Refreshments