

## **. . . and the response**

**MR COLIN VALE** from Wits says South Africa consistently projects an overwhelmingly negative image of itself to the international community. What is necessary, he says, is a massive, costly, well-managed and imaginative propaganda effort. We agree — with the accent on the imaginative part. Our handling of the Samora Machel disaster perhaps goes to underline what Mr Vale is saying. To date we have been almost painfully correct in handling the tragedy. That is all very well. But in the meantime, while we are offering no hard evidence on the grounds that investigations are pending, some world leaders already say that South Africa is guilty. The fact that they are distinctly ramshackle international leaders is not the point. Their views have been reported by a massively anti-South African international media. It is possible that, with Machel not dead a week, the average man or woman in, for example, Belgium already suspects that South Africa had a hand in the matter. We have lost the information war. Perhaps we would not be losing quite so badly if we were less old fashioned, more skilled, more polished. South African information agents should not descend to the level of the thugs in the streets of Harare, but perhaps it is foolish to cling to our book of rules when others have long ago thrown away theirs.