Letters to the Editor

WAR AIMS

NEED FOR A POSITIVE IDEAL

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—May I express agreement with what I take to be the main theses of your comment upon Mr. H. G. Wells's letter? You say: "The broad truth about the future is without doubt that the world has to move towards a greater unity"; but you conclude that to shatter Hitlerism "it is no Utopia" to insist that whenever Hitler and his supporters are overthrown the free nations of the world will still be faced with the problem of Germany. This problem is how to make sure that the 75,000,000 or 80,000,000 of Germans, now included in the Third Reich, shall no longer be a perennial threat to the peace and freedom of other peoples. No lasting solution is likely to be found by external force alone. Reasonable and enlightened Germans—there are still such—might help to find it within a European, or even a wider, framework which the foes of Hitlerism (not of Germany) could and should provide. But it must be a framework so firm and well-knit that no future Hitler would be able to mislead the German people into trying to break it.

As the war goes on our own people and the people of France may need an ideal more positive and sustaining than "the destruction of Hitlerism." The League of Nations, which seemed "Utopian" in 1914, became an inspiring reality in 1920, albeit a reality from the obligations of which the free nations progressively recoiled, the United States first among them. To say that the League has failed is to condemn the Governments which, having created it, shrank from upholding it. Even the war of 1914-18 will prove not to have been fought in vain if the lessons of the League's failure are now learned, and if we resolve not again to err as we and others have erred since 1920.

In 1914-18 we and the French were allied, not always harmoniously. From 1920 onwards we were often at cross-purposes. To-day we are not so much allied as united. In this union lies our strength, for Great Britain is now, irrevocably, part of Europe. The "Oslo" neutrals are striving towards closer cooperation if not actual union. Is it "Utopian" to see in these things the beginnings of a movement towards a greater unity in which unlimited national sovereignties will be subordinated to common needs? If not, this war should help to foster the international solidarity in withstanding war and creating peace that may, one day, give the German people a chance to enter, as equals, a union of nations democratically self-governed and banded together not only against lawless violence but for the mutual helpfulness which is peace.

I submit, Sir, that British policy should aim at these things. To frame and to proclaim such a policy would be the most powerful propaganda. True though it be that no propaganda can be expected decisively to sway German minds until the prospect of defeat in war has made them receptive, knowledge that there might be a not unhopeful morrow beyond defeat would help to hasten the overthrow of Hitlerism.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

WICKHAM STEED.