

ARCHIPELAGO

Today we think of islands....

"Yellow sand-spots," the artist said.
"Sea that unbelievable parrot green...
and the goonies, the goody-birds, with their deafening
clack-gaggle clattering racket wide-wing-planing
always aloft or braking for a landing!"

Specks the islands in the enormous flow
and welter of the lavish elements....

It's where the world ends
the place for jumping off
the Alexander Selkirk solitude...
wings of a dove... the sea-fowl in her nest...
Robinson Crusoe with his nanny-goat....

And then the first apparent enemy hulls
rising beyond the sea line the vibration
loudening fading of planes... the far sea-battling
over the horizon by remote control....

Crash of anti-aircraft whine of torpedo-planes
assault like Midway with their carriers swinging
to dodge the babies from our bomb-bay doors
Waterspouts like whales blowing shot-silk
of sky and sea ripped by the flash and crash
and sound and flame...

Aloof the islands lie...
Wake that the indomitable four hundred
leathernecks held and held for fourteen days....
Midway the Marshalls spawn-swarm of Micronesia...
the Marianas that Magellan found...
Our Mindanao Davao musical names...
Luzon that held Bataan Corregidor
names more than musketry and cannonade...
the spread of equatorial Melanesia
down to Australia and the Coral Sea....

God made big islands too He made Australia...

and the Carolines in never-ending June....

But now it is beach-heads held or beach-heads taken.
Fleets now of monster birds with metal wings
and doom-filled bellies and all that endless ocean
studded with island ambush....

Over the surf
of the coral reef the goonies bank and veer
and cawk and cry or shake their mating dance
awkwardly silhouetted against a sun
that rose in red once and that sets in blood
slowly slowly under the long sea line....

Today
far islands that are very near.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

EDITORIAL

ON the first anniversary of our publication, we bow our heads before the victims of fascism of all countries, of all races, and of all creeds. We respectfully salute the memory of the soldiers of the United Nations who have given their lives for the defense and the consecration of the ideals of freedom and justice. We recall particularly the heroic soldiers of China, who through the long years of their unaided struggle against Japan stood firmly at the crumbling walls of their cities. We think of the millions of tenacious Russians defending every inch of soil against the powerful nazi machine. We honor the free fighters—Czechs, Frenchmen, Greeks, Norwegians, Poles, Yugoslavs, and others—who fled from their enslaved countries to take up arms against the ruthless enemy that is terrorizing their loved ones at home. We hail the aviators, soldiers, and sailors of Great Britain and the United States, who are carrying on relentless battle in all parts of the globe.

And we bow reverently before the men and women undergoing the nazi campaign of terror in the occupied regions, the daring forces of the underground which have overcome despair and now fight on with a courage unsurpassed in all history. In this one year, the European continent has been the scene of sacrifices more terrible, more heroic, and more noble than those made in all previous centuries. Innumerable Jews and Czechs and Serbs and Greeks and Frenchmen and Spaniards have been forced into slavery—yet their souls remain free.

To these fighters and these victims we have a solemn obligation. To them we owe an effective unity among the nations fighting for freedom. To them we owe the reconsideration of all previous values, the rejection of nationalistic egoism, and the resumption of our march on the road to a free world. We owe them the fullest immediate mobilization of our forces, the daily launching of new efforts, the constant opening of new fronts on every field. Only thus can we redeem their sacrifices and fulfill our duty to them, to the men and women who have been spared the horrors of fascism, and to generations yet unborn.

One year ago, we said that this magazine would be more than an editorial event, that its appearance would be a political act. It has proved to be even more than that. It is an act of war against the enemies of humanity, an act of war against the prejudices which had led to this World War; an act of war against the national egoism which has destroyed international security. We have fought this battle without interruption. Through the