

Moshe Burla With Other Political Exiles From Thessaloniki On Ai Stratis Island



Here I am on Ai Stratis Island with other political exiles from Thessaloniki. The photo was taken in the 1940s.

We thought that ELAS was going to set Greece free, at least Macedonia, that we were going to predominate and that we would have elections for the mass to come out and vote the party. But England got in the way, and ruined it all for the future of the Greeks. For us it was a major hit because after that arrests and deportations started – to camps, Makronisos, Ai Stratis, Ikaria.

To Ai Stratis came only the ones that had survived the abuse in Makronisos. One had lost his voice, another one his hand, the other one had no leg, all the 1200 people that had come from Makronisos were quite shaken from the situation there. For us Ai Stratis was an infirmary of sorts, for us to recover. Another good thing was that on Ai Stratis life had taken such a pace that it was like a school. We opened classes for accounting, for foreign languages, a workshop for shoe-makers, hairdressers. We had a team to take care of the garbage because the problem was that there were so many of us. We had patches of land to grow our tomatoes. We made many tents; one tent was for 14 people. We made nice complexes, we had educated people working.

We even had a dancing group that Giannis Ritsos was leading. We had the theatrical complex that was nice, and where we staged a play every month, not only for the prisoners but also for the villagers. At the beginning the police would not let them come, but when they realized that the plays didn't have a political context, they let them.