

Article

“Living in the File”: Kinship and Political Surveillance in Post-Civil War Greece

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Abstract

Little attention has been paid to the ways in which political surveillance practices have historically intersected with a cultural logic of kinship or actual kin relationships, despite the fact that intergenerational effects of state surveillance have been observed. This article aims to open up this important avenue of research through a reflection on the relationship between kinship, political surveillance and state persecution in post-civil war Greece. Drawing on narrative interviews and borrowing from the emerging ethnographic work on the agentic qualities of state documents, this article analyzes the unexpected ways in which the citizen file (*fakelos*) created a form of political inheritance for the children of leftists. I argue that a cultural logic of kinship was central to anti-communist surveillance practices after the civil war and that these practices ultimately rendered political identity a matter of lineage, something transacted through patriline, fixing fathers and sons (and sometimes uncles and nephews) in a shared political genealogy.

Introduction

During fieldwork in 2012 with former Greek political activists, the theme of being “filed” in the decades after the Greek civil war emerged with considerable frequency. Fought between 1946 and 1949, the civil war split the country between the National army (backed by foreign governments) and partisans organized by the Communist Party. My interlocutors had come of age in the 1950s and 1960s under consecutive anti-communist governments. They shared the experience of having been ascribed the title ‘left’ (*aristera*)—a category literally recorded in citizen files (*fakelos*) kept by state agents—because they had fathers or uncles who either participated directly in the civil war on the side of the partisans or were suspected of having left-wing sympathies. Now in their seventies and eighties, they used phrases like “living in the file” and “being one of the filed” to convey their experiences of marginalization and surveillance. Their stories are important for scholars of surveillance because they shed light on a neglected area of research; namely, the *second-generation effects* of the political file.

Very little attention has been paid to how political surveillance practices have historically intersected with a cultural logic of kinship or actual kin relationships, despite the fact that intergenerational effects of state surveillance and persecution have been observed. For example, we know that Mussolini’s regime comprehensively surveilled leftists and that when punishments and exiles were enforced, children became

vulnerable to poverty and isolation in the absence of parents (Ebner 2010).¹ More comprehensive studies of Stalin's Soviet Union have shown how the children of those recorded as enemies of the state faced stigmatization, poverty and homelessness, shared the punishment of internment and exile to remote areas with their parents, and could be disenfranchised as adults (Alexopoulos 2003, 2008; Fierson and Vilensky 2010; Kelly 2007). Closer to home, memoirs and autobiographies of the "red diaper babies"—the sons and daughters of American communists—evoke the fear of living under constant surveillance in the McCarthy era (Kaplan and Shapiro 1998).

In Greece, no scholar has done more for the study of surveillance than Minas Samatas. Second-generation effects of political surveillance circulate in his work too, albeit as a methodological issue that renders "a detached academic orientation" to surveillance scholarship difficult (Samatas 2005: 194). Filed as a young man on account of his father's "political convictions," Samatas (like many of my interlocutors) admits reading his own file during military service in the years of the Junta and recalls how "police informers described, in a very pejorative way, [his] father's socio-political beliefs and activities, all underlined with red pen" (ibid). In this article, I aim to open up this very important avenue of research through a reflection on the relationship between kinship, political surveillance and state persecution in post-civil war Greece.

This study is based on an open-ended ethnographic approach to political surveillance. Drawing on narrative interviews, I analyze the agentic aspects of the political file and the unexpected ways in which it created a form of political inheritance for the sons and nephews of those subjected to state surveillance. I argue that a cultural logic of kinship was central to anti-communist surveillance practices after the civil war and that these practices ultimately rendered political identity a matter of lineage, something transacted through patrilineal, fixing fathers and sons (and sometimes uncles and nephews) in a shared political genealogy.²

In the next section I provide a brief summary of my methodology and a historical overview of the political file. I then introduce the theoretical frame through which I approach the 'social life of the file,' borrowing from the emerging ethnographic literature on state practices that emphasize the *productive* capacity of documents. The rest of this article considers *how* surveillance practices generated a political genealogy with second-generation effects, focusing on three specific processes: First, reading the contents of the file had an unintentionally revelatory function for sons and nephews, as it provided details of family histories along with an exacting vocabulary that forewarned of—or clarified—experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Second, when the file was confronted as an institutionalized feature of places of work, universities and the military, it could render its effects as if by magic; seemingly in the absence of human agents, it could exclude and disappear through a protracted bureaucratic process of denial. Third (and quite oppositely) the file is sometimes remembered precisely for the social encounter through which it was confronted, along with the cruel or sympathetic file-keepers whose face and words my interlocutors continue to evoke today.

Methodology and Historical Context

Between 2011 and 2012 I conducted ethnographic research with 30 Greek men in their seventies and eighties who shared the collective experience of state surveillance and marginalization as a result of their family's political background. I conducted semi-structured narrative interviews with each subject and arranged multiple interviews with more than half of my sample. My exchanges with 10 interlocutors took place over

¹ Chiara Fonio's (2011) archival analysis of surveillance practices under Mussolini does not address second-generation effects of the political file. She does, however, note in passing that the parents and relatives of political migrants abroad were threatened and intimidated by secret police regarding the latter's activities.

² The case of post-civil war Greece opens up an important avenue of research into the role of kinship as a tool of modern state governance. Elsewhere, I will explore how this case troubles the dominant models through which we theorize the relationship between states and families in political sociology.

more extensive visits of two or three days in the regions where they had retired.³ In these circumstances, additional conversations were less structured and often included their spouses, children and friends. Despite the fact that I was not explicitly asking after the political file at the onset of my research, the tropes of "living in the file" and "being one of the filed," as well as accounts of encountering this document, emerged with striking frequency in the course of our conversations and interviews.⁴

I contend that three specific institutional and biographical factors give these narratives their particular consistency, despite the fact that the people participating in this study were from different regions in Greece: First, my interlocutors were young men in the 1950s and 1960s and thus shared the institutional experience of mandatory military service. In many accounts, the army is the primary site of very close encounters with the file, sometimes involving face-to-face exchanges with file-keepers.⁵ Second, all of my interlocutors became political migrants under the Colonels' dictatorship (1967-1974), leaving Greece because of the heightened insecurity they felt living under intensified state surveillance and marginalization. Abroad, they became politically organized in a movement against the regime. While I do not analyze the significance and implications of this dislocation here, it is worth noting as an additional structuring feature that may account for re-occurring tropes. Finally, the men in this study confronted similar institutional exclusions in spheres beyond the military, such as places of potential employment and universities. As I will show, bureaucratic processes built around the file lend a unique temporality and shape to accounts. In this way, particular institutional factors, as well my interlocutors' gender and age, create the conditions for a common experience of "living in the file" that is perhaps best articulated as a "problem of a generation" (Borneman 1992: 47).⁶

In the decades following the civil war, my interlocutors became the young subjects of consecutive right-wing and center governments that reinforced a well-institutionalized, state-administered system of anti-communism—one that would last until the fall of the Military Junta (1967-1974).⁷ In these conditions, a "dossier society" (Samatas 1986: 52) or "political economy of papers" (Hull 2012: 114) emerged, in which the file became central for both classifying citizens and their families and distributing (or denying) privileges and resources. Only on the basis of a clean *fakelos*—that is, one indicative of a "nationally-minded," religious and conservative family history—would a "certificate of civic mindedness" be given (Alivizatos 1981: 225; Samatas 1986: 12). This document was necessary for the acquisition of bank loans, driver's license, passport, national identification card, access to university and employment in the public sector (including transportation, administration, military, police, social services, medicine, education, utilities, merchant marines, banks, and the emerging corporations partially or fully owned by the state) (ibid: 32). As Tsoucalas (1981) mentions, the certificate of civic mindedness was "extended to the whole family on a semi-hereditary basis, as a formal presupposition for every kind of license, public certification and work" (1981: 32). My interlocutors attest to the fact that being refused this certificate could be socially and financially devastating for families. Denials led to a dependence on unstable and precarious forms of work,

³ Interviews were conducted in both Canada and Greece and lasted, on average, 3-4 hours.

⁴ NVivo software was used to identify generalizable patterns in both field notes and interview transcriptions.

⁵ As will become evident, this article is heavily shaped by male protagonists and a reoccurring theme in accounts is political patrilineal. This is the result of focusing the study on *encounters* with the file, which occurred in traditionally male-dominated institutions.

⁶ In other words, it is not simply age or cultural references that merit the categorization of 'generation' but rather a constellation of experiences related to a common predicament—that of being the children of leftists in an anti-communist system of surveillance and exclusion.

⁷ This is not to suggest that surveillance in Greece ends with the burning and classification of citizen files. Rather, this paper is focusing specifically on a period characterized by political surveillance through citizen file-keeping—what Minas Samatas has termed "post-civil war repressive anti-communist surveillance." See Samatas (2005) for a comprehensive overview of the evolution of surveillance in Greece through four distinctive periods. The period I am considering here ends, according to Samatas, with the fall of the junta in 1974 and the legalization of the communist party.

such as selling items (like books or building materials) door-to-door or, in the better case, working as sailors with foreign-owned shipping companies. Premised on a cultural logic of kinship, the *fakelos* became a structuring feature of everyday life in this way.

The dossier society was fed by the practice of police filing and surveillance, record-keeping in pursuit of identifying and marginalizing alleged internal enemies. According to Tsoucalas, approximately 60,000 informers were on secret state payrolls in 1962 (1981: 328). Samatas (1986) estimates that most of those engaged in surveillance of their peers were “ex-communists and lumpen proletariat who purchased their public safety with information” (1986: 31). In other words, those accused of holding ideas unsympathetic to the nation could prove otherwise by providing information about their compatriots and ex-comrades.

In 1989, most of the documents produced through police surveillance and citizen collaboration were destroyed in an industrial incinerator just outside of Athens and in public squares throughout Greece.⁸ The event was organized by a coalition government of right and left-wing parties as an act of reconciliation to “abolish the consequences of the civil war.” Approximately 2,100 files, those deemed of “historical importance,” were salvaged and classified. Access was barred to anyone interested in the files, including the filed (*fakelomenoi*) themselves and their relatives, with the justification made in statements by public officials that doing so would both avoid “scratching at public passions” and maintain the “spirit of national reconciliation.” These files remain classified today.

The Social Life of the Political File

Arguably, the file “may be the most recognizable symbolic prop of totalitarian domination” (Los 2006: 74). The power of the file—the fear and obedience it evokes—are tied to its elusive quality; “assumed but almost never *encountered*,” the file is often “envisaged as a secret, central paper fold somewhere in the Ministry of the Interior, where all the undesirable information ends up” (ibid). Yet, this point of departure can render the file asocial at the onset, isolated from the relations that emerge between surveilled, surveillant and the surveillance technology itself. In other words, it neglects the fact that the file, as the product of surveillance efforts, can also have a social life. What is so interesting about the case of post-civil war Greece compared to other populations undergoing political surveillance is precisely men’s unusual access and close proximity to their *fakelos*.⁹ Many of my interlocutors *encountered* their file and its exclusionary effects firsthand during their mandatory military service or during attempts to enter the university or find employment. Later, after the military Junta fell and the country underwent a democratic reconstruction, the files became classified material. Not surprisingly then, the *fakelos* has a complex presence in accounts; it has, at once, a memorable materiality (emerging in storied “encounters”), a representational force (as an abiding metaphor for being marginalized and excluded in the decades after the civil war), and an enduring spectral sense (having been destroyed, it is no longer a physical object but it nevertheless leaves behind enduring effects and preoccupations). It is precisely this broader social, material and symbolic life of the file that I am interested in here.

The complex life of documents has been an area of special concern in recent ethnographic work on state writing practices. This literature can be fruitfully mobilized in the field of Surveillance Studies in order to open up analytical space for the *unanticipated productive* or *agentic* work that political files and other

⁸ There has been no sustained academic treatment of the destruction and classification of these files and its implications. Information concerning this event has been gleaned from Greek newspapers. See: Manolis Karellis, “The destruction of the political files”, *Patris*, November 26, 2011. http://www.patris.gr/articles/211328?PHPSESSID=#.VGN-t_TF8f8 (accessed December 22, 2011).

⁹ Unique in the case of Greece is the close proximity of the filed to their file *during* the period of political surveillance. Of course, it is not unusual for citizens to have access to political files once a regime has fallen and the archives are declassified (as in post-soviet societies, Germany and Chile, among others).

technologies perform beyond the assumed effects of information sharing or generating fear and obedience. The Greek *fakelos* has at least four productive tendencies that resonate with findings identified in contemporary ethnographic studies of documentation. First, the *fakelos*, like other official documentation (Navaro-Yashin 2007; Nuijten 2004) is an important element in subjects' affective perceptions of the state; it too "bears the symbolism of permanence [and] carries the image of proof, stability and durability" (Navaro-Yashin 2007: 84). Encounters with the file occasioned an affective and interpretive moment in which my interlocutors confirmed or called into question the state's right to ascribe political identities and, by extension, the state's authority and legitimacy.

Second, the *fakelos* generates specific *categorizations, taxonomies and orders of perception*, a tendency demonstrated time and again in the ethnographic literature (Dirks 2002; Glaeser 2010; Stoler 2010) and expressed by surveillance scholars through the language of "social sorting" (Gandy 1993; Lyon 2003). Greek authorities mobilize—through both filing practices and legal mechanisms—the categories "dangerous citizen," "communist" and "leftist," all of which were starkly opposed to the category of the "nationally-loyal citizen" (*ethnicofronas*). Of course, while these formulations reflect elements of an already-existing anti-communist culture, ascriptions and categorizations of this kind lent an official legitimacy to this hierarchical order and became the basis for explicit institutional denials and exclusions.

Third, the *fakelos* engender *specific kinds of social, political and ethical subjects* (see Caplan and Torpey 2001; Das and Poole 2004; Gordillo 2006; Jacob 2007; Kelly 2006; Riles 2006). Ascriptions pertaining to political identity were much more than mere categories or assignments; they were imbued with assumptions about what kind of person you were and what values you claimed. Particularly fascinating in the case of the *fakelos* are the ways in which assumptions about one's social, ethical and political sensibilities were extended to whole family lines. The construction, through surveillance practices, of a collective political subject on the basis of kinship, rather than the more recognizable forms of class, ethnicity or nation is certainly a novel finding warranting additional research.

Lastly, the political file generates particular *forms of sociality and modes of relating*, a tendency identified in ethnographies of the production, distribution and application of documents (Hull 2012; Messick 1993; Navaro-Yashin 2007). My interlocutors' accounts revealed, at length, the ways in which encounters with the political file entailed exclusions more or less explicit. In some cases, the encounter reveals and clarifies men's political inheritance; in others, a seemingly faceless bureaucracy denies men's requests for recognition, opportunities or resources. As I will show below, attuning to these specific forms of sociality helps us to better understand *how* the *fakelos* constructed post-civil war political genealogies.

Reading the File: Political Inheritance Revealed, Affirmed and Challenged

A unique feature of Greece's post-civil war dossier society was the possibility it presented to the *fakelomenoi* to know the contents of their personal file, at least momentarily. Indeed, my interlocutors' recollections of the file evoked its bulk, size and color, as well as the covert act of reading it. Thus, one way in which the *fakelos* worked in the service of political inheritance was by offering young men the occasion to read the details of their family history. The discovery of the *fakelos*' contents elicited a fair bit of interpretive labor on the part of the filed; my interlocutors sometimes challenged the official version of events and, by extension, the Greek state's claim to authority. Very often, however, the sons and nephews of left-wing Greeks reiterated the regime's point of view—that they had, in fact, been "born left"—and described their encounter with the political file as clarifying or confirming their political inheritance.

Many of those I spoke to met the *fakelos* for the first time during their months of mandatory military service; others as young men trying to enter universities or seeking employment. In the former case, they snuck into military offices where paper files were kept or asked friends stationed as office clerks to smuggle the documents out. When I met Thanassis, an Athenian from a Cretan family, he had been retired for nearly two

decades from his job as a journalist and had just celebrated his 80th birthday. Having enthusiastically spoken of his "left roots" and the culture in his family of reading and sharing ideas freely, his mood darkened when he began to recall the "difficult" months he spent in military service as a young man of 19. His encounter with the file occurred in the first days of his service. Finding themselves clandestinely in the office of the military camp, Thanassis and another new recruit located their files and read them aloud to one another:

Oh yes, I remember reading in that file that I was categorized. I was category "A" [alpha], which is the first letter for "aristera" [left]. "A" was leftist by association: Blood. Family. I remember that "B" [beta] was leftist with personal involvement with the movement and that "I" [gamma] was very active and very dangerous. "E" [epsilon] meant you were a nationalist, *ethnicofronas*, a good person. For those people, they needed no other information, just the category. It was written that I was "A" through my father's family.

As a young man, Thanassis had known only that his father had been "marked" for being part of the resistance and this meant that his family was on the "wrong side." Reading the file provided Thanassis with a specific lexicon for a vague feeling he had of being "one of two" in the years after the civil war. The *fakelos* provided explanations, introduced him to a taxonomy of subversion in which his family was implicated and announced the consequences for his own political identity from the standpoint of the regime. Others similarly narrated their encounters as reinforcing and clarifying—by giving a name to—the experiences they had as young people from left families (*aristeres oikoyenies*).

The *fakelos* was more explicitly *revelatory* in those cases where parents were inhibited regarding their political activities and ideas. On this matter, some had remained utterly silent. Others actively discouraged their sons from getting involved in party politics and movements, urging them instead to "think for yourself" and "be your own man." When I interviewed Evangelos, a Canadian-trained economist from Thessaloniki, he described his family in the latter terms, where "left ideas" were only ever very subtly expressed and always without any explicit reference to political organizations or ideologies. Evangelos recalled the surprise he felt upon discovering his *fakelos*, especially learning that his father had been categorized as an active communist. This was a designation that Evangelos himself had inherited through the *fakelos* and "by association," without prior regard for "what the word even meant." Being trained as an office-boy typist at the time, he had access to all the soldiers' files in the main office and recalls reading the documents of others frequently and inconspicuously.¹⁰ Of his own, he recalled, "I read there that my father had abstained from the elections in 1946 and, as a result, I was considered a communist. It was written in the *fakelos* that for this reason they would never make me an officer."

The event that Evangelos is referring to occurred when the Communist party directed its supporters to abstain from the elections in a statement of protest against right-wing intimidation and ballot rigging. This abstention was materialized as an absent stamp in the citizen's election booklet and was then taken as proof of his or her disloyalty to the existing state whenever it ended up in the hands of authorities. On the significance that the regime had given to this missing stamp, however, Evangelos was hesitant. Shrugging his shoulders and raising his eyebrows, he mused, "Of course, my father was a truck driver and for that reason I think it is at least *possible* that he was travelling at the time and that's why he didn't vote that day. In any case, he had leftist ideas, although I don't know if he was a [party] *member*."

¹⁰ The ways in which men describe and justify their proximity to the file and the division of labor in the military is both interesting and inconsistent. Some men recall being isolated from the others, being placed outside of the camp in a garbage sorting site or being kept in the office as a typist-in-training. Ex-office boys tended to explain their isolation as a means of denying them arms training (signaling the potential danger they were perceived to pose as young leftists) or, quite oppositely, as a reward, more or less, for good behavior and exceptional intelligence "despite" their left roots.

Beyond revelations concerning political ascription and the exclusionary implications for the children of the filed, the *fakelos* provided a host of details about fathers and uncles that men continued to find significant many decades later. Yiorgos, a small business owner from Athens, now in his mid-eighties, expressed feeling both bewildered and intrigued reading about his family: "All of the details! Where you are from, what you have done, who's your family, what they have done, your uncle was in the mountains..."¹¹ He continued: "In that file, I read about my father. I knew that he was involved, but he never *spoke* about it. He was working on the ships for years. I didn't know the details. But in that file, I also learned just how smart my father was and all the places he had traveled." Yiorgos spent some time during our interview further detailing what he had learned about his father and how this knowledge had enhanced his respect and empathy for a man who had long ago retreated silently into himself. It's not that the file's discovery led to a more candid dialogue about the past between fathers and sons, especially during the period of the military dictatorship, but it could certainly encourage sons to see their fathers in a new light. It had the power to evoke a more compassionate eye. It could also provoke a frustrated critique: "Why couldn't he just keep his big mouth shut?" Criticisms of this kind, it should be added, were notably rare; only two of my interlocutors expressed disdain for fathers' activities, choices or conduct as revealed by the *fakelos*.

The Magic of the File: Powers of Disappearance and Exclusion

A second way in which political inheritance was transacted through the *fakelos* lies in the latter's apparent "magic." Those I interviewed spoke about the file as having the power to *disappear* other papers (especially of the valuable kind that created opportunities for those who held them) and even *to turn one thing into another*. This is evocatively conveyed in Ilias' account below. Ilias is a retired carpenter from Corinth, now eighty years old and living a quiet life with his wife in a nearby village. In our interview, Ilias described how he had been previously denied jobs because of his "left roots." Like his father, he was later "lucky" to find work as a sailor on a foreign-owned ocean liner. In the early days of the April 1967 dictatorship, however, he experienced directly the paper effects of the new regime:¹²

Let's say somehow I had already been characterized [...] But when the junta happened, *my work license was made a dirty rag*. There was no job for me anymore. Not even with the commercial fleets. I went to the police station and I saw my *fakelos*. They had underlined my name in red ink. That was in the port police office. I tried again with another foreign company in Kavala, a factory for making fertilizers. Then I went and took some exams and I was struggling for 4 months, back and forth from Athens to Kavala [to get the results].¹³ They kept saying, "Come back next week, come back next week."

Ilias here narrates the discovery of his file together with the degradation of his work license and his vanished exam scores. For others too, unrecorded grades and missing exams marked both the seriousness of the file's implications and the emergence of a personal awareness of institutional marginalization. It was, as Ilias describes, a feeling of "being wrapped up in paper," of there being too many records of exclusion and not enough of the kind that would "open doors." The repetition at the heart of these stories (writing tests over and over for a job one would never be offered or for university studies one would never take up, visiting again and again the offices of consulates, local authorities and police only to be told "come back" or "we have no such papers") announces a bureaucratic initiation into one's condemned political inheritance. This was the perceived "magic" of the file. It could render its disappearing and excluding effects without an explicit denial, without a name or category, by simply allowing time and fatigue to erode requests. It could

¹¹ As much of the civil war was fought in the Gramos mountain range of Northern Greece, being "in the mountains" is short for having fought on the side of the partisans.

¹² My interviews do not afford details into the filing practices of different regimes in the post-civil war period of surveillance, although Ilias' quote certainly suggests this may be a fruitful area for future research.

¹³ The distance between Athens and Kavala is about 650km.

impact a young man's life seemingly in the absence of identifiable authoritative agents or malicious intentions.

As the progenitor of ideas on bureaucracy and documentation in the social sciences, Max Weber (1978[1922]) long ago noted that the file serves a vital function in bureaucratic institutions. Yet, Weber viewed the file as a rather passive object, dependent upon a set of organizational social norms and trained bureaucrats to lend it significance. He could not anticipate the ways in which subjects come to imbue documents with agentic qualities, seeing in them the power to bestow privileges, ensure entitlements or deprive their holders of essential resources. Speaking here in terms of the "magic" of the file, I am referring to this tendency among my interlocutors to narrate the *fakelos* as an agent in itself, operating without human interventions. This occurs when political and social relations are evacuated from the story—a process Gaston Gordillo calls the "fetishization" of documents (2006).

Weber did understand that an important effect of bureaucratic organizations was to render irrelevant the personal qualities of the bureaucrat and to disappear individual accountability from the daily operations of the office. When my interlocutors narrate their experiences of exclusion as a result of no one in particular, they are echoing this broader bureaucratic effect. As Matthew Hull (2012) notes, the processes through which state documents are produced, circulated and used often has precisely the effect of "mak[ing] it hard to understand who does anything" (2012: 115).¹⁴ It is in this light too that my interlocutors' affective and interpretative approach to the authority of the file as a kind of agentless agency or force must be viewed. Undergoing a bureaucratic initiation into one's political inheritance was, in this way, often experienced as a repetitive, fatiguing, drawn-out denial made by no one in particular, albeit with enduring symbolic, social and material consequences.

Faces of the File: Encountering the File-Keepers

A third way in which the *fakelos* functions in the service of political inheritance involves the mediation of the file's keepers. If we have identified a strong tendency to imbue the file with capacities seemingly quite apart from human actors, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the many detailed accounts in which the *fakelos*' effects were achieved through entirely social confrontations; that is, with a specific denial or interpellation and a memorable voice and face. It is in these encounters (some vulgar and cruel, others seemingly benevolent or sympathetic) that what had perhaps been latent, whispered or more ambiguous is brought to authoritative voice. In these instances, it is not simply the contents of the file that inform men of their condemned political inheritance; rather, the file now becomes animated and effective only through the relations it enters with other actors.

Markos, seventy-eight, is a retired dentist who has been living in Toronto with his family since the early 1970s. In our interview, Markos was preoccupied with his *fakelos*, wondering if it had in fact been destroyed (as claimed in the media) or digitized instead. Reflecting on a conversation he had with his brother "just days before, Markos recounted: "He said to me, when I die, ask your children to seek that *fakelos* because I believe after 10 or 15 years they will be in our hands, god willing." During our conversation, Markos offered a disturbing example of encountering the file's guardians—one that helps us understand the brothers' enduring fascination with the *fakelos*. Coming to the end of his mandatory military duties in the late 1960s, Markos had approached a lieutenant general to request a letter of good behavior in order to make

¹⁴ Anthropologist Michael Herzfeld (1992) has offered a fruitful analysis of contemporary everyday talk and attitudes about Greek bureaucracy. He finds that people's dealings with bureaucratic processes are often narrated as if negotiating a cosmic order against which they were bound to fail (either because of bad luck or the hands of gods) rather than the specific decision making of individual bureaucrats or policy imperatives. He mentions, in passing, that the history of political file-keeping may play some role in what he regards as mass resignation in the face of bureaucratic procedure.

a visa application for studies abroad. In recalling this exchange, Markos first brought to life for me the timidity with which he knocked on his superior's door and made his request and then acted out the lieutenant's response. With sweat on his brow, Markos slammed his fist on his desk and raised his voice dramatically: "I won't help you people, I won't! *You, your father and your papers will stay on this shelf until they are eaten by insects!*" Collecting himself for a moment and then shaking his head, Markos added, "He said, 'the law gives me permission not to let you go.' What could I say to that?" A few moments later, Markos surmised, "You have to understand, anti-communism was a profession for some."

The vulgarity with which this lieutenant exposes Markos' political inheritance is in stark contrast to the protracted and repetitive bureaucratic denial that I detailed in the case of Ilias. In the hands of the lieutenant, the *fakelos* becomes the material basis for both his interpellation ("you people") and his act of exclusion. In effect, it also becomes part of the family ("you, your father and your papers"). The file-keeper is crucial here, as he supplies the *enduring* quality of the file. After all, how long *would* it take for paper files to decompose? The message is clear: For as long as his papers exist, along with the legal regime that renders these files meaningful, Markos will be immobilized by his political inheritance. In the discursive world generated between Markos and this lieutenant, the *fakelos* emerges as a core element of a naturalized, legitimized anti-communist order—one that controls movement and opportunity on the basis of a cultural logic of kinship.

When I met Dimitris, seventy-five, he was just days away from closing his small printing business in Toronto. Like Markos, he had lived in Canada since the early 1970s, but he continued to spend the summer months in Northern Greece with his siblings. In our interview, Dimitris and I lingered for some time on an encounter that clarified the long-term impact of his *fakelos* and served as a catalyst for finding a route out of Greece:¹⁵

I was arriving again for the same test to enter the navy college and I had already written it three or four times. And each time, these papers went missing. I persisted. And finally [the son of a first] cousin, an officer, said, "Listen, you could write it 8 times perfectly and you'll never be accepted." I didn't understand. "Why?" He said, "You know your father is a communist." And I said, "But that was my father, this is me." And he said, "*Even your kids, when you get married, and their kids, all of them will have this stamp.*"

In this case, we have both a muted bureaucratic disappearance and a memorable social interaction that finally leads to an explicit revelation. The officer further spelled out the present and future repercussions of Dimitris' political file, sympathetically explaining how it would come to impact everyone in his immediate family, including the woman he would one day marry. Here the file-keeper evokes the *fakelos*' *stamp*, both as an official iteration of the state's authority to categorize and exclude, as well as a testament to the longevity of stigma that would be attached to Dimitris' political inheritance. Offspring marked before they have even been born, records intended to last as long as nature permits and the remark that "files are made to be kept, not thrown away"—all of these references point towards an indefinitely condemned inheritance. In these accounts, the social life of the file and the service it provides for post-civil war political genealogies thus depends upon the file-keepers themselves and their own interpretive labors.

Conclusion

¹⁵ Routes out of Greece for those who were barred from acquiring legal travel documents included purchasing passports on the black market and relying on friends "on the right" to pull strings in the anti-communist state bureaucracy. While some were sponsored by family members who had already migrated to Canada, the US or other European countries, many others traveled as tourists and overstayed their visa. Three of those I interviewed jumped ship when working as sailors for foreign companies.

This article demonstrated how surveillance files in post-civil war Greece both depended upon and reproduced a cultural logic of kinship. Taking these accounts together, we can better understand *how* surveillance practices, culminating in the paper file, generated a post-civil war political genealogy with second-generation effects. I've identified three ways in which the file worked to transact a political inheritance of consequence for those I interviewed. First, close proximity to the file and the opportunity to read it had a revelatory function for sons and nephews, providing details of family histories along with an exacting vocabulary that forewarned of—or clarified—experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Second, when the file was confronted as an institutionalized feature of places of work, universities, and the military, it could render its effects as if by magic; seemingly in the absence of human agents, it could exclude and disappear through a protracted bureaucratic process of denial. Third, the file sometimes achieved its effects through a social encounter with file keepers whose face and words my interlocutors continue to remember today.

While it is certainly true that “the world is produced by more than a play of documents” (Coutin, Maurer and Yngvesson 2002: 823), it is also true that these files produced significant symbolic, social and material *second-generation effects* for the sons and nephews of leftists. My interlocutors, deemed by the state to be suspicious from birth (by family “association” and “blood”), were barred from universities and denied jobs and licenses on the basis of their political inheritance. Drawing from ethnographic work on state writing practices, I aimed to show the unpredictable consequences of the file for the construction of a specific form of political inheritance. Importantly, in my analysis of the productive powers of the *fakelos* and their paper effects in Greece's post-civil war dossier society, I have tried to avoid fetishizing the documents themselves by placing them within the specific forms of sociality through which encounters emerge. While I have discussed experiences that were bureaucratically structured by the apparent “magic” of the file, I have also paid attention to the play of documents in the hands of particular file keepers.

The fact that police files can unintentionally generate forms of political inheritance and thus political genealogies across generations should become a greater consideration in research on surveillance (for instance, on the anti-communist surveillance regimes of Franco, Mussolini and Pinochet and their impact on the families of the left, but also on the second-generation effects of the Soviet and East German file-keeping regimes). Tracking the logic of kinship in surveillance practices of both left and right-wing states is an area worth exploring in much more historical, theoretical and ethnographic depth. Moreover, while I have focused on the gendered effects of surveillance for young men negotiating defense, education and work institutions, it is imperative to further extend this analysis to include the experiences of women who came of age in Greece's anti-communist dossier society.

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