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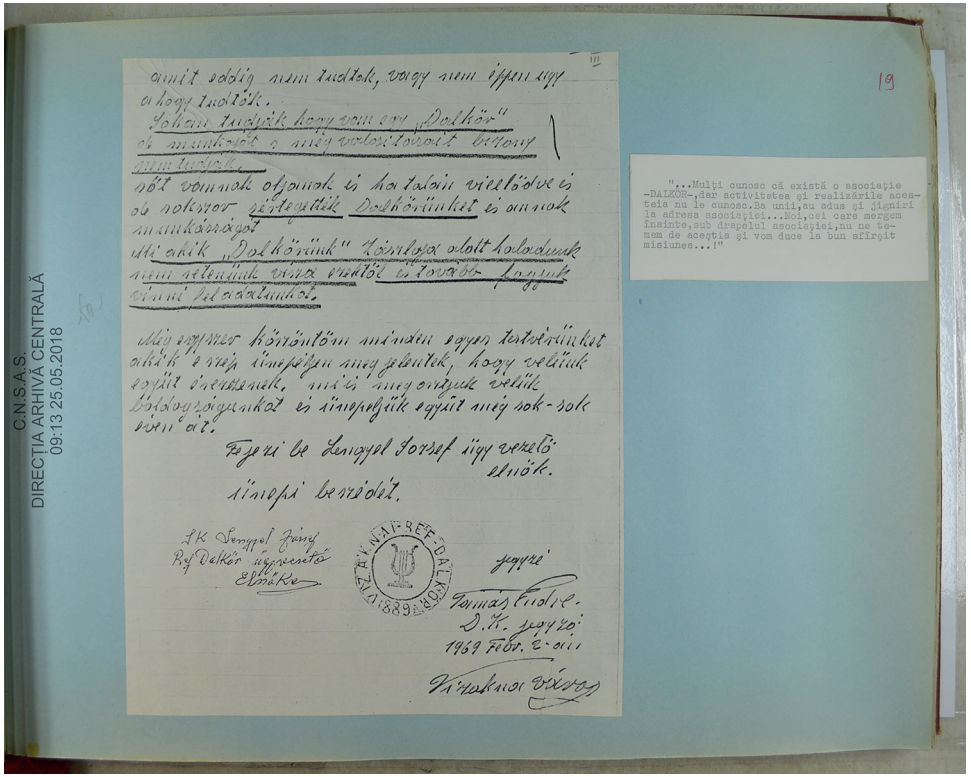
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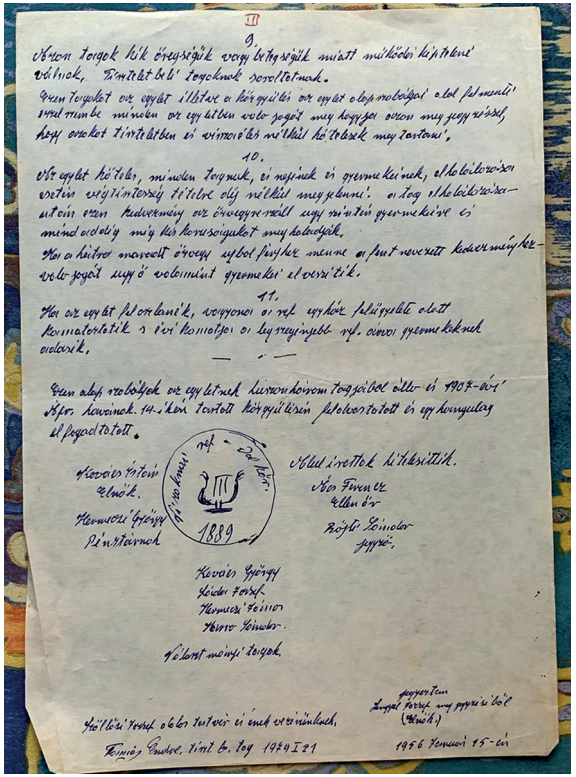
53.
The Stolen Stamp
–
Ágnes Hesz

"The stamp should come home. It should come home. The stamp and the sceptre and the crown always stay with the king."
"The stamp. It's a pity that that stamp was lost because, how should I say it, it was a document, really."
"A value."

This conversation was recorded during an interview in 2018, in the small town of Ocna Sibiului (Vízakna). The two men, father and son, were talking about the official stamp of the town's Hungarian Calvinist Church Choir, which had been confiscated during a secret police raid in 1973 along with the choir's archive. Documents and photographs confiscated from the choir were compiled by the Securitate into a photo album (see entry 25), which includes the president of the choir's celebratory speech (shown here) performed at the choir's eightieth anniversary. As with many of the group's documents, it bears the official stamp of the choir.

Although the choir was allowed to operate after the raid, as present members say, it was "robbed of its past," since none of the confiscated items were returned. Some attempts were made to compensate for this loss: for example, several documents were recreated by the choir's former secretary who, in lieu of the missing stamp, created a hand-drawn replica when necessary. The other image you see here was taken during ethnographic fieldwork in 2018 and shows a document with a hand-drawn replica of this stamp. Copying the stamp by hand was one way in which the choir coped with the loss of their belongings: in this case the loss of the choir's recorded history and an important symbol of its legitimacy, its stamp.


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