FAMILY JOURNAL / JURNAL DE FAMILIE

What David Lăcătuș said about our father

Ce a spus David Lăcătuș despre tata

Source: YouTube testimony “David Lăcătuș – Mărturie” (wayfaring stranger, 2017)
https://youtu.be/TaPruFFnzLc

This note is for the sisters. It is not a court paper. It is one brother’s memory of Gheorghe Hoffman of Rădăuți, spoken on camera years later. Read it next to the 1981 sentence. The sentence is the state’s voice. This is a coworker’s voice.

Însemnare pentru surori. Nu e act de tribunal. E memoria unui frate despre Gheorghe Hoffman din Rădăuți. Citiți-o lângă sentința din 1981. Sentința e glasul statului. Asta e glasul unui tovarăș de drum.

Ce știm acum / What we know now

Notă de arhivă, 1 noiembrie 2026. Nu este glasul lui David. Archive note. Not David’s voice.

El spune Sitarilor 3. Mandatul din 26 octombrie 1980 și procesul-verbal din 30 octombrie scriu tot Sitarilor 3. Mama scrie, în aceeași zi, Gărilor 3. Dosarul din 1981 scrie Sitarilor 4. Este aceeași casă, până când o pagină le desparte. He says Sitarilor 3. The warrant of 26 October 1980 and the search record of 30 October also write Sitarilor 3. His wife, the same day, writes Gărilor 3. The 1981 file writes Sitarilor 4. It is the same house, until a page separates them. The number in the recording matches the October papers.

Mai jos, jurnalul numește numărul o alunecare de memorie. Citiți întîi rîndul acesta. Below, the journal calls the number a slip of memory. Read this line first.

El spune cinci copii sau șapte. Instanța scrie șapte minori. He says five children or seven. The court writes seven minors. That is what we keep.

El spune gara din Vicov de Sus și șantierul de la Stânca Costești. Familia îl ține pe Lăcătușu Vasile din Cacica. Vasile Lăcătuș din Vicovu de Sus rămîne un alt om. Hîrtiile nu scriu David pe același rînd cu Cacica. He says the station in Vicov de Sus and the works at Stânca Costești. The family keeps him as Lăcătușu Vasile of Cacica. Vasile Lăcătuș of Vicovu de Sus stays a different man. The papers do not write David on the same line as Cacica.

La sfîrșit filmul se pierde. El spune că vorba a ajuns acasă, luni dimineața la miliția din Suceava, și că Hofman a luat Bibliile rămase în casă. Fraza aceea este greu de urmat. Datele pe care le ținem: noaptea de 18 spre 19 octombrie nu îl ia, și arestul cel lung începe la 31 octombrie 1980. At the end the film breaks off. He says word reached the house, Monday morning at the Suceava militia, and that Hofman took the Bibles still in the house. That sentence is hard to follow. The dates we keep: the night of 18/19 October does not take him, and the long holding begins on 31 October 1980.

1. Who is speaking / Cine vorbește

David Lăcătuș, with his wife Mioara. He worked as an excavator operator at the Stânca Costești dam works in Botoșani county — a huge “neutral zone” where Romanian and Soviet crews mixed. One night a Soviet driver wept over a Bible in David’s cabin. After that David began carrying Scripture toward the USSR.

David Lăcătuș, împreună cu soția Mioara. Era excavatorist la șantierul de la Stânca Costești, județul Botoșani — zonă neutră, români și sovietici la un loc. O noapte un șofer sovietic a plâns cu Biblia la piept în cabina lui. De atunci a început să treacă Scriptura dincolo.

2. He names our father / Îl numește pe tata

A man who had been laying marble and granite told David: I met a brother Hoffman. He works with brothers from Germany and America who bring Bibles into the country. They want them passed on into Russia. Would you meet him?

David went that same day to the station in Vicov de Sus, then to Rădăuți. Sunday after lunch he walked into the house.

> *I went to Hoffman on Sunday after lunch at his house at the Rădăuț, on Sitarilor Street number three.*

The 1981 court file lists domicile as Rădăuți, str. Sitarilor nr. 4. David says number 3. Same street. Memory of a house number after many years can slip by one. The rest of the picture matches Tata exactly.

Dosarul din 1981 scrie Sitarilor nr. 4. David zice nr. 3. Aceeași stradă. Un număr de casă se poate încurca după zeci de ani. Restul se potrivește întocmai.

What he saw in that house / Ce a văzut în casă

Hoffman met him glad. They talked through Sunday afternoon and all night — how the work could be done.

The wife came in. David remembers her saying, in his telling, that even if you walked on steel pins you would not find someone who looks after you like this man.

> *This family was a difficult family, a Hoffman family. He was a poor man. He had many children — I think five or seven. He worked at the bakery as a mechanic.*

The court in 1981 wrote: maintenance mechanic, married, seven minor children, no prior record. David, speaking from memory, got the job, the poverty, and the number of children.

Instanța a scris: mecanic de întreținere, căsătorit, șapte copii minori. David, din amintire, a nimerit meseria, sărăcia și numărul copiilor.

3. Monday morning / Lunea dimineața

Tata said: Come on, Nea Gheorghe. They packed three more bags of Bibles. They put them in the car of the bakery's Party secretary and drove to the construction site. They arrived safe.

Tata a zis: Hai, nea Gheorghe. Au făcut încă trei saci de Biblii. I-au pus în mașina secretarului de partid de la brutărie și au plecat la șantier. Au ajuns cu bine.

David says that after he met Hoffman the work was no longer small and primitive. Tata had contact with Saxon brothers in Sibiu who received books from Germany, and with the American martyr mission around Richard Wurmbrand. From then on there were books enough. What was missing was a man to take them across. That became David's part.

4. How Tata organized the line / Cum a organizat tata linia

Books came into Rădăuți from Sibiu, Ploiești, Bacău. Other brothers hauled loads from Rădăuți to the worksite — Toader Mitric, a brother from Siret, Tata's brother-in-law or kin from Dorohoi who was a construction foreman. David is careful: he did not know all those men well on purpose.

> *They only knew brother Hoffman. If I was caught I was not supposed to know names. If they were caught they only knew brother Hoffman. It was put together so the brothers who were working could be protected.*

That is why a court file can list five names and a church history can list eight more fined, and still a child in the house on Sitarilor would not have been told the whole map.

De-aia un dosar poate avea cinci nume, o revistă încă opt amendați, și un copil din casa de pe Sitarilor tot nu a aflat harta întreagă.

5. Scenes he remembers with Tata / Scene cu tata

Near Grănicești — Tata's birth village — a station wagon full of Bibles, unloaded at night. David was there with Hoffman and met young Klaus Wagner of Sighișoara, who later suffered beatings when caught.

Tata coming from Rădăuți in a combi, the back full, a blanket and a hat thrown over the books. Stopped at Ștefănești by a severe militia commander. That same evening Tata arrived out of breath with the load toward a Soviet truck that had a wheel off, as if it had a puncture, so the books could be moved.

When the night was done the men scattered: Sibiu men to Sibiu, Dorohoi kin to Dorohoi, Siret men to Siret, Hoffman back to Rădăuți.

David says that for almost two years, into 1980, working with Hoffman, no transport was caught in Romania or in Russia. God guarded the loads — until the end came.

Aproape doi ani, până în 1980, zice că n-a căzut niciun transport. Până la urmă a căzut.

6. How it broke / Cum s-a rupt

They tried to start the line again. David names brother Hoffman, brother Matias, brother Paul Gross — the same Gross Paul who stands first in the 1981 sentence.

Cars were stopped. The men said they were going to Hoffman. Word went to the house: he must be at the militia in Suceava Monday morning. David says Hoffman then took the Bibles still at home. The recording grows hard to follow there. The court file picks up the rest: searches, arrest at the end of October 1980, Botoșani prison, sentence confirmed 31 January 1981.

Mașinile au fost oprite. Au zis că merg la Hoffman. Vorba a ajuns acasă: luni dimineața la Miliție, Suceava. David zice că tata a luat Bibliile rămase în casă. De-aici dosarul din 1981 continuă singur.

7. What this adds to the 1981 papers / Ce adaugă lângă sentință

The tribunal wrote that Hofman Gheorghe received prints and tapes from Gross Paul, Kloos Mihail and others and circulated them in Suceava and Botoșani counties. David puts a face on that sentence: the kitchen on Sitarilor, the bakery mechanic, the Sunday night talk, the three bags on Monday, the combi with a hat on the blanket, the rule that the haulers only knew Hoffman.

David does not read the court file. He is remembering a man. The two stories meet on the same street, the same years (1978–1980), the same partners (Gross, Sibiu brothers), and the same ending (Suceava militia, then prison).

Sentința zice „a primit și a difuzat". David arată casa, noaptea de duminică, sacii de luni și regula că ceilalți știau doar pe Hoffman.

8. Samuel Hoffman — Tata's brother / Samuel Hoffman — fratele tatei

The family line is this: Gheorghe Hofman of Rădăuți is our father. Samuel Hoffman is Tata's brother — our uncle. The public lists do not say "brother." That word comes from the family.

Linia familiei: Gheorghe Hofman din Rădăuți este tatăl nostru. Samuel Hoffman este fratele tatei — unchiul nostru. Listele publice nu scriu „frate". Cuvântul acela vine din casă.

Calea Credinței, writing about Canalul-80, names five men sentenced in January 1981: Paul Gross (Câlnic), Matei Fakner (Sebeș), Gheorghe Hoffman (Rădăuți), Mihail Kloos (Miercurea Sibiului), Manfred Herbert (Sibiu). Beside them it names eight who received fines, not prison: Vasile Lăcătuș, Petru Ovadiuc, Gheorghe Moloci, Clemente Gherasim, Eusebie Pribeagu, Samuel Hoffman, Silvestru Tcaciuc and Mihai Bleorțu.

So two Hoffman names stand in the same operation. Tata went to Botoșani. Uncle Samuel was fined. The magazine does not give Samuel a town, a house number, or a term of years. It only puts his name on the fine list. We should not invent the rest.

Așadar două nume Hoffman stau în aceeași operațiune. Tata a mers la Botoșani. Unchiul Samuel a fost amendat. Revista nu-i dă localitate, număr de casă sau ani. Îi pune doar numele pe lista amenzilor. Restul nu-l născocim.

What the outside sources add, and what they do not: CNSAS studies confirm the Suceava night of 18/19 October 1980, the seven sacks (576 Russian Bibles, 167 booklets, 40 cassettes), the search at Gheorghe Hoffman's house in Rădăuți, and the Karlsruhe depot. They do not write a separate file summary for Samuel. David Lăcătuș, in the 2017 testimony, talks about "brother Hoffman" of Sitarilor — that is Tata, the bakery mechanic with many children. He does not name Samuel on camera.

Izvoarele din afară confirmă noaptea din Suceava, sacii, percheziția la casa lui Gheorghe din Rădăuți și depozitul din Karlsruhe. Nu dau un rezumat aparte pentru Samuel. David Lăcătuș vorbește despre „fratele Hoffman" de pe Sitarilor — adică tata. Pe Samuel nu-l numește.

Keep the two men distinct on the page so the sisters do not mix them: Gheorghe Hofman, born 22 March 1936 in Grănicești, domicile Sitarilor 4, Rădăuți, sentenced 1 year and 6 months, Botoșani. Samuel Hoffman, Tata's brother, listed among the eight fined in Canalul-80. Same blood. Different line in the state's paper.

Țineți-i deosebiți pe pagină, ca surorile să nu-i amestece: Gheorghe Hofman, născut 22 martie 1936 la Grănicești, Sitarilor 4, Rădăuți, 1 an și 6 luni, Botoșani. Samuel Hoffman, fratele tatei, pe lista celor opt amendați. Același sânge. Alt rând în hârtia statului.

9. What Canalul-80 was / Ce a fost Canalul-80

Canalul-80 was not a river. It was the Securitate's name for a 1980–1981 campaign against underground Christian print — Bibles, booklets, sermon tapes — coming in from the West. Canal here means a channel: a route the secret police believed ran from West Germany into Romania.

Canalul-80 nu e un râu. E numele dat de Securitate unei campanii din 1980–1981 împotriva tipăriturilor creștine clandestine. „Canal" înseamnă fir, drum — drumul pe care poliția secretă credea că vin cărțile din Germania de Vest.

After 1948 the state recognized the Brethren church but kept print under the Department of Cults. Official Bibles were scarce. Families passed one copy from house to house. From the early 1970s, after the floods opened a window for Western aid, Scripture came in with clothes and food. The regime answered with confiscation, fines and prison, dressed as currency crime and "unauthorized graphic and phonetic materials."

După 1948 cultul a fost recunoscut, dar tiparul a rămas sub Departamentul Cultelor. Bibliile oficiale erau puține. Din anii '70, după inundații, au venit ajutoare din Vest și, cu ele, Scriptura. Regimul a răspuns cu confiscări, amenzi și pușcărie, mascate în valută ilegală și „imprimate fără autorizație".

Canalul-80 is not Canalul-81 / Nu e același dosar

CNSAS historians treat Canalul-80 and Canalul-81 as the two biggest operations of that kind. Both hit the Brethren. They were not the same network. Canalul-80 broke on the night of 18/19 October 1980 at a Suceava checkpoint and was sentenced in January 1981 — Tata's file. Canalul-81 was a later Danube-barge line, mostly a Ploiești–Brașov circle, with longer terms (five to six years). Klaus Wagner of Sighișoara belongs on that later list, not in Tata's dock.

Istoricii CNSAS le țin deosebite. Canalul-80 e noaptea din Suceava și sentința din ianuarie 1981 — dosarul tatei. Canalul-81 e linia de pe Dunăre, prinsă mai târziu, cu pedepse mai grele. Nu amestecați cele două.

How the file opened / Cum s-a deschis dosarul

On that Suceava night militia stopped two cars with Alba plates: Paul Gross of Câlnic and Matei Fakner of Sebeș. In the trunks: seven sacks — 576 Russian-language Bibles, 167 booklets, 40 cassette tapes. The Securitate itself called the stop incidental — a daily filter, not a planned ambush of those two cars. Once the sacks were opened the file grew. Searches went to Gross and Fakner, to Gheorghe Hoffman's house in Rădăuți, and to other Brethren addresses. In Sighișoara more than two thousand booklets were found at one house.

În noaptea de 18/19 octombrie 1980, la un filtru în Suceava, au oprit două mașini cu numere de Alba. În portbagaje: șapte saci — 576 Biblii în rusă, 167 broșuri, 40 de casete. Percheziţiile au ajuns şi la casa tatei din Rădăuți.

Five men were arrested: Gross, Fakner, Hoffman, Mihail Kloos of Miercurea Sibiului, Manfred Herbert of Sibiu. Eight were fined, among them Uncle Samuel. Investigators wrote that the print had come from a central depot in Karlsruhe that supplied several socialist countries. West German Bible-school students (Wiedenest), Swiss believers and Western visitors were named as the inbound side. Inside Romania the trail ran through Moldova — Iași, Botoșani, Suceava — and in part toward the USSR. That is why so many of the books in those trunks were in Russian.

Canalul-80 was not only that one night. On 10 August 1980, at Stamora-Moravița, border troops took 2,355 brochures, 20 cassettes and 200 pictures of Jesus from a German citizen. Securitate folded that seizure into the same campaign name. Official notes for 1980 claim more than 100,000 items stopped at the frontier and about 50,000 found inside the country. Those figures are the state's count, not an independent audit.

What the court wrote instead of "Bibles" / Ce a scris instanța în loc de „Biblii"

The Rădăuți sentence of 10 January 1981, confirmed in Suceava on 31 January 1981 (Decizia penală nr. 49, dosar 161/1981), did not say Bible trafficking. It used two legal masks: Decree 210/1960 art. 37 — illegal foreign cash (for Tata: 170 rubles in August 1978); and Law 3/1974 art. 94 — distributing print and recordings without authorization (for Tata: receiving materials from Gross, Kloos and others, 1971–1980, and circulating them in Suceava and Botoșani counties). The first court said the group as a whole had put more than 40,000 unauthorized copies into circulation. Prints, tapes, a cassette player and some foreign cash were confiscated. The 1981 file does not confiscate a house. Preventive arrest for Tata ran from 31 October 1980. He was held at Penitenciarul Botoșani.

Sentința n-a scris „trafic de Biblii". A scris valută și imprimate fără autorizație. Dosarul din 1981 nu ia casa. Arestul preventiv al tatei e de la 31 octombrie 1980. A fost ținut la Botoșani.

Note on numbers: some later church tables print "4 years, Botoșani" beside every Canalul-80 name. The court paper in our hands is more precise. Tata's combined term that stood on appeal was one year and six months. Trust the stamped decision over the later summary table.

Tabelele bisericești de mai târziu care scriu „4 ani" lângă fiecare nume sunt un rezumat. Sentința tatei, pe hârtie, este 1 an și 6 luni.

Why 1980 / De ce atunci

By 1980 the regime was already nervous about neo-Protestant growth and about Western "interference." The 1977 memorandum Cultele neoprotestante și drepturile omului, read on Radio Free Europe, had put Baptist and Brethren names on the international map. Helsinki language about religious freedom was treated in Bucharest as a cover for hostile activity. Canalul-80 and Canalul-81 were the police answer: close the inbound channels, punish the Romanian receivers, keep official print tiny.

Official Bibles that did arrive through approved churches were sometimes not delivered. In one later episode, thousands of Bibles sent for the Reformed Church were pulped into toilet paper — a story that reached Western papers in 1984. That is the climate in which a bakery mechanic in Rădăuți with seven children at home was still moving books by night.

Acesta e aerul în care un mecanic de la brutărie, cu șapte copii acasă, tot ducea cărți noaptea.

10. What we should not claim / Ce să nu pretindem

David's dates and house number are memory, not a stamp. He says Sitarilor 3; the court says 4. He says five or seven children; the court says seven. He is one witness, filmed decades later. He does not replace the sentence. He does not prove a house claim. He does tell the sisters what kind of work their father was in, in the words of a man who sat at that table.

David nu înlocuiește sentința. Nu dovedește o casă. Le spune surorilor, cu glas de om care a stat la masa aceea, în ce lucrare a fost tata.

11. A line you can send / Un rând de trimis

> *Am găsit o mărturie a lui David Lăcătuș. El a stat duminică după masă în casa de pe Sitarilor. Zice că tata era mecanic la brutărie, sărac, cu mulți copii, și că organiza Bibliile care mergeau spre Botoșani și mai departe. Lunea au pus trei saci în mașină. A lucrat cu el până în 1980. Apoi a venit miliția. E aceeași poveste ca sentința din 1981, spusă de un frate, nu de judecător.*

I found David Lăcătuș's testimony. He sat Sunday afternoon in the house on Sitarilor. He says Tata was the bakery mechanic, poor, many children, and that he organized the Bibles toward Botoșani and beyond. Monday they put three bags in a car. They worked together until 1980. Then the militia came. It is the same story as the 1981 sentence, told by a brother, not by a judge.

Updated 23 September 2026. Built from the YouTube testimony, the family's 1981 court pages, Calea Credinței, and CNSAS studies on Canalul-80 / Canalul-81. Family correction: Samuel Hoffman is Tata's brother. Watch: youtu.be/TaPruFFnzLc — Hoffman passages around minute 38.

Actualizat 23 septembrie 2026. După mărturia de pe YouTube, actele din 1981, Calea Credinței și studiile CNSAS despre Canalul-80. Corecția familiei: Samuel Hoffman este fratele tatei. Sursa video: cam minutul 38.

PDF set for the Hofman Fund archive on 1 November 2026. The wording below the front note is the family journal of 23 September 2026. The front note is where the 2017 recording differs from what the papers show. It does not replace the sentence.