

The M. M. Bakhtin Circle: on the Foundation of a Phenomenon / O Círculo de M. M. Bakhtin: sobre a fundamentação de um fenômeno

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the social, intellectual and political context of the Bakhtin Circle's formation is retrieved in order to defend Pavel Medvedev's participation in it and the original authorship of the disputed texts. It results from the conference session held at XIV International Bakhtinian Conference in Bertinoro, Italy, 2011.

KEYWORDS: The Bakhtin Circle; Medvedev; dialogue

RESUMO

O artigo recupera o contexto social, intelectual e político de formação do Círculo de Bakhtin, para defender a atuação de Pável Medvedev e a autoria original dos textos disputados. É resultado da conferência plenária proferida na XIV Conferência Internacional Bakhtiniana, realizada em Bertinoro, Itália, em 2011.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Círculo de Bakhtin; Medvedev; diálogo

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The dialogue does not have the impression of one,
but of various individualities.
Mikhail Bakhtin

On the edge the creation of word and the creation of life
fuse together and dissolve in one another.
Pavel Medvedev

We all are just a mutual
reflection of mirrors.
Valentin Vološinov

The phenomenon of the “Circle” was perfectly in tune with the issues of the international conference dedicated to Bakhtin’s heritage in “grand time.” In Bakhtin’s work and activities, the “Circle” remained in shadow for a long time; it was either not studied or seen under a tendentious light and, therefore, not scientifically understood in Russia.

A. D. Aleksándrov, while speaking of another phenomenon that undoubtedly belongs to the “grand time” - quantum mechanics, drew attention to the fact that it was created by communication exchanges, when Niels Bohr received colleagues for discussions and arguing (ALEKSÁNDROV, 1988, p.442). This is one more example which confirms the efficiency of the concept of “thought collective,” introduced in science by Ludwik Fleck. We have used this notion for several times in presentations and articles about the “Bakhtin Circle” (see: MEDVEDEV, Iu. P., MEDVEDEVA D. A. / SHEPHERD, D., 2011), once it is entitled not only to the intellectual community of exact sciences but also to the field of humanities. As an example, we can recall the “collective intelligence” of the Russian formalists.

By rejecting the Soviet past with its authoritarian collectivism, people close to Bakhtin “threw the baby out with the bathwater.” That is the reason why there is a lack of confidence in relation to the collective work of the “Bakhtin Circle,” although Bakhtin himself used to state, “We worked in a close creative contact”¹.

Some decades after the beginning of the Bakhtinian studies, Serguéi Aviérintsev admitted (1995, p.6), “Despite everything, and yet, all of our approaches do not capture something, something is left out of our discussions, *i. e.*, the mystery of Bakhtin’s identity. In a certain sense, he shared this mystery with those to whom he related <...> because of the solidarity of time; a relation that was above all the barriers of personal misunderstandings.” Unfortunately, authors with Russian approaches, without lying or recognizing the context, “*did not capture*” the

¹ Letters of M. M. Bakhtin. *Literatúrnaia uchióba*. Moscow, Books 5—6, 1992. p. 145.
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most important aspect: Bakhtin's particular view of the world, transforming the unique polyphonic philosophical thought into a habitual monological scheme. Despite the countless anthologies, dissertations and articles, and, to be exact, precisely because of them, the intention of building an encyclopaedia of Bakhtin without considering the co-creation of close collaborators is at least naïve.

Throughout his life, the psychology of Bakhtin's work and the dialogic thought guided him in the intellectual communities: the small circle of "Omphalos" youngsters, the Niével circle and, finally, the "Bakhtin Circle" in Vitebsk and in Petrograd which was no longer a circle, but the "Circle," because in this case the communication was incorporated into scientific and philosophical writings which became monuments at that time².

This would be enough to understand Serguéi Aviérintsev (1988, p. 259), who, at the time of preparation to publish the collection in many volumes, suggested entitling it "Bakhtin and his circle." He referred to the work of Medvedev and Vološinov, that is, to the "B. M. V. Circle," according to Bénédicte Vauthier's later definition (2007, p.9-43).³

It is necessary to linger on the "B. M. V. Circle" (Bakhtin - Medvedev - Vološinov). The relations and the communication between Bakhtin and the participants of the circle of Niével have already been described more than once, and the manuscripts of its participants' archives have already been published (N. Nikoláiev, V. Mákhlin), but even in this case there has been some substitution, whether voluntary or not.⁴

The Niével community, which existed in plain composition for at least one year, is persistently called the "philosophical school of Niével." And it happens despite the fact that the "school of Niével" did not have only one conception and was formed by the aforementioned authors based on later publications.

The horizon and the theory of the creation of the "B. M. V. Circle" are not only presented by the worldwide known work of the participants, but they can also be partially reconstructed from P. N. Medvedev's work and texts, as they were the "pre-Bakhtinian" published material. P. N. Medvedev's personal archive, the non-published manuscripts of his work and his vast

² Due to the necessity of analysing the stages of formation of the "Circle" and of its work, we are forced to have recourse to facts and details which are partially known from our previous articles.

³ Editor's note : In 1995, therefore before Vauthier's later definition, Jean Peytard had already employed the term "B. M. V." in his work *Mikhaïl Bakhtine. Dialogisme et analyse du discours*, Paris: Bertrand-Lacoste, 1995.

⁴ This period is known by means of the contacts of its participants with the "philosopher of Marburg" M. I. Kagan. About him, see: PUL, B. The role of M. I. Kagan in the constitution of M. M. Bakhtin's philosophy (by Hermann Kohen and Max Scheler). (Rol M. I. Kagana v stanovliénii filossófii M. M. Bakhtiná (ot Hermanna Kohena k Maksu Scheleru)). In: *Bakhtinski sbórník*. Ed. 3. Moscow, 1994, p. 162—181; "Back to Kagan". The school of Marburg in Niével and M. M. Bakhtin's philosophy ("Nazad k Kagánu". Márburgskaia chkola v Niévele i filossófia M. M. Bakhtiná). *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, Vitebsk, N. 1, 1998, p. 38—48.

correspondence were confiscated and destroyed by NKVD⁵. His inheritance was reduced with violence and deprived of that information which would convey an idea about the personality of his colleagues (M. Kagan, L. Pumpiánski, and others). How valuable Medvedev's archive was can be seen, for example, by means of the remainder of his philosophical collection which is stored in the sections of manuscripts of the Russian National Library and Púchkin House and which always attracts scholars interested in the work of A. Blok, L. Gumilióv, B. Pasternak, O. Mandelchtam, F. Sologub, A. Biély, B. Rózanov, I. Ánnenski, N. Kliúev, K. Váginov and other representatives of the "silver century" of Russian literature, to which also belonged Pável Medvedev in a large part of his artistic path. All the material of the journal *Zapiski Peredvizhnogo Teatra* (*Notes of an itinerant theatre*), with which Medvedev collaborated since 1919 and of which he was the director from 1922 to its closure by the censorship in 1924, serve as evidence.

Many of Bakhtin's ideas are, in fact, replies which agree, develop or deny other reply-ideas which reverberated on the pages of *Zapiski Peredvizhnogo Teatra* in those years when "the search for new tasks and for the comprehension of the aim of the art" was, in E. Rádlov's words, a "sign of the times" (TIUPÁ, 1997, p.189-208).

In July of 1919, Medvedev invited to teach at the Popular University (Proletarian), organised by him, the philosophy professor of the University of Petrograd S. O. Gruzenberg and L. V. Pumpiánski from Niével, who immediately moved to Vítebsk. In the autumn of 1919, M. I. Kagan also started teaching at the university and, in the autumn of 1920, Bakhtin also moved to Vítebsk. Sometime later, V. N. Vološínov was invited to the sub-department of arts directed by Medvedev and where the young I. I. Sollertínski already worked.

The confluence of philosophical and aesthetic interest favoured gathering those people. Bakhtin talked about that to Duvákin, "Around me there was a circle which today is called the "Bakhtin Circle"... <...> In this circle, people often include, above all, Pumpiánski, Pavel Nikoláievitch Medvedev, Vološínov. <...> And then, the three of them were in Vítebsk, where, in fact, the basis of this circle which later settled in Leningrad was founded" (BAKHTIN; DUVAKIN, 2002, p.161).

The circle of coreligionists gathered by Medvedev in Vítebsk in 1919 was soon limited to three constant participants, as Kagan, Pumpiánski e Sollertínski left the city in 1920. Until the autumn of 1920, there was a narrow dialogic communication among B., M., and V. The circle was formed according to mutual attraction. For example, it may sound strange that the philosophy professor S. O. Gruzenberg, who at that time worked in the same institutions of

⁵ Editor's note: In English, NKVD means People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. *Bakhtiniana*, São Paulo, Special Issue: 28-48, Jan./Jul. 2014.

higher education as Medvedev and Bakhtin and who communicated with Medvedev, had not joined that circle and that his name had never been mentioned by Bakhtin. Medvedev, however, considered S. O. Gruzenberg one of the main professors of the Science and Human Arts Institute, which, by their initiative, had to be open in Vitebsk, based at the Proletarian University.

Bakhtin wanted to discuss with M. Kagan⁶ about the work on the aesthetics of the verbal creation, which was not discussed in Niéval, as he did directly with Medvedev. Medvedev's communication in the press (*Iskússtvo, Zhizn iskússtva*) is a testimony of that. And so are his notes on the manuscripts of Bakhtin's article "The problem of content, material and form in the verbal art" (*Probléma soderzhánia, materiala e formy v sloviésmom khudózhestvennom tvórchestve*) and, of course, the book about Dostoevsky, written in Vitebsk and prepared for publication together with Medvedev at the time when Bakhtin was liberated from detention due to his disease, after signing a document in which he pledged not to leave the city, being sometimes in hospital, and sometimes at home waiting for the sentence. This is attested not only by some memories but also by some official prorogation of the edition that was necessary for the preparation of the book publication.

In Vitebsk, there was Bakhtin's transition from philosophy to aesthetics. As it was revealed, he delayed the work "The subject of morality and the subject of the right" (*Subiekt nrávtvennosti i subiekt prava*) for good; a fact that he could not probably forgive himself as he considered himself, above all, a philosopher. At the first meeting with the new colleagues, he soon warned, "I am a philosopher." Maybe, subconsciously, Medvedev also remained not forgiven, because the transition from philosophy to aesthetics was encouraged exactly by Medvedev. Studying the problems of theory and psychology of literary creation, Medvedev searched coreligionists and colleagues to develop a *new* theory of artistic creation, which he, a convinced defender and idealiser of the ontology of communication, saw it as sociological. Medvedev was elected President of the Organising Committee of the Institute of Human Sciences and Arts, which was to be open in Vitebsk, and prepared the programme of the Institute and chose the scientists. The idea of the Institute was supported by People's Commissar Lunacharski.⁷ However, for various reasons (including financial), the Institute in Vitebsk was not open. Nevertheless, the "thought collective" arisen in Vitebsk gradually moved to Petrograd. Medvedev's subsequent actions made clear how deep he valued his Vitebsk coreligionists. After leaving Vitebsk in 1922, he commented at the Petrograd newspaper (which later was turned into

⁶ See letters of M. Bakhtin to M. Kagan in *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, Vitebsk, N. 1, 1992, p. 66-72.

⁷ "Order N. 114 of the Department of Education 29th July 1920. <...> The vice artistic director P. N. Medvedev, in accordance with the phone call to People's Commissar Lunacharski, 16th June, under the number 63428, is delegated to Petrograd". (GAVO, f. 2268, op. 3, folder 1, sheet 91).

a journal) *Zhizn iskusstva*⁸ on the work of S. O. Gruzenberg, on a "young scientist" M. M. Bakhtin, on a musicologist V. N. Volóshinov, supporting his colleagues and advertising their work.

When Bakhtin came back to Leningrad, *Zapiski peredvizhnogo teatra* no longer existed. Ivanov Razúmnik's journal *Osnóvy (Fundaments)*, whose editorial board (together with Tomashévski, Dolínin, Tyniánov, Smirnov e Zamiátin) Medvedev would also join, was not launched, as it had been announced by the press.⁹ However, the theme of the "Circle" of Vítebsk evolved based on Medvedev contacts with the Art History Institute (where, in 1923, he delivered three lectures and where Bakhtin, intermediated by him, also lectured in 1924) and with the Institute of Research on Comparative History of Western and Eastern Literatures and Languages (ILIaZV), in which Vološínov became a postgraduate student not without the help of Desnítskii, acquainted with Medvedev. K. Váginov, N. Kliúev and M. Tubiánski started attending the "Circle" meetings, probably because of Medvedev's initiative, as the publication in *Zapiski peredvizhnogo teatra* (before Bakhtin moved to Leningrad) made evident. Boris Zubákin, who had visited Leningrad, dedicated his poems to Medvedev, which were published in number 43 of the journal. Talking to V. Duvákin, Bakhtin told him about Váginov's verses, unimaginable in Soviet times, which were published in the journal by Medvedev (BAKHTIN; DUVAKIN, 2002, p.215).

If Bakhtin had had the texts that he wanted and was ready to publish, Medvedev would have found the chance to publish them, as he did with the articles of Vološínov, Gruzenberg and his own which were released in the journals *Iskusstvo*, *Zapiski peredvizhnogo teatra*, *Rússki sovremiennik*.

It was in Vítebsk that Bakhtin wrote his treaties as well as the book on Dostoiévski. Medvedev, according to documents stored in the archive in Vítebsk, from 1917, wrote a series of works, including *Methodological premises to the history of literature (Metodologúicheskie predposýlki k istórii literatúry)*, *Essays on the theory and psychology of literary creation (Ócherki teórii i psikhológii khudózhestvennogo tvórchestva)*, *Russian Literature of the 20th century (Rússkaia literatura XX viéka)*¹⁰, and prepared for publication the first book on Blok (published in Saint Petersburg in 1922 and reedited in 1923). At the same time, Vološínov's articles on music which already carried some echoes of general scientific and philosophic themes were published. Medvedev reedited Vološínov's article on Beethoven in *Zapiski peredvizhnogo teatra* (No 44), published one article by I. Grúzdev (No 40-42) "On the procedures of literary

⁸ Theatre-literary chronicle (Teatrálno-literatúrnaia khrónika). *Jizn iskusstva*, Petrograd, N. 33 (856), 1922, 22—2nd August, p. 4.

⁹ IRLI, sheet. 79 (of Ivanov-Razúmnik), op. 1, N. 5 book of notes "Volfila — Epokha").

¹⁰ For the first time, these manuscripts were studied by Ken Hirschkop (1999, p.146).

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narrative" (*O priíomakh khudózhestvennogo povestvovánia*) with his theory of masks, which was appreciated and probably used by Bakhtin in his conception of authorship.

In the questionnaire of Zúbovski Institute, Medvedev mentioned the size of each one of his manuscripts.¹¹ To the question why those books had not been published, Medvedev answered that he did not consider them "well grounded and ready for publication." Maybe those circumstances stopped Bakhtin from publishing, a fact that confirms, once again, the need for an intellectual dialogue and for professional discussion of his work. The famous monographs were finished later, after having been thought of and finished in the general intellectual environment of the "Circle" and of the scientific community of ILIaZV, where Vološínov, postgraduate student, and Medvedev, external researcher of first degree, taught and delivered lectures.

In 1928, the Council of ILIaZV put Medvedev and V. F. Shishmarióv, a student of the academic A. N. Vesselóvski, in charge of organising the new academic course of the Institute as well as the respective section of sociologic poetics. With Medvedev's book *The formal method in literary scholarship*, ILIaZV started a new series of anthologies and monographs *Methodological issues of langue and of literature (Voprossy metodológii iazyká i literatúry)*; three editions of this series were released before the massacre of Medvedev's work. The massacre interrupted both the work of the new section and the publication of the series of his scientific work, while sociologic poetics became, for many years, a forbidden discipline. It was no longer a "private methodology" of Medvedev, Vološínov or Bakhtin, but a methodology of a scientific school: the sociologic poetics school of the Institute of Comparative History of Western and Eastern Literatures and Languages, idealised and organised by Medvedev. I. I. Ioffe, M. A. Iákovlev, Vološínov, and soon after other members of the Institute took part in the work in the section.¹² In 1929, Medvedev initiated the collective theme of "Palaeontology and epic sociology" (with the participation of L. Bogáievski, O. Freidenberg, V. Shishmarióv, N. Derzhávin, I. Frank-Kameniétski)¹³ and – in co-authorship with Shishmarióv – the collective theme of "The sociology of genres,"¹⁴ and many others. To Medvedev, the fundamental debate with the "formalists" conveyed meaning to his theory through confronting points of view. It was no longer about a polemic attack, as it had happened in the past, but it was the emergence of a new scientific vision of the world or, as he used to say, of the "scientific and systematic theory of the object of artistic perception" (MEDVEDEV, 1925, p.264-276). In Bakhtin and Medvedev the essence of the "shared" concept is formulated in different ways. The thought autonomy of the

¹¹ Department of manuscripts of IRLI, f. 172, N. 550, sheet 1.

¹² Archive RAN, branch in Saint Petersburg, s. 302, op. 1, ed. khr. 14, sheet. 28.

¹³ TSGALI Saint Petersburg, f. 302, op. 1, case 270, sheet 10.

¹⁴ TSGALI Saint Petersburg, f. 302, op. 1, case 270, sheet 8.

participants of the “Circle” was confirmed in the innovator work of V. N. Zakhárov (2007, p. 19-30).

Medvedev was not worried only about his own publication, but also about his coreligionists'. Only this way the new tendency could challenge the dominant formal school as well as other countless adversaries. Medvedev published, in "Priboi" publishing house, the famous monographs of his colleagues. His fundamental essay oriented against formalism "The scientific salierism" ("Uchiónyi salierizm") of October 1924 was supposed to be supported by Bakhtin's article "The problem of content, material and form in the verbal art" ("Problema soderzhánia, materiala i formy v sloviéssnom khudózhestvennom tvórchestve") of 1924, just like the editor's preface, written by Medvedev to V. V. Vinográdov's book,¹⁵ was followed by Volóshinov's review.¹⁶ Bakhtin's article was prepared for the fourth edition of the journal *Rússki sovremiénnik* (released at the end of 1924), but, probably, was delivered too late and, therefore, was not included in the fourth edition. The fifth edition was never released, because the journal was shut down.

Initially, Bakhtin was known not so much for his philosophical pieces of writing (the treatises were found later), but for some work on poetics, which led to the desire to attribute the philosophical work of his colleagues to Bakhtin. The essential fact that Bakhtin's “first philosophy,” which became known later due to the treatise "Towards a philosophy of the act" ("Filosófia postúpka"), written in Vítebsk, was of great importance for the philosophical aesthetics of the “Circle” remained obfuscated. It also refers to the same period, the first known Bakhtin's statements about his circle (2003, p.231): “One voice can sing only in a cosy environment, before the possibility of the support of the chorus, of the sonorous non-solitude by principle." Sometime later, Bakhtin significantly developed this testimony.

Medvedev entered the history of the Russian culture as the pioneer of the scientific study of Aleksandr Blok's work: He was his first editor and commentator; author of one of the best known pieces of work on “art history” ("Dramas and poems by Al. Blok. On the history of its creation" / "Dramy i poemy Al. Bloka. Iz istórii ikh sozdánia"); idealiser of one of the first courses of modern national literature for the institutes of higher education¹⁷; fundamental critic of the principles of the formal school. Medvedev's literary and scientific reputation by the end of

¹⁵[MEDVEDEV, P.] By the editor (Ot izdátelstva). In: VINOGRÁDOV, V. V. *On literary prose (O khudózhestvennoi proze)*. Moscow-Leningrad, 1930, p. 3—8.

¹⁶ VOLOŠINOV, V. N.: <Review of the book> VINOGRÁDOV, V. V. *On literary prose (O khudózhestvennoi proze)*. *Zvezdá*, Saint Petersburg, N.2, 1930, p. 233—234.

¹⁷ The publication of the manual was cancelled after the detention of Medvedev, but it was maintained the publication of his Methodological study to the course of history of Russian literature of the imperialist time e of the proletarian revolution. (*Metodicheskaia razrabotka po kúrsu istórii rússkoi literatúry epókhii imperializma e proletárskoi revoliútsii*. Leningrad, 1933).

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1920 was reflected by Erich Hollerbach (1930, p.11-12), who called Medvedev the "destroyer of the formal method." Hollerbach's book was released in the beginning of 1930, i. e., before the official ideological campaign against formalism. Medvedev was one of the first victims of the ongoing campaign against formalism, having been accused of "Kantism, formalism and other types of darker obscurantism" (ERMÍLOV, 1932, p.11). Today this situation has already been studied by the employees of IRLI (Púchkin House) based on the material stored in the archives of the Institute.¹⁸ The characteristic made salient by Hollerbach reflects the outstanding side of Medvedev's personality in those years, but casts a shadow over his essence which was so diversely and clearly revealed during the "Cultural Renaissance of Vítebsk," in the "set of individualities" of the Itinerant Theatre and in Bakhtin's scientific and philosophical circle. The "anti-formalist" reputation explains the scientific adversaries' attitude in relation to Medvedev: They were under the impression of the public "repentance" of Shklóvski (this is the article "Monument to a scientific mistake" ("Pámiatnik náučnoi oshibke")), published in the newspaper *Literatúrnaia gaziéta*, on 27th January 1930). The memories about Medvedev¹⁹ did not abandon him neither in Moscow (in the famous talk to V. V. Kózhinov (1992, p.117), nor in Perediélkino²⁰ (talks with Viatcheslav Vs. Ivánov), nor in Leningrad (to E. S. Dóbin²¹ in the House of the art in Komarovo), nor in any talk to foreign authors (Catherine Clark²²). The mail of 1929 exchanged with Iu. N. Tyniánov²³, who tried to comfort the friend, contradicts the later version that he had always known that Medvedev's book would have been written by Bakhtin.

Not without the vindictive involvement of Shklóvski, Medvedev's book, partly forgotten in relation to the prohibition to mention the names and pieces of work of the "enemies of the people,"²⁴ was attributed to Bakhtin by radical Moscovits, while the unscrupulous businessmen, grabbing a profitable version, flooded the editorial market with the "masks" and "semi-masks" of a classical author who was sold like warm scones, which made society absolutely adrift.²⁵ The result was paradoxical, which was typical Shklóvski: The scientific adversary was humiliated and morally destroyed, and his ideas, which once let the ex-formalist so disturbed, were entirely

¹⁸ The literary formations of 1917-1932 in Russia (the problems of the study). (Literatúrnyie obiediniénia 1917-1932 v Rosii (problémy izutchiénia). In: *Of the history of literary formation in Petrograd-Leningrad in 1910-1930. Researchs and material. (Iz istórii literatúrnykh obiediniénii Petrograda-Leningrada 1910-1930 godov. Issliédovania i materialy)*. Books 1, 2. Saint Petersburg, 2002, 2006.

¹⁹ See also Medvedev's review about *Theory of the prose* by Shklóvski. *Zvezdá*, Saint Petersburg, N. 1, 1926, p. 265—266.

²⁰ Chklóvki lived in Perediélkino in mid-1930s.

²¹ DRÚSKIN, Liev. *The saved book. (Spasiónnaiia kniga)*. Saint Petersburg, 1993, p. 233 and others.

²² SHKLÓVSKI, V. B. Interview with K. Clark 25th March 1978. In: CLARK K., HOLQUIST M. *Mikhail Bakhtin*. Harvard: Harvard UP. 1984.

²³ TYNIÁNOV, Iu. N. Letter to Chklóvki. *Soglásie*, Moscow, N. 30, 1995, p. 201.

²⁴ For example, the book *The formal method* was liberated from the special archive in 1987.

²⁵ The repeated illegitimate re-editions (despite the countless objections in the press) pieces of work of P. N. Medvedev and V. N. Volóshinov under the name of Bakhtin, were made by the publishing house "Labirint" of Moscow (director I. Pechkov).

delivered to another – who at the time was in fashion and was big, with whom it was not embarrassing to come to a consensus – in the process of his own evolution, of course.

Bakhtin rejected the authorship imposed to him. He knew who was the idealiser and organiser of the aesthetic circle. According to Randall Collins (2002, p.48-49), the organiser of the "thought collective" is always an important character, even when the "intellectual leader" of the collective is someone else. Collins demonstrated that with the example of Kant and Fichte.

The memories of Medvedev's students and junior colleagues - I. I. Sollertinski, A. Krasnov-Levítin, E. I. Naúmova, A. V. Desnítskaia – together with the good evaluation of Medvedev's work by his contemporary – the academics Zhirmúnski, Shishmariov, Sakúlin, Píksánov, Professor L. Grossman, Nikolai Kliúev, Boris Pasternak – and with the letters of V. A. Desnítski, O. V. Tsekhnovitser, Viacheslav Shishkov, Mikhail Zóschenko in defence of imprisoned Medvedev (see Medvedev; Medvedeva, 2003, p.216), just like Nikolai Zabolotski's "prison" testimony, conveyed an idea of Medvedev's creative personality which, despite not being exhaustive, is very solid and coincident in all the authors.

In 1912, when he still studied Law at university, Medvedev suggested three articles to the director of Petrograd journal *Sovremiennik*: about Briússov, Blok and "Towards a philosophy of Russian literature" ("K filossófií rússkoi literatury")²⁶. In this proposal, just like in articles previously published and which are now partially known²⁷, the scope of the issues towards which Medvedev would orient his studies is defined. In Petersburg, Kishiniov and Vítebsk, the young lawyer starts delivering lectures on literature, sends articles from the war front: "On the study of Púchkin", on Berdiáev, "On Gógol", "On the diary of Liev Tolstói", "Andréi Biély"...

Medvedev's erudition originated at the university, but it was also developed during the independent work on a book to which he was always able to find some free time. There is a testimony about this fact: a preserved draft authored by Medvedev, entitled "On the work of Chudovski. The doctrine of the verse" ("Iz rabot Chúdovskogo. Utchiénie o stikhié")²⁸. The ideas of C. Chudovski, talented critic of the journal *Apollon*, drew his attention:

The word is no way something that "is written together" and that is in the dictionary. The word is not determined by a set of typographic impression, but by the unit of the concept in consciousness. So, it becomes clear that the spelling expresses little of this unit of concepts. On the other hand, the speech expresses it well. The speech is perfectly suitable for the conscience and, in general, for the soul.

²⁶ Russian National Library. Section of manuscripts, f. 118, ed. khr. 1454.

²⁷ The re-editions of some of the first Medvedev's work can be found on the journals *Dialog. Karnaval. Khrinotop* (2003. N. 1—2 (39—40); *Zvezdá* (2006. No 7, p. 197—198); *Voprosy literatury* (2009. No 6); *Zvezdá* (2010. N. 11); Collected writings *The chronotope and the surroundings (Khronotop i okriéstnosti)* (Ufá, 2011).

²⁸ The summary can be found in the archive of Medvedev family.

The nature of those drafts as well as Medvedev's later work make it possible to evaluate his context. Many aspects that will be developed and grounded later have been sketched here. They are: the dissatisfaction with the state of the literary studies and the search, derived from this frustration, for a method to study the literary phenomena; the controversy of the morphological approach that emerged in Russia on the basis of symbolism (See BIÉLY, 1910 and his followers); the comparison between practical and poetic language that would become a problem for future reflection; and the secession of the properties of language and poetic language, in other words, of stylistics and linguistics.

Based on the work of Liev Tolstói, Medvedev enriched his comprehension of the philosophic essence of "communication." This concept became decisive for his epistemology: in the work of 1912, "The philosophy of Russian literature," in the article "On the diary of Liev Tolstói" (2010[1916]; 2004, p.188) and in the book "The formal method" (1928), which represents one "introduction to sociological poetics."

The definition given by Bakhtin to this concept – "The proper essence of man (external and internal) is the *deepest communication*. Being means *communicating*" – came up in the manuscript of 1961 (1996, p.344).

Medvedev initiated his critique of "material aesthetics" before he met Bakhtin and before the emergence of OPOIAZ. In the programme of his lectures of 1919-1920, the topics of the "poles of the word" and the categories of "evaluation" as well as the "methods of prosaic thinking" already show; in the description of the ideology of the creator, he had already sketched the philosophy of the sign, and it happened long before the publishing of *The formal method* and *Marxism and philosophy of the language*, which were essential for the future semiotics; the ontological essence of "communication" became fundamental to his thought long before he was introduced to Bakhtin's philosophy as well as the western work on the "theory of communication"; in *The formal method* (as well as in *Formalism and formalists*, published in 1934) he developed the "panorama" of the theory of the Western art which was contemporary to him...

The scientific voice of Medvedev could be easily recognised if a significant part of his work had not been attributed to Bakhtin²⁹ and if his first texts had been re-edited and taken into

²⁹ A. B. Murátov, who was head of the Russian Literature Department of the State University of Saint Petersburg for years, in the article on the history of his department "The study of Russian literature at the University of Saint Petersburg –Petrograd - Leningrad", writes: "The last decades, P. N. Medvedev's methodological ideas were actively discussed in the work dedicated to Mikhail Bakhtin."

account³⁰, as it happened to the archive texts and the documents of his colleagues. If it had been done, by the logic of “cooperative intellectuals,” Medvedev would have been the pioneer in the establishment of basic criteria of the “*general* concept of language and of discursive work.” However, it contradicts the self-sufficient pseudo-Bakhtinian “programme” (MAKHLIN, 2004, p. 336). Nevertheless, in this specific case, it is not about the primacy or influence of one in relation to the other (which is absolutely natural and organic to any thinking community), but about the general intellectual orientation. Iu. M. Kagan (1992, p.60), who believed that “it would be more accurate to talk ... <...> about a circle of people who philosophised and shared spiritual interests,” was absolutely right.

Medvedev’s sociological poetics did not intend to please the new political order although this aspect was undoubtedly present and functioned as an excuse to the organisation of the Institute of Sciences and Human Arts: a scientific and educational centre for the study of art theory. The sociological poetics, enhanced through the analysis of the circumstances of Liev Tolstói and Fiódor Dostoiévski’s creative path (Medvedev conducted the seminar on Dostoiévski at the Institute of Popular Education in Vítebsk), became a fecund stage of literary studies despite the misery of the ideology that prevailed in the country. That is why Medvedev’s book is interesting and read until today.³¹ That is why he was criticised by orthodox Marxists, and the functioning and the development of the sociologic poetic school were interrupted with violence. Medvedev was put in first place among formalists, in second among vulgar sociologists and in third among orthodox Marxists. Fadiéev, RAPP [The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, also known under its transliterated abbreviation RAPP (Russian: Российская ассоциация пролетарских] director, declared that he – the only one among the critics in Leningrad – would be a “liquidator of proletarian literature” (FAVIÉEV, 1932, p.5). Such charges resulted not only in the prohibition of his publishing activities but also in his prison. Despite all that, Medvedev’s effort and work were not wasted: They influenced, in a direct way, the research at ILIaZV at the Academy of Art Studies (seminar for postgraduate students) and at the University,³² and in a latent way – for many years later – literature and critique³³.

Still in Vítebsk, the lectures on the history of Russian literature of the 19th century (as it is shown in the programmes published in “*Notes of the Proletarian University*” (“*Zapiski*

³⁰ According to insistent recommendation and even demands made in one series of international Bakhtinian conferences.

³¹ The treatise of P. N. Medvedev *Sociologic poetics. Volume I. Thematic*, written after *The formal method*, did not last until these days for having been confiscated during the author’s detention, but there is some information which confirms its existence.

³² Memories of his students about P. N. Medvedev: see note 26.

³³ See E. Dóbin’s preface to the collection P. N. Medvedev’s work *At the writer’s laboratory (V laboratórii písátelia)*, Leningrad, 1960, 1971; as well as note 30.

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Proletárskogo Universitieta") and the 20th century (as it is made clear through the circle of lectures at the Institute of Popular Education³⁴) were organised by Medvedev in such a way that literature was presented under the aesthetic prism. In 1920, he, invited by the Council of State Offices and Art³⁵ (in those times, the offices were still directed by Chagall and Kazimir Maliévich), started conducting his course "Theory of artistic creation."

At this time, Medvedev based his theory of artistic creation, taking distance from both metaphysical and empirical tendencies, in a scientific theory (based, specially, on Vesselóvski's, Potebniá's and phenomenologists' work), analysing art as an aesthetic phenomenon with an evaluative orientation. For Medvedev, the "aesthetic object" valence (concept already present in Christiansen's theory, 1911) belongs to the "artist-creator" and to the "contractors of art," the bearer of "evaluation." The aesthetic was permeated by the social. Probably, it is an unfinished theory of artistic creation, one in construction, but ready to take off. Attention to the genre and to its "aesthetic and history" served as a reliable guide to the theory of the historical development of literature³⁶.

The future book on the formal method was not "ordered" only by its time, but it had already been "ordered" by the search itself and the author's intuition. It is by chance that Bakhtin, as if it were evident, called Medvedev "literary theorist" (BAKHTIN, 2002, p.222)³⁷ referring to a specific profession and not to his relation with "theory," common to both scholars.

The community, despite their interests in relation to the problems of "moral philosophy," can be seen in the title of Medvedev's lecture "Turgenev as a person and a writer," which was delivered in November of 1918³⁸. For Medvedev, the methodological validity of this comparison was important, essential both on the philosophical plan and on the plan of life. He gives special attention to this theme-problem in his lectures on the theory of artistic creation ("The artist and the man") and in other texts.

According to Bakhtin, on the basis of the three books – Medvedev's, Vološinov's and his own on Dostoevsky - "there was the *general* concept of language and of literary creation. <...> The presence of creative contact and of collaboration do not deprive each one of these books of

³⁴ *Zvezdá*, Saint Petersburg, N. 7, 2006. p. 197-198.

³⁵ The state archive of the region of Vitebsk, f. 204, op. 1, d. 49, sheets 107, 108.

³⁶ Medvedev wrote "more often my thoughts echo A. N. Vesselóvski's..." in the already mentioned questionnaire of Zúbovski Institute. Commenting on *Al. Blok's notebooks* (*Zapisnyé knízhki Al. Blóka*) (1930), Medvedev calls Vesselóvski "founder of historic poetics" (p. 238), not by chance that it contrasts the end of the article on Vesselóvski in "Literary Encyclopaedia" (Volume 2. Moscow, 1929, p. 201).

³⁷ See: *Vitebski listok*. 1918. N. 1036. Compare with: M. M. Bakhtin's and M. I. Kagan's lectures on "Day of art" (Niével, 13th de September 1919).

³⁸ See: *Vitebski listok*. 1918. N. 1036. Compare with: M. M. Bakhtin's and M. I. Kagan's lectures on "Day of art" (Niével, 13th de September 1919).

independence and originality"³⁹. The concept arose in conversations in Vitebsk, where the *dialogic support* which the members of the "Circle" shared and which, despite the independence of reasoning, all of them needed was clearly manifested. The common parameter between Medvedev and Bakhtin, which distinctly shows now that they are both dead, is the innovation, not in the name of novelty as such, which sometimes happened with some philologists, but as a sharp "intention to the truth": Bakhtin created the "*first philosophy*," while Medvedev searched ways to the *new* theory of literature. He also started with basic principles: psychology of art, genetic study of artistic phenomena (A. Blok's drafts), the history of literature, as well as of the problems of literary critique, which he, following Apollon Grigóriev's thought, also conceived as a "rigorous philosophical discipline" (MEDVEDEV, 1916, p.2).

Vološinov's work was analysed in D. Uinov's and N. Vasíliev's work. The fundamental book of V. Alpátov *Vološinov, Bakhtin and linguistics* is widely known. N. Vasíliev, for the first time in Russia, publicly raised (although following the delicate position of S. Aviérintsev, who aimed not at the imposition, but at the understanding of the problem) the issue of authorship of the texts attributed to Bakhtin (VASSÍLIEV, 1991). In a recent conference, he "presented new evidence of V. Vološinov's first scientific pieces of work... This is the most recent proof that V. N. Vološinov, just like P. N. Medvedev, were not M. M. Bakhtin's 'masks' and were not at all amateurs in Science, playing an important role in the mediation between the 'Marxist Science' and M. Bakhtin, who was in a marginalised position" (TULTCHÍNSKI, 2011). To the monograph *Marxism and philosophy of language* and to his author Vološinov, it was dedicated a recent detailed work of the Swiss professor Patrick Seriot (2010).

The fact, unknown until a short time ago, of the collaboration between Vološinov and Medvedev in the work on musical criticism in 1925-1926 deserves some attention. We intend to publish this article entitled "The legend of Ktej town' and our critique" ("Skazanie o grade Kítezhe" i nasha krítika) soon. In this paper, the dialogic contact between Vološinov and Medvedev resulted in co-authorship. The article was signed by both of them. We also hope to publish Medvedev's articles of 1918, in which some invective against the Soviet power and against Jewish persecution can be found⁴⁰. Before that he had already positioned himself against anti-Semitism in 1916⁴¹.

Because of the destruction of Medvedev's archive, carefully preserved by him, for throughout all his life he used to develop the themes and tasks established in his youth, it is necessary to examine his creation, *Zapíski peredvizhnogo teatra*, very carefully.

³⁹ M. M. Bakhtin's letters. *Literatúrnaia uchióba*, Moscow, N.5-6, 1992, p. 145. 1992. N. 11-12, p. 176.

⁴⁰ We thank the researcher of Vitebsk V. Shishánov for the concession of the texts.

⁴¹ On what burns forever like a slap (O tom, chto víechno zhzhót kak poshióchina). *Bessarábskaia zhizn*, Moldovo, N. 90, 1916, p.2.

In the autumn of 1922, Medvedev, invited by the director, actor and poet P. P. Gaidebúrov⁴² and by the actress N. F. Skárskaia (Vera Komissarzhévskaja's sister), joined the "Brotherhood" of the Itinerant Theatre, directed by them, and became director of repertory and the editor of the journal *Zapíski peredvizhnógo teatra* (*Notes of an itinerant theatre*). Medvedev's approach to the theatre troupe, one of the most genuine phenomena of Petersburg culture (as he used to say "the unique phenomenon in the artistic culture of our times"⁴³), happened in Vítebsk, where the theatre was located in 1919. Since then, Medvedev became the author of the critic column "Literary Diary" on the newspaper.

"The Itinerant Theatre – recalled Bakhtin in 1973 – was very popular at that time." (2002, p.190). The phenomenon of the Itinerant Theatre represented a kind of life parallel to the Bakhtinian "philosophy of the act." "A personality should be entirely responsible" (1986, p.3) – this postulate could be taken from an epigraph to the creative activity of his big and solid artistic collective.

In the Itinerant Theatre, Medvedev gave a course on psychology of art, delivered a series of lectures on Dostoiévski and made introductions to spectacles and lectures.

By the topic tackled (in particular, the discussion about poetic problems), by the composition of a group of newspaper authors⁴⁴, by the nature of the bibliography published in each edition as well as by Medvedev's publication, this journal resembles an academic department of theory and psychology of art (and not only theatrical art). "This reveals a considerable number of possible connections between Bakhtin's scientific work and this wonderful phenomenon in various ways... <...> which was waiting for its historian (just like theatre itself, the name of which should parallel Stanislávski's and Meyerhold's theatres)" - said Professor V. Tiupá (1997), who defends "the return to the culture of the forgotten Bakhtin's interlocutors."

The idea of "collective personality" always attracted the "itinerants." A. Meyer, philosopher and founder of the religious and philosophical society "Resurrection" (in relation to which Bakhtin was later arrested), interpreted it this way:

The problem of collective creation is the next immediate task in Divine edification. It does not matter if the group, which sketched this task, takes it out of Christianity. This ineptitude is harmful, but it does not completely devalue the act itself. The socialists mutter about materialism, but it is not worth considering. It is not about that. <...> The ideal exists. However, it stands out

⁴² About Gaidebúrov see K. A. Kumpan and V. I. Tiupá's article on the biographical dictionary *Russian writers. 1800-1917* (Rússkie pisáteli. 1800-1917), Moscow, 1989. Volume. 1, p.513).

⁴³ *Zapíski Peredvizhnógo teatra*, Saint Petersburg, N. 44, p.1.

⁴⁴ Took part at the journal: I. Grúzdev, V. Zhirmúnski, B. Kazánski, B. Tomashévski, E. Hollerbach, E. Stark, A. Piotrovski, V. Erlich, E. Rádlov, A. Gizetti, V. Volóshinov, D. Vygódski, N. Kliúev, and others.

only in terms of economic development and does not go beyond that, because the ideology is poor. It is a weakness, but the way is traced. <...> In it, the word was said, although it is weak: the reunification of the idea and its execution. (MEDVEDEV, 1999, p.82-158).

"Now we meet at the intersection of Russian culture... <...> We hope for a true national Renaissance" – wrote Medvedev in those years.⁴⁵

By publishing "Al. Blok's notebook" in 1930, Medvedev, already taking risks, kept Blok's notes on Meyer which were normally eliminated or replaced by suspension dots (Meyer was arrested on 11th December 1928 due to the case of "Resurrection"; he was initially sentenced to death and at that time was in jail in Solovki).

As the fundamental idea of the aesthetic of *Zapiski peredvizhnogo teatra*, the idea of art religiousness should be recognised. It was presented by Viacheslav Ivánov, who "as a thinker and as a personality," according to Bakhtin, "was of colossal importance" (TIUPÁ, 1997).

Medvedev considered Viacheslav Ivánov a "herald of a new era of religious and popular art,"⁴⁶ "the biggest among our contemporary."⁴⁷ However, in his opinion, the "itinerant" came to "religiousness" in a very independent way⁴⁸.

Then, Tiupá (1997) wrote:

It is really a "new" conscience that one finds out of personality; it is not a collective conscience of "chorus" in which the precision of personality is dissolved and disappears. It only assimilated the choral principle of equality among all consciences. But, at the same time, it assimilated the principle of a personality auto-definition, conquered by a solitary conscience in the struggle against authoritarianism.

Craig Brandist, a long-time researcher of scientific Russian archives and present international director of The Bakhtin Centre, aims at "analysing Bakhtin's ideas exactly as a significant contribution to the dialogue going on inside the scientific institutions and schools and among them – in a particular historical moment." "The importance of this general dialogue" for the researcher is still "more important than the value of Bakhtin's patrimony" (BRANDIST, 2006). But as one thing does not exist without the other, the Bakhtinian patrimony cannot exist without Medvedev's heritage, who discovered the origins of the "theory of communication" in the work of Liev Tolstói and the context of his thought in the legacy of N. Mikháilovski, V.

⁴⁵ Zapiski Peredvizhnogo teatra, Saint Petersburg, N. 50, p.3.

⁴⁶ Zapiski Peredvizhnogo teatra, N. 21, p.3.

⁴⁷ Zapiski Peredvizhnogo teatra, N. 42, p.4.

⁴⁸ Zapiski Peredvizhnogo teatra, N. 44, p.1.

Solovióv, Ap. Grigóriev and, inclusively, in Blok, Prishvin and Mandelstam. In the aforementioned questionnaire of Zúbovski Institute, Medvedev wrote in 1924: "More frequently my thought echoes with A. N. Vesselóvski's, Osc. Walzel's, G. Lanson's, Ap. Grigóriev's and V. Zhirmúnski's." To these names many others found in his publication and materials must be added: B. Chúdovski's, G. Shpet G. Vinokur's and even formalists, with whose work he familiarised his colleagues of Vítebsk (BAKHTIN, 2002, p.68).⁴⁹ Nor can we forget the fact that the philosophical and aesthetic inheritance of the "young scientist" Bakhtin became available due to his book on Dostoiévski, published in 1929, and his life was saved because of Medvedev's contacts with A. N. Tolstói, M. Gorki and A. Lunachárski.⁵⁰ It does not diminish the importance of later performance in the Bakhtinian environment in 1960s, but it indicates the heritage of the effort.

In our lecture at XIII Bakhtinian Conference⁵¹, we exposed the dialogic phenomenon of the "Circle," showing the psychological, social and creative character of its polyphony. Today, due to the effort of many researchers, the "Circle" ceased to be a bibliographic detail of Bakhtin's life, and became an independent cultural phenomenon. "I cannot be without the other, I cannot become myself without the other; I must find myself in the other by finding the other in myself (in a mutual reflection and perception)" (BAKHTIN, 1996, p.344). In these and in other Bakhtin's personal testimonies (in the beginning and at the end of his work), the upper vertex of interpersonal, spiritual and intellectual communication is rooted: a phenomenon that Bakhtin comprehended and grounded in the philosophy of dialogue and polyphony, in the work of Fiódor Dostoiévski, and in his theory of authorship. This intellectual phenomenon obtained a real, vital and creative reincarnation in the "Bakhtin Circle."⁵² There one finds the meaning and the "secret" of the phenomenon.

Summarising the results of the XIV International Bakhtinian Conference in Italy (which took place in July of 2011), Professor G. L. Tulchínski focused upon the philosophical content and meaning of countless presentations. "In first place – according to him – it refers to the idea of *dialogism* of meaning formation, produced by M. M. Bakhtin. <...> As a result, in the

⁴⁹ Bakhtin recalls that he met, for the first time, the formalists' flyers in Vítebsk (Talks with V. D. Duvákin, p.68).

⁵⁰ "Anatoli Vasilievich promised to publish my review on his lecture at Púchkin's House on the next edition of *Krásnaia Nevá* of Moscow, but with the reduction (it is quite extensive and thoroughly evaluates his lecture) of one or two pages. Anatoli Vasilievitch meets you and greets you."- it was said in one letter of 9th November 1923 of the imagist poet Vladímír Ricciotti to Medvedev (IRLI. Division of Manuscripts, f. I, op. 24, N. 35).

⁵¹ Iurii Medvedev, Daria Medvedeva (St. Petersburg) and David Shepherd (University of Sheffield), The polyphony of the Circle 13th International Mikhaíl Bakhtin Conference, July 28th- August 1st, 2008, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.

⁵² One more declaration that Bakhtin mingled and became acquainted with "primitive people," comprehensible on the mouth of the scientific adversaries of the "Circle," raises questions about the competence of present "specialists." See publication of N. D. Tamárchenko in the collection *Kronotop i okriéstnosti* (2011, p. 313) and in the journal *Voprosy literatury* (N. 1, 2011).

conference, it was clearly shown the re-evaluation of the relations between Bakhtin and “his circle.” If a short time ago Bakhtin acted as a kind of cultural hero who “founded” or “gave rise” to something, to whom the authorship of Vološinov’s and Medvedev’s work was attributed, now it becomes clear that the “Bakhtin circle”, <.. > as stressed by A. Ponzio (University of Bari, Italy), was an informal community of intellectuals who actively communicated with one another, discussed common problems, read each other’s texts and expressed their opinion about the reading. According to S. Padilha (Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso, Brazil), “a very important role of this circle derived from the informal everyday communication. Each one of the participants of this communication had his own voice, which in the course of time sounds clearly and distinctively. <...> It is a circle of talented Russian intellectuals, bright creative personalities who tried not only to survive and work under pressure and rigid ideological repression, performing the experience of national and European scientific, philosophical and religious thought, but also <...> the possibilities of a sociologic approach of conscience and language, exaggerated by Soviet Marxism.”⁵³

If you define the “thought collective” as a community of people who mutually exchange ideas or keep an intellectual interaction, it will change, to our eyes, into a unit of development of an area of thought, of a level of knowledge and of culture (FLECKI, 1999, p.64).⁵⁴

Bakhtin’s “first philosophy,” Medvedev’s “sociologic poetics,” Vološinov’s “sociolinguistics” are links of a single intellectual chain. As the great thinker and the leader of the artistic community of coreligionists of the circle B. M. V. used to say:

At any point of the dialogue there are huge and unlimited masses of forgotten meanings, but in certain moments of development of the dialogue, in its course, they are recalled and will come back to life in an updated form (in a new context). There is nothing that is absolutely dead: Each meaning will have its own revitalisation party (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.393).⁵⁵

⁵³ See note 40.

⁵⁴ FLECK, Ludwik. *The rise and the development of the scientific fact*. Introduction to the theory of thought and thought collective (*Vozniknoviienie i razvitie naučnogo fakta. Vvediienie v teoriiu stilia myshliienia i myslitel'nogo kollektiva*). Moscow, 1999, p. 64.

⁵⁵ The article was already in press when we learned of the new publication of the Swiss scientists (Jean-Paul Bronckart et Cristian Bota. *Bakhtine démasqué. Histoire d'un menteur, d'une escroquerie et d'un délire collectif*. Droz, 2011). We have not read or analysed the book yet, but the first idea of it could be grasped from the interview with the authors made for the university journal *Campus* (Bakhtine tombe le masque. In: *Campus*. N. 106. Université de Genève). "Examining Bakhtin's work, Jean-Paul Bronckart was convinced that... <...> the work signed by Voloshinov drastically differed from the other work of Bakhtin. We just decided to compare those texts thoroughly, but then we started an actual investigation, and the article originally conceived came up as a 600-page book." – said the co-author Cristian Bota. "We are simply astonished that the authors, who seem serious and competent, could easily assimilate something that is almost an “interpretative delusion” – said professor Jean-Paul Bronckart. – But we did not make anything up. All the material used in this book had been available for researchers for about 15 years. However, this did not prevent those who built their careers over the name of Bakhtin from *Bakhtiniana*, São Paulo, Special Issue: 28-48, Jan./Jul. 2014. 45

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keeping believing in their own inventions and from systematically ignoring Medvedev and Voloshinov, the merit of whom today it is worth totally rehabilitating."

Bakhtin unmasked. History of a liar, of a fraud and of a collective delusion: This is the title of the book. This is the contribution of veterans of Bakhtinian studies in Russia that proposed, to independent researchers, the results of their "projects" and "programmes" that humiliated, in first place, Bakhtin himself, as we have already warned several times with concern.

We want to answer the authors of the book right now: Of course, Bakhtin's inventions about his biography and other things could be considered a "lie," but calling him a liar, without taking into account the context of country-time-biography, is impossible! I would like to remind secular Europe of the difference between a liar and a "false testimony against your neighbour." Bakhtin could comprehend this difference and followed it. And yet "All the material <...> was available to researchers for about 15 years..." – this is actually a fact (see, for example: Medvedev Iu. P. "We were many on the boat..." ("Nas bylo mnogo na chelné...") In: *Dialog. Karnaval. Khronotop*, Saint Petersburg, N. 1, 1992, p. 89-108). Thanks to the responsible efforts of a series of national and foreign scientists, whose work we always acknowledge and whose names are worth mentioning again with respect (see note 3), science is slowly getting back on track. Although the editorial preface is full of auto-propaganda, the book *Problems of Bakhtinology (Problémy bakhtinológii)* (Saint Petersburg-Moscow, 2011), dedicated to the 120th (!) birthday of Bakhtin (1895-1975), is trying to justify its pseudo-scientific "way back."

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