



## **Statement from the Portuguese PEN Centre on the so-called “Acordo Ortográfico/AO 90 [Orthographic Agreement]” from 1990**

The so-called “Orthographic Agreement” for the Portuguese language, signed in 1990 by the seven Portuguese-speaking countries (Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, San Tome and Principe, Cape Verde), has not yet been ratified by all, due to the recognition of basic, structural and specific problems and critic aspects of all kinds.

To speak an “essential unity of Portuguese language”, with the same orthographic rules, is the aim of the “Agreement”. That is not possible, because syntactic, lexical and semantic differences remain untouched. The linguistic variants of Portuguese language are numerous in all countries. The basic critics stress the inapplicability of such a document because the changes that were introduced were not scientifically correct; they produced an artificial language that can only be implemented through computer programs, because it does not follow the natural evolution of the language. The radical changes in the European variant of the Portuguese mean a real erasure of so-called “mute” consonants (most “p” and “c”, which open the vowels and also display the Greek and Latin common roots and word family), affecting the most used words. A complete chaos is established since different writings and accent variations are accepted.

The so-called second Amendment Protocol of 2004 was ratified in May of 2008 by the Portuguese Parliament, by the majority of the deputies, due to party discipline, against the opinion of language experts and specialists in Linguistics and against the language sensibility of a considerable majority of the Portuguese population. According to that Amendment, it would be enough that only 3 countries, less than a half of the 8 countries of Portuguese official language (with East Timor as a new independent country), would be enough to ratify the Agreement in order to enforce it.

Since the beginning of 2012 all official documents of the Portuguese government are supposed to be written in that grapholect, which also affects the school programs and has been adopted by a considerable number of publications and publishing houses.

The Portuguese PEN Centre has carried out an enquiry among its members with following questions: 1. Which aspects do you consider positive and negative in the Agreement? 2. Do you intend to follow this Agreement in your texts or do you intend to keep writing in European Portuguese? 3. Do you think that PEN should take any initiative regarding this issue? In this case, which one? 4. If you wish, you may write further remarks on issues which you may consider important.

Almost all the answers to this inquiry have brought sharp critics to the Orthographic Agreement, strengthening the opinion of all Board members about its inutility and the damaging effects, which are now experienced everywhere. In the spirit of PEN, of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee and the Girona Manifest, the Portuguese PEN Board calls upon the support of International PEN to its actions with the goal of implementing the discussion about the measures to be taken, in order to use all legal means to revoke that unhappy treaty, which does not respect the language diversity and autonomy of Euro-afro-asiatic Portuguese.

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