

Dear Colleagues,

the German language has been represented by two orthographies for a couple of years now.

One of them is the orthography which has gradually evolved from Goethe's day and which has been proven throughout the 20th century. It is the orthography Theodor W. Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Ingeborg Bachmann, Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich Böll, Elias Canetti, Paul Celan, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Max Frisch, Hermann Hesse, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Rainer Maria Rilke, Arthur Schnitzler, Max Weber, and Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote and published in. It is the spelling of the German language in literature, philosophy, and science.

The other orthography has been invented by commission of the state. It is inferior and makes precise linguistic articulation more difficult. Notwithstanding, its implementation is being enforced by decree, against the will of a majority of the population. A large majority of German-speaking intellectuals rejects this prescribed orthography. One of Germany's leading newspapers, the Frankfurter Allgemeine, rejects it. The most renowned publishers, e. g. Diogenes, Hanser, Suhrkamp, Piper, reject it. They all maintain the conventional spelling. At the same time however, children in German, Austrian and Swiss schools are being taught this spelling is 'obsolete'.

Unfortunately, some publishers have decided in favour of the 'new' spelling. But even in these houses, German authors usually insist on their books being published in the conventional spelling. However, they have no influence on the orthography used in books translated from other languages into German. Whilst German literature is to a large extent being printed in the supposedly 'obsolete' spelling, foreign language literature is converted into the 'official' orthography by publishers such as S. Fischer or Rowohlt.

We would like to ask you, dear colleagues, to join and support us. We ask you to insist – as we continue to do ourselves – on the use of the conventional orthography, from those responsible for publishing your future work in German. Your readers will appreciate your decision.

Yours sincerely,

Horace Engdahl   Hans Magnus Enzensberger   Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt

Günter Grass   Lars Gustafsson   Elfriede Jelinek   György Konrád

Reiner Kunze   Stanisław Lem   Siegfried Lenz   Claudio Magris   Harry Mulisch

Adolf Muschg   Sten Nadolny   Cees Nooteboom   Patrick Süskind

Martin Walser   Christa Wolf

*Berlin, october 7th 2003*