

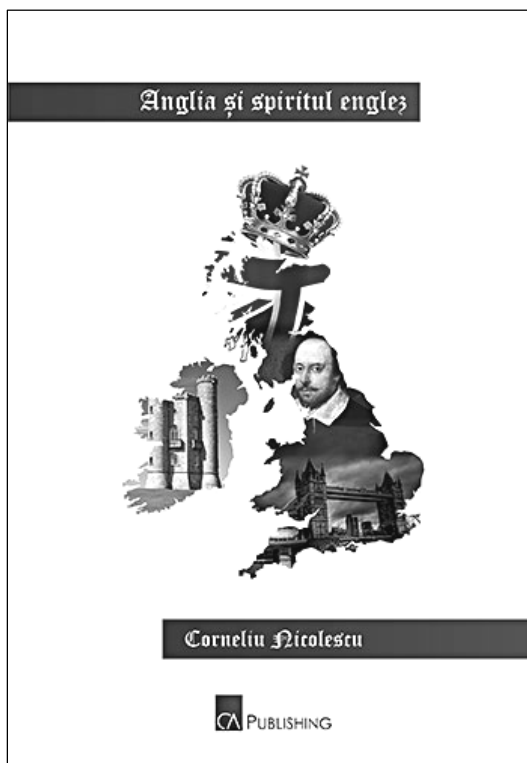
REVIEWS

Corneliu Nicolescu, *Anglia și spiritul englez* [England and the English Spirit] (Cluj-Napoca: CA Publishing, 2010), 311 pp., ISBN 978-973-88878-4-8

by **Costel COROBAN***

Romanian historiography has lately proved itself very attached to Great Britain and its historical destiny, fact which is also proved by the publishing of this book in 2010 by professor Corneliu Nicolescu from the Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. Professor Nicolescu is one of the most experienced researchers of English literature and politics, enjoying an international renown, which has allowed him to teach in many Western universities both in Europe and the United States. He has published over 15 books and volumes and countless articles in his fields of specialty, literature and politics, a fact which has given him the scholarly insight necessary to successfully identify and convey to us this history of “England and the English spirit”.

The volume is divided into 11 chapters plus a Foreword and a very useful Bibliography. The first chapter begins with an account of the Celtic civilization in Europe and Britain, and continues until the moment of Caesar’s invasion of the British Isles in 55-54 BC. The second chapter opens with the conquest, and then the organization and evolution of Britannia until the emergence of Christianity during the reign of Constantine the Great, after



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which came the end of the Roman rule. Certainly one of the most copious parts of this chapter is the story of Boudicca, the Queen of the Iceni, and her uprising against the legions of Rome.

The third chapter is first concerned with the Anglo-Saxons' settlement in Britain and continues with the fate of the early kingdoms of Britain, the supremacy of King Alfred of Mercia, the Viking invasion, and ends with the fate of kings Aethelred and Knut. The main theme of the fourth chapter is the Norman invasion of 1066. First the author sets before us certain considerations on the history of the Normans, and after detailing the invasion of 1066, goes on through the High Middle Ages by depicting the reigns of the Norman kings which succeeded William the Conqueror, ending with the reign of John Lackland and the signing of the Magna Charta.

Chapter 5 offers a broad view of the Late Middle Ages (1290-1485), during which one of the most important events was the Hundred Years War (1337-1453). Still, accent also falls on the social changes brought by this era, the turmoil of the XVth century for Britain and the first “symptoms” of the advent of the English nation. The next chapter begins by treating the flamboyant rule of Henry VIII Tudor, and ends with the glorious reign of Elizabeth I of England, who had the face the invasion of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the Stuart dynasty: the succession of James I of England and VI of Scotland, the advent of the English Civil War and Charles I's execution on 30 January 1649. Respecting the traditional chronology of English history, the author continues by treating the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, and the chapter ends with the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688-1689. The following chapter is concerned with the post-1688 establishment, the Hanoverian Succession of 1714, the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, but also the social and industrial progresses which happened during the first and second halves of the XVIIIth century.

It is interesting to note that professor Corneliu Nicolescu is probably the first Romanian author who uses the English names of the monarchs and personalities he presents us in his book.¹ While some would instead prefer the old, Romanian versions of these names which were used by the pioneers of British history in Romania (like Nicolae Iorga, Camil Mureșan et al), Dr. Nicolescu's approach is easily explained by the fact that the volume is dedicated to students of English philology, who should become accustomed with these names under their English form. I dare say that future Romanian historians and

¹ I have also identified a probable typographic or editorial mistake: when referring to the Jacobite rebellions, the form “iacobini” is used in Romanian (which might lead to a confusion to the Jacobin Club of the times of the French Revolution), instead of the established form of “iacobiți”. See Costel Coroban, *Mișcarea iacobită din Marea Britanie 1688-1746*, preface by Emeritus Professor Dr. Harry T. Dickinson, Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2011.

researchers² choosing to approach subjects in European history should follow suite, because becoming more accustomed to the native names of these personalities is after all closer to the historical ideal of truth.

Returning to the structure of the volume hereby presented, volume 9, entitled “The Liberal Period. The Revolution and Consolidation of the Legislative System (1789-1851)”, begins with the Industrial Revolution in a social context, then expands to the campaigns against Napoleon, and ends with the Great Reform of 1832 and the period immediately afterwards. The next chapter (“Social Liberalism 1851-1914”) continues on the same subject of liberalization and democratization while emphasizing the social, economic, and cultural class-related features of this second half of the XIXth century, and of course, the emergence of the Victorian society. The last chapter (and the closing one) presents an overview of the Empire and the idea of Imperialism from its beginnings immediately after the Seven Years War (1756-1763) to the end of the XIXth century.

Overall, I have to confess of having enjoyed reading this volume, and therefore I can only wholeheartedly recommend it to both fellow researchers of British history and politics as well as to the larger public. The book is written with great literary prowess, in an extremely clear and readable style, which furthermore adds to its value. Please allow me to also comment that I can hardly imagine a field of the humanities or of the social studies that would not benefit from witnessing the historical experiences of England. This being said I must conclude by thanking the author for this contribution, which is a further proof of the fact that Britain continues to enjoy a privileged status among Romanian scholars of the humanities and social sciences.

² I have to admit to compromising to this ideal in Costel Coroban, *Politică și alegeri în Anglia de la Glorioasa Revoluție la Marea Reformă 1688-1832*, Preface by Prof. Dr. Marian Cojoc, Iași, Editura Pim, 2010, and Costel Coroban, *Mișcarea iacobită din Marea Britanie 1688-1746*.