

and diplomacy. Code-breaking had an undeniable impact on military operations, but, before the 1996 releases, relatively little was known about Arlington Hall's work on foreign diplomatic traffic. Alvarez's surprising yet convincing conclusion is that the effect of this work was slight: The Allies' policy of unconditional surrender, combined with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's expectation that he could carry foreign leaders with him "through the exercise of will and persuasive charm," undercut the influence of signals intelligence in top policy circles.

Despite this admittedly disappointing conclusion, Alvarez tells a classic tale of secret agencies and intrigue. The army, bringing in some very unmilitary people to get the job done, emerges as a bureaucratic hero. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, it commissioned Alfred McCormack, a prominent New York lawyer with a tough legal mind, to shake up its intelligence system. McCormack created a new Special Branch within Arlington Hall to sift and analyze the code breakers' output and ensure that it at least reached top officials throughout the government. He filled the Special Branch with so many high-powered lawyers that people in the War Department began calling it the best law office in Washington.

In one of the book's most telling anecdotes, code breaker William Lutwiniak finds himself facing the prospect of being drafted after Pearl Harbor. His boss, Captain Harold Hayes, tells him to go to the army recruiting station and enlist. There, Lutwiniak is sworn in as a private and handed his orders: Report to Captain Harold Hayes for active duty. Back at Arlington Hall, Lutwiniak goes to see the captain, who promotes him on the spot to sergeant and tells him to get back to work and not to worry about basic training. There are lessons here for today's very bureaucratic intelligence bureaucracy.

—Stephen Budiansky

#### MEMOIR:

#### *My Life and Themes.*

By Conor Cruise O'Brien. Cooper Square. 460 pp. \$30

In an earlier age, Conor Cruise O'Brien would have been an ambassador for the Holy Roman Empire, or a Celtic princeling seeking adventure in the service of the Byzantines. As a diplomat with both the Irish foreign service and

the United Nations (including a harrowing period in the Congo as a close adviser to Dag Hammarskjöld during the 1960s), a university administrator in Ghana, a New York University professor during the student protests, a newspaper editor, and a legislator, O'Brien has participated in many of the major political debates of the last half-century. Along the way, he has written some two dozen books, including volumes on Edmund Burke, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Camus, Ireland, Israel, and the French Revolution. Now he takes as his subject his own extraordinary public life.

Nationalism and religion have been his abiding concerns, with roots running deep in his background and the tortuous history of Irish politics. His family had ties both to the United Kingdom, where his grandfather sat in the House of Commons, and to the quest for an independent Ireland, in which an uncle was killed. He recounts the family experiences that influenced his early thinking about "the Irish question," as well as his later, hands-on role in trying to deal with it: He served in the Dáil, the Irish legislature, and as a minister for the Labor government, rousing the ire of Sinn Fein more than once.

If some family connections pushed him toward Irish nationalism, his early rejection of Catholicism and his education at secular or Protestant schools made his way difficult in a country where politics and faith are tightly joined. This conflict sharpened when he began to express the view that those attempting to incorporate Northern Ireland were ignoring the wishes of its inhabitants and, in the process, echoing what the British had done in the first place.

Ireland looms large in this book, both in its own right and as a template for examining the connections between religion and politics. Unfortunately, the author never explains how his philosophy has developed. While he implies that he has been consistent, the liberal Conor Cruise O'Brien of 1961 is not the same man who now calls himself a Burkean, and who has devoted much of his recent work to defending the "moderate Enlightenment" against what he considers religious or political extremism. Had he given a fuller account of that intellectual evolution, coupled with this engrossing life, he would have more completely supplied the themes promised in the title.

—Gerald J. Russello