

**TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS** delivered by **PROFESSOR PATRICK FINNEGAN**, NUI, Galway on 26 June, 2009 on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **PÁDRAIC MACKERNAN**

In 1959, Pádraic MacKernan came to Galway from his native Limerick and commenced studies as an undergraduate in UCG. As well as formal courses in French and English leading to a BA honours degree in 1962 he was a notable contributor to the Dramatic Society and also the Literary and Debating Society, serving a term as its auditor. Important also, were the informal symposia in the Genoa Bar where Paddy's political skills were refined in the company of such luminaries-to-be, as Sean Duignan and the late Dick Walsh of the Irish Times. Another significant landmark was his college romance with Caitriona Gavin now his wife for more than four decades. Leaving Galway, Paris beckoned and Paddy taught in the Lycée Condorcet while pursuing his studies in the Sorbonne and the Bibliotheque National, which lead to the award of an honours MA by UCG in 1963.

Paddy entered the Diplomatic Service in 1964 and in the following year transferred to the United States where he served successively in the Consulates in Boston and New York and also at the United Nations. His early service in the United States coincided with the evolving crisis in Northern Ireland. Following the outbreak of serious violence in Derry and Belfast in August 1969, he participated in the composition of the Irish case when Dr. Patrick Hillery, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressed the United Nations Security Council. Again, after the tragic events of Bloody Sunday in Derry in January 1972 he accompanied Dr. Hillery to Washington and Ottawa to enlist the support of the United States and Canada to persuade the British Government to abjure the violence that had been employed in Derry.

In 1974 he returned to Dublin as Counsellor in the Political Division and was immediately involved in the development of Ireland's role in the European Economic Community and the evolution of European political cooperation. Ireland's influential role in European affairs was enhanced by the manner in which the Presidency of the Council of Ministers was conducted in 1975, 1979 and 1984. In succession to Noel Dorr, Paddy had been appointed Assistant Secretary and Political Director in 1980 and throughout his service in the Political Division he was engaged in a wide range of international negotiations including Arms Control and disarmament, the Arab-Israeli conflict and East-West security and co-operation.

Paddy's first appointment as Ambassador was to the United States and Mexico in 1985 and in that post his achievements have been widely acknowledged in diplomatic and political circles. He played a pivotal role in securing the support of Congress for the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 and the establishment of the International Fund for Ireland. He also orchestrated, in association with congressmen Brian Donnelly and Bruce Morrison, House Speaker Tip O'Neill and Senators Ted Kennedy and Alan Simpson, a systematic campaign of advocacy that regularised the status of undocumented Irish citizens in the United States. Throughout his service in the United States, Paddy supported educational and cultural co-operation between America and Ireland and he was especially active in promoting the work of the American Conference on Irish Studies.

Leaving America in 1991, Paddy was appointed Permanent Representative to the European Union and represented Ireland in the negotiations relating to the Maastricht Treaty, the Single European Act and the allocation of Structural Funds. Paddy returned to Dublin in 1995 as Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and during his tenure, oversaw the opening of more than twenty new missions in Europe, Latin America and Asia. He also directed the campaign for Ireland's election to the United Nations Security Council.

In 2001 Paddy embarked on his final appointment, as Ambassador to France.

In Paris he was notably successful in promoting Franco-Irish relations in the political, economic and cultural areas. As a member of the Board of Management, he supported the restoration of the historic Irish College and its transformation into the Irish Cultural Centre. The centre is now the flagship for Franco-Irish cultural activities. His achievements in France were recognised by the French Government when he was honoured as a Grand Officier de l'Ordre National du Merite.

During his diplomatic career Paddy has displayed courage and wisdom and his political judgements were delivered with erudition and wit. On one occasion a Minister for Foreign Affairs, not yet appreciating the social and political importance of the Galway Races, proposed a visit to Indonesia during the last week of July. Paddy's response suggested that the Minister was putting Djakarta before the horses. Paddy has maintained strong links with Galway and the University

during his busy professional career and he is a worthy member of that cohort of Galway graduates, Tadhg O'Sullivan, Noel Dorr, John Oliver Burke and Sean Ó hUigin, who have pursued distinguished diplomatic careers in the service of their country.

*Praehonorabilis cancellarie, totaque universitas:*

*Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittantur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.*