

CORVINUS GRADUATION CEREMONY 2011: 11 OCTOBER 2011

Very pleased to have been invited to be Chair of the Curatorium of the MBA programme of this distinguished University nearly 4 years ago. It has given me a privileged opportunity to witness the development of future leaders – i.e. you the graduating students!

Warmest congratulations to all the successful graduands here today. Tremendous achievement, particularly when students have somehow to combine their studies with busy, full time jobs. I am aware too of the pressure on families and friendships that part-time study can cause. May I also recognise those families and friends here today who have supported the graduands through thick and thin during their studies. You don't get the glory, but you have played an extremely important role in helping in the students' success.

In the course of your MBA, you the graduands will have met teachers with international reputations, speakers from cutting-edge corporations and a diverse and stimulating group of fellow-students. Hope you will have enjoyed your course, as well as benefiting from it professionally. It will have furnished you with flexible skills appropriate to a fast and ever-changing business environment.

And you will go out from here to be Ambassadors at large, to be diplomats for this University and for your countries. All of us are diplomats in a sense, in that we have to deal with other people, negotiate and communicate to achieve our ends. I happen to deal with these issues at an international level, however, as the British Ambassador to Hungary and therefore as the diplomat heading up an Embassy in Budapest. So I might be well placed to tell you what Ambassadors and diplomats are and what they do. Can they in fact be those godlike creatures who can apparently reduce beautiful women to quivering ecstasy by serving them Ferraro Rocher chocolates under the chandeliers?....

[There then followed a review, largely humorous, of diplomacy through the ages.]

I hope that gives you some pointers on how to be an Ambassador at large and the pitfalls that lie ahead of you. To the graduands, congratulations on your tremendous success. All the best in your future careers. It is a great thing to be an Ambassador at large for Corvinus University. And to the University itself, thank you for the opportunity to serve as Chairman of your MBA Curatorium. I leave Hungary at end-2011 for Ethiopia. I shall watch from afar the future development of this distinguished place of learning.