Collins strikes gold for his contribution to Europe

By NORMA PRENDIVILLE

THIS Friday, former Foreign Min-
ter Gerald Collins will become a
member of a very elite group when
he joins former Taoiseach Jack Lynch
and Garrett Fitzgerald as one of only
three Irishmen ever to be honoured
with a gold medal from the Founda-
tion for European Merit.

Mr Collins will be presented with
his award by the Prime Minister of
Luxembourg, Jacques Santer, at a
formal banquet and ceremony in
Luxembourg, along with Hans Diet-
rich Genscher, a former German For-
eign Minister who is being similarly
honoured.

Mr Collins was singled out by the
Foundation to receive the award pri-
narily because of his role in negoti-
ating the Maastricht Treaty and
because of his "outstanding leaders-
ship" during the Irish presidency of
the European Community.

According to the citation, his
effective management of the EC's
affairs during Ireland's presidency
"played a major role in securing a
decision to convene the intergovern-
mental conferences which resulted in
the Maastricht Treaty, in defining the
EC's policies concerning the col-
lapse of communism in Eastern
Europe and in adopting a record
level of Single European Market leg-
islation."

Speaking to the Limerick Leader
this week, Mr Collins said that the
award came as "quite a surprise" but
he was very pleased at the honour.
Of the work he had done which
has merited him the award, he said:
"I knew we had a very difficult
agenda comprised of very complex
subjects."

Issues like the stability of Europe,
the bringing into the European fold
of the additional 17 million or so
people from the former East Ger-
many, the reunification of Germany
itself, all had to be dealt with.
Mr Collins said he was optimis-
istic that the present difficulties in getting
the Maastricht Treaty ratified would
be overcome.

"I was satisfied that we had got
the best deal possible for Ireland," he
continued.

"Europe is our future," Mr Collins
stressed, "it is all our futures."
Mr Collins' wife, Hillary, will
travel with him to the award cere-
mony.