

***France Awards
TAG Chairman
Legion d'Honneur***

Transcript of speech made by Mr. Robert Mitterrand when awarding the Legion d'Honneur to Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh on July 18, 1985

Such a magnificent setting for such a wonderful ceremony, and guests as distinguished as those present certainly deserve an eloquent speech, and our friend Talal, who loves figures, has chosen an engineer to decorate him! So I will content myself, when talking about Talal, with saying what I think as an average French citizen.

On looking through Talal Abu-Ghazaleh's CV, I realized that he has done something (like) my eldest son, and I said to myself: "I'm not going to come up with a formal, conventional speech ... which would sound a bit cold. I'll proceed as if I were decorating my son; In that case, if I were doing it, I would make a purely spontaneous and sincere speech."

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, who was born in Jaffa, Palestine and who is a Jordanian citizen, wasn't yet 20 when he distinguished himself in the eyes of the Arab League among his fellow students, winning prizes and competitions amidst hundreds, maybe thousands of his classmates. He was not yet 30 when His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan awarded him the Decoration of Independence of his country. He was 40 when the State of Bahrain awarded him a decoration of I believe, an economic nature, called the Gold Mercury International Award for productive development and international cooperation.

After that, many other honors followed, especially in his field of professional activities.

But, to come to the subject of his profession, he started off at the University of Beirut by acquiring a very important diploma of the American University... he must have been around 22 at that time. Later on, he went into public accounting, as a start, and climbed within twelve years or so the ladder of success to a very very brilliant career taking him in such a short time to the presidency of organizations, subsidiaries of the biggest specialized companies in that field, particularly in America. And we found him, twelve years later... let me work it out: $22+12=$ about 34 ... at that age ..

co-chairman of various big American companies in the Arab countries, and then, at 34, he said to himself: "Maybe I'll set up my own business after all", and with his legendary optimism, — his world famous smile, I would say, and with courage, he founded a company bearing his name. He said: "This is an optimistic thing to do". If you give your name to a company it implies expectations of success .. or else you wouldn't put your name at stake, especially when there is a lot of competition.

He succeeded in creating a group of companies of which he is president of the holding firm with offices in Washington, Paris and Zurich. He managed to create the biggest Arab enterprise or Arab group throughout all those countries specializing in public accounting, business management consultancy, financial consultancy and trademark and patent protection. These activities are quite remarkable, yet at the same time, while managing these companies — I don't know how he succeeded in doing so, because I know what it takes — was able to compile an accountancy dictionary. He founded an association called the ARAB SOCIETY OF CERTIFIED ACCOUNTANTS, which all his colleagues from the Arab countries supported, electing him unanimously as its President. That gives an idea of the fame and importance he has acquired in this field.

As regards France, first of all, on the economic side, he has special merit. He recognized that in France, as is not usually known, there is an unexpected mine of medium-size — or even small companies which have high quality production capabilities and men of great competence. And thanks to his ability to judge companies — that is part of his job, and on the other hand, if he has succeeded, it's because he knows how to choose his men, of course — his valuation of these French companies was certainly an excellent one. Consequently, he founded in France an organization which guides these medium-size or small companies towards foreign markets, which hitherto they had trouble reaching due to the limited resources at their disposal. For this, France is grateful to him and I would say that this is the big merit which we are here today to recognize.

In addition, between him and France there is a sentimental and cultural attachment: he loves France and the French love him. He came to live in France in a little paradise that I advise you to discover one day some 35 kilometers west of Paris; look for it ... you'll see, it's very pleasant, where he has hidden a lady who is here today: her name is Nuha, who has been for the last 22 years, his closest colleague, his best advisor, and at the same time his