

The Personal Traits of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani through the Book of Mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba: "*Dialogue with the Self and with Others* "

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Abstract:

This study explores the personal traits of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani as portrayed by Mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba in *Dialogue with the Self and with Others*. To ensure the credibility of this testimony, the research first outlines Jeghaba's life and militant career, then highlights the book's value as a primary source for the history of the Algerian Revolution, before turning to Chaabani's biography. The analysis emphasizes Chaabani's personal qualities as reflected in Jeghaba's accounts, which offer a deep understanding of his character through detailed narratives. These testimonies reveal key traits courage, firmness, wisdom, commitment to national principles, and a strong sense of responsibility that defined Chaabani's leadership and enabled him to command the Sixth Wilaya. The study concludes that Chaabani embodied the values of the Liberation Revolution, standing as a devoted national figure, a model of youthful militancy, and an enduring example for his contemporaries.

Keywords: Personal Traits; Mohamed Chaabani; Mohamed Jeghaba; Book; Dialogue with the Self and with Others.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Algerian historical sources on the Sixth Historical Wilaya (the Sahara) highlight several key militant figures who interacted with Colonel Mohamed Chaabani and reflected on his personality and qualities. His memory remains vivid and his influence profound. Among these sources, the memoirs of Mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba, presented in ***"Dialogue with the Self and with Others,"*** stand out as a valuable testimony. Accordingly, we raise the following research question : How did the testimony of the mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba in his book ***"Dialogue with the Self and with Others"*** reflect the personal traits of Colonel Chaabani? To answer this question, the content of the paper is divided into the following themes: **01.** The biography and militant career of the Mohamed Jeghaba/ **02.** An overview of the book *Dialogue with the Self and with Others* and its importance as a historical source / **03.** The key landmarks in the life of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani / **04.** The personal traits of Colonel Chaabani as reflected in Mohamed Jeghaba's book.

This study relies on the descriptive historical method in order to trace the various events related to the lives of both Colonel Chaabani and the mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba, drawing on relevant sources and references. It also makes use of the analytical method to uncover the dimensions of the different personal traits of Colonel Chaabani, which Jeghaba highlighted in his book.

2. The biography and militant career of the mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba

Mohamed Jeghaba was born on November 5, 1935, in El Kantara, (Biskra). He began his schooling with the outbreak of the Second World War, and between 1935 and 1945 he attended a free school, which provided an environment more suitable for learning than the French schools steeped in the ideas of Jules Ferry. After the events of May 8, 1945, the young Mohamed Jeghaba quickly matured into an adolescent with early intellectual awareness (Jeghaba, 2007, pp. 34-35). He joined the ranks of the Liberation Revolution in its early stages, in the spring of 1955, with his activities initially concentrated on the eastern front. He later moved to the western part of the country, where he served as an officer in the Eighth Zone of the Fifth Wilaya in southwestern Algeria. There, he carried out several dangerous military operations (Khalifi, 2015, p. 98).

Before being arrested and imprisoned in both Mechria and Hennine Bourzeg (Aïn Dhra). Immediately after his release, he joined the leadership of the Sixth Wilaya, where he worked to reorganize it and played a major role in thwarting French plans in the region (Belkacemi et al, (n.d.), p. 320). He continued the struggle within the ranks of the National Liberation Army until the restoration of national sovereignty in 1962. Among his most notable missions was the one that sent him to the South to establish revolutionary cells (Kedida, 2022, p. 147).

3. An overview of the book *Dialogue with the Self and with Others* and its importance as a historical source.

3.1 Presentation of the Book “*Dialogue with the Self and with Others*”

Mohamed Jeghaba’s book “*Dialogue with the Self and with Others*” can be regarded as a memoir, for which he chose a distinctive title, even though the author stated at the beginning of the book that it was not a personal autobiography, despite the fact that its main and subtitle might suggest otherwise. According to him, the titles merely expressed his intention to describe his position within the historical process, and he considered himself more an active observer than a mere observing actor. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 21)

The book was published by Dar Houma in Algiers in 2007 in three medium-sized volumes. The first volume contains 404 pages, the second 445 pages, and the third 518 pages. The cover of each volume features white at the top and light green at the bottom, with a central illustrative image. The first volume displays a picture of the Kantara region, the second features the Hoggar Mountains, and the third includes a photograph of notable figures-Mohamed Jeggaba, Houari Boumediene, Ahmed Ben Bella, and Mohamed Chaabani. As for the back cover of all three volumes, it includes a photograph of Mujahid Mohamed Jeggaba positioned at the far upper right, accompanied by a detailed explanation of the meaning of the book’s title, “*Dialogue with the Self and with Others.*”

The author chose a main title for all three volumes, “*Dialogue with the Self and with Others*”, and complemented it with a subtitle specific to each volume.

The first volume’s subtitle is “*After Doubt Comes Certainty*”, the second “*Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times*”, and the third “*Tides, Islands,*

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and Aspirations". Clearly, a reader will inevitably sense from these titles that the author intended to distinguish between the three volumes. The author attempted to establish a distinct plan for each volume, through which he organized his thoughts-efforts he diligently gathered over many years. He employed a method that facilitated recalling information, namely the dialogue technique he used with Mr. "Bachir Rouabhia", whose name appears on the book's cover directly beneath the author's. The structure adopted in each volume consisted of a preface, an introduction, and a general opening, followed by nine chapters, conclusions, and appendices. The appendices primarily comprised images, each carefully annotated.

Mohamed Jeghaba provided a definition of the memoir in the preface to the first volume, stating: *"This book should not be regarded as a historical work, and that is for several reasons, even though its first volume contains extensive excerpts concerning the history of a specific region during a defined historical period. The foremost reason is that neither the author nor his interlocutor are specialists in history, bearing in mind that history has its own rules, tools, and methods which only specialists are able to use properly."* (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 21)

Regarding this book, Mohamed Jeghaba states that it is a testimony concerning a distinctive and complex historical period, which may serve as raw material with respect to certain aspects of history. He noted that the work is primarily addressed to the generations that came after the Liberation Revolution, with the aim of enabling them to understand and internalize their past, so that they may appreciate our efforts, judge them-whether positively or negatively-and compare them with their present and future achievements. (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 13)

The project of this book was thus conceived and formulated in the form of an interview between the author, Mohamed Jeghaba, and Mr. Bachir Rouabhia (a university professor interested in Algerian history, whom Mohamed Jeghaba describes as a serious reader, highly inquisitive, constantly engaged in research and investigation, and also a friend of the author). It is evident that each of them belongs to a different generation. (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 14)

The interview method was adopted, as it allows, as much as possible, for events to be placed within their proper context through a dual-structured

framework of reading and analysis both from the interviewer and the interviewee. In this way, all the interrelated elements can be highlighted. (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 15)

- **The Purpose of Writing the Book:** In the preface to the first volume of the book, Professor Rouabhia notes that this work aims to make a modest contribution to the process of documenting an important period in Algeria's history. In addition, the author, through presenting his ideas, seeks to provoke his fellow comrades-in-arms and members of his generation, urging them to venture into the field of writing history just as they once ventured into the field of struggle. (Jeghaba, 2007, pp. 22,23)

3.2 The Significance of the Book : In the preface to the first volume of the book, Professor Bachir Rouabhia points out that in the year 2000 the project was modified, when he himself suggested to the author a book project about Mohamed Chaabani, the colonel and commander of the historic Sixth Wilaya. However, Mohamed Jeghaba, who was a close friend of Mohamed Chaabani, rejected this proposal, considering himself the least qualified to undertake such a task. He explained that many others among the officers of the Liberation Army who were still alive were more qualified, given that they had lived in continuous contact with him (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 19).

Anyone who reads and studies Mohamed Jeghaba's book in its three volumes will quickly realize its great significance, as it focuses on an important period of Algeria's contemporary history. The author lived through the pre-revolutionary era, the events of the Liberation Revolution, and the subsequent recovery of national sovereignty. During these crucial stages, many prominent and pivotal events in Algerian history took place. The author was entrusted with several missions under special circumstances, moving across various regions during the Revolution. He lived alongside and interacted with many prominent militant figures, which enabled him to convey to the reader a clear picture of the events he witnessed and the personalities he encountered, particularly the leaders of the Sixth Wilaya and others.

4. The key landmarks in the life of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani

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Mohamed Chaabani, known within his family circle as “*Taher*”, was born in 1934 according to his birth certificate, to parents *Hajj Mohamed Ben Chaabani* and *Zineb Bint El-Hajj Ibrahim Saifi*, in the commune of Oumache. (Masmoudi, 2009/2010, p. 47).

He began his early education at a very young age in the zawiya of the village of Oumache, which was administered by his father. At the age of six, his father sent him to the city of Biskra to pursue primary education. After several years, he traveled to the city of Constantine, where he began his studies at the Ibn Badis Institute. It appears that Mohamed Chaabani’s exposure, from an early age, to the intellectual and political climate leading up to the outbreak of the Liberation Revolution helped shape the broad outlines of his political and intellectual orientations. Among his role models were Sheikh Ben Badis, Ben Boulaïd,..., and others (Chahrit, 2017, p. 09). His upbringing, rooted in the principles of Islam, contributed to shaping his character with tolerance and good companionship. It was not surprising for him to possess such qualities, as his father was an imam and preacher in the village mosque of Oumache, while his mother, deeply imbued with authentic cultural values, used to recount to him stories of heroes and scholars (Masmoudi, 2009/2010, p. 53). The child Mohamed (*Taher*) grew into a young man whose heart was filled with faith and patience, drawing his strength from the sources of piety-the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger. He was also deeply convinced of the idea that the enemy could never be trusted, a lesson he derived from the massacres perpetrated by France against the Algerian people on May 8, 1945 (Masmoudi, 2009/2010, p. 53). Mohamed Chaabani was enthusiastic, from the very outbreak of the Revolution, about the military operations he heard of erupting here and there, particularly in the Aurès and Kabylia regions. In late 1955, he underwent an important test, when he carried out an armed sabotage operation against a road construction unit. As a result, the young man was accepted into the Third District of the First Wilaya, since the Sixth Wilaya had not yet been established at that time. From then on, he began to advance in rank and earn the trust of the responsible leaders (Chahrit, 2017, pp. 09-10).

After the establishment of the historic Sixth Wilaya (the Sahara) in 1958, the opportunity arose for Lieutenant Mohamed Chaabani to prove himself and demonstrate his abilities during one of the most intense phases of the war. On March 29, 1959, Si El Haouas, commander of the Sixth Wilaya, was martyred alongside Colonel Amirouche at Mount Thamer near the city of Bousaada. Three months after this tragic event, the officers of the Sixth Wilaya-particularly the commanders of the military zones-nominated Mohamed Chaabani to assume leadership of the Wilaya in succession to Si El Haouas. Although Chaabani hesitated for a moment, being only twenty-four years old at the time, he eventually accepted the position in July 1959 (Chahrit, 2017, p. 10).

It appears that Mohamed Chaabani possessed a distinctive military strategy in confronting the enemy, which relied on launching intensive attacks against its centers and installations. He specifically targeted everything connected to economic resources, while placing the Wilaya in a state of maximum alert. This was achieved through the intensification of guerrilla operations, the planting of mines, the setting of ambushes, and the execution of assaults. (Derouaz, 2009, p. 129). Accordingly, it can be said that during Mohamed Chaabani's leadership, the Sixth Wilaya witnessed a variety of military operations-battles, clashes, attacks, ambushes, and others-against the enemy, its positions, and its companies between 1959 and March 19, 1962 (Masmoudi, 2009/2010, p. 82).

Mohamed Chaabani confronted the Bellounis movement in the Battle of Al-Hamra at Mount Mimouna, in the Bou Saâda region, in April 1958 (National Organization of Mujahideen, 1983). Chaabani succeeded in countering this dangerous movement and ultimately dismantling it amid the internal conflicts that tore through its ranks. On July 14, 1958, Bellounis met his end, killed in action (Ben Zeroual, 2011–2012, p. 239).

Colonel Chaabani also confronted the Abdallah al-Salmi movement beginning in 1959, which grew in intensity by 1960. The movement spread and established its presence in several areas of the Sahara, including Ouled Djellal, Sidi Khaled, and Bou Saâda. (Jeghaba, 2007, p. 359). It should be noted that Wilaya VI had a well-structured and hierarchical administration, organized according to levels of responsibility-from municipal councils to *mousabilin* units, to secret offices, then to sections, districts, regions, and finally the Wilaya itself

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(National Organization of Mujahideen, 1983). Colonel Chaabani, as head of Wilaya VI, made education and rapid field training a top priority. (Derouaz E.-H. A., 2006, p. 163). Chaabani played a crucial role in the resistance across the vast Algerian South, particularly after the "Petroleum Revolution" and France's decision to separate the Sahara from the North. He passed away on September 3, 1964, at the age of 30 (Ould El Hocine, 2012, p. 223).

5. The personal traits of Colonel Chaabani as reflected in Mohamed Jeghaba's book.

The author Jeghaba speaks of his companions with great admiration, whether they were renowned leaders such as Ben Boulaïd, El-Houas, Si Ziane, and others of lesser fame, or even the unknown heroes, in view of the sacrifices and acts of bravery they had offered. Nevertheless, he reserved a special place for his comrade Chaabani, frequently pointing to the similarities and identical qualities between Chaabani and Mostefa Ben Boulaïd, whom Jeghaba regarded as the greatest among the great leaders, describing him as the "reference" (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times)*, 2007, p. 26) In this regard, he states: *"...In reality, I cannot establish preferences among those remarkable men, beginning with Commander Menani and ending with the General Staff in 1962, passing through the likes of Si El-Houas, Chaabani, Lotfi, Abdelghani, Saouli, Randi, Rouini, Rouina, and many others."* He adds: *"You may choose whomever you like from this brief list, but you will never be able to rank them according to degrees of merit. And, of course, I will not include in this list that towering figure, Ben Boulaïd, the reference"* (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times)*, 2007, p. 374)

Before Jeghaba revealed the name of Chaabani in his dialogue with Mr. Bachir Rouabhia, he referred to him as "the student" without mentioning his real name, stating: *"Let us call him the student, and that is enough ... This designation, in fact, is an expression of a social status, and at the same time a pleasant epithet"*. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 180)

Mohamed Jeghaba describes his relationship with Mohamed Chaabani as growing stronger over time, through discussions that sometimes took on a philosophical and reflective character. From these exchanges, Jeghaba came to know that Chaabani had pursued his studies first in a Qur'anic school and then in a free Arabic school, and that he was the descendant of a respected family deeply imbued with patriotic spirit (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 180). Thus, through his book, the Mohamed Jeghaba provides us with a comprehensive portrayal that reflects the multiple dimensions of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani's character, including his leadership, intellectual, and military qualities, while not neglecting the moral and human aspects of his personality.

5.1 The Ethical Dimension : The ethical dimension constitutes a fundamental pillar of Colonel Chaabani's character, as he adhered to a set of religious and national values that were reflected in his behavior and in his relations with his companions.

Mohamed Jeghaba recounts that, after spending time with the student Chaabani, he discovered that those noble traits and virtuous qualities did not stem from a kind of ostentatious asceticism or superficial austerity, such as could be observed among some students of the institute or certain zawiya circles. Rather, Chaabani was a type of young man who was open-minded, fond of life, yet endowed with sound judgment, critical thinking, and a balanced temperament. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 182). As a close companion of Mohamed Chaabani, Jeghaba described him as a person who consistently maintained his composure and calmness, traits that characterized his personal temperament and never changed. Even after rising through the ranks of responsibility, Chaabani did not abandon his noble qualities; on the contrary, he gained greater wisdom, acumen, and insight. He eventually became a competent leader, respected and obeyed, under whose command served organized and disciplined groups of soldiers who had freely and voluntarily joined the ranks of the National Liberation Army. Thus, Mohamed Chaabani came to embody the model of the resistant fighter who assimilated lessons and acquired experience under the guidance of one of the leaders who established and supervised the organization of the Sixth Wilaya. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 179)

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In his description of Colonel Mohamed Chaabani, Mohamed Jeghaba states: *"Mohamed Chaabani was simple in appearance, ascetic in pleasures... two qualities that reflected human dignity, as well as moral and spiritual elevation. He possessed a determination that accepted no compromise in the service of the national cause"* (Jeghaba, ...And What Never Crossed a Human Mind, 1997, p. 118) Jeghaba further adds: *"Dignity, elevation, and determination...these were the qualities that qualified Chaabani to succeed Si El-Houas and Omar Idriss at the head of the Sixth Wilaya."* (Jeghaba, ...And What Never Crossed a Human Mind, 1997, p. 118)

Regarding good companionship and sincerity, Mohamed Jeghaba recounts an incident when he was summoned by Si El Haouès, who informed him of a decision to assign him a very sensitive and risky mission-namely, opening a new front in the vast southern region. Si El Haouès told him that everything was already prepared for its implementation. Jeghaba was astonished by the precise instructions, which he had never imagined would be presented with such a high level of detail. He describes this as an exceptional and unexpected meeting with Si El Haouès. Afterward, Chaabani welcomed him with a broad smile mixed with friendly banter, which, according to Jeghaba, was prompted by the signs of astonishment and surprise evident on his face. Chaabani said to him: *"You may refuse if you are unwilling to undertake this mission..."* Jeghaba quickly interrupted, saying: *"Do you really think so? Refuse to comply with an order or to carry out a mission issued by Si El Haouès? Is that even conceivable?"* Following this exchange, Jeghaba recalls: *"An immense, indescribable joy appeared on Chaabani's face, reflecting his pride in seeing his comrade accept such a noble mission."* (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, pp. 190-191)

5.2 The Intellectual and Political Dimension: Regarding his education, Jeghaba states: "He enrolled at the renowned Ibn Badis Institute, which at that time was regarded as a distinguished fortress of knowledge and learning. The Institute, in particular, was a reference point whose high social and cultural standing was beyond question". According to Jeghaba, it was this noble social and cultural environment that prepared him to play a prominent role in organizing the region,

especially after the martyrdom of the official appointed by the Soummam Conference and in the wake of the crisis experienced by the Sixth Wilaya. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 180)

Regarding Mohamed Chaabani's joining of the Liberation Revolution, Mohamed Jeghaba comments: "Since Mohamed Chaabani graduated from the Ibn Badis Institute in the capital of Eastern Algeria, and mingled with the elite of the political class and the intellectuals of the region, it was impossible for him to ignore these fundamental factors-especially because he had lived with deep anguish the events of 20 August 1955. In fact, the actions of the students in May 1956 were nothing but a direct consequence of the events of August 1955, and in turn, a concrete embodiment of the November 1st Appeal. It can thus be said that all those occasions ignited a vibrant dynamism in the body of the Revolution, and it was inconceivable for the students to remain idle in the face of the liberation movement's momentum and the occupier's tyranny" (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 182). Jeghaba further adds: "After the student (referring to Chaabani) returned to his birthplace in Ouled Moussa, he discovered with great admiration that the seeds of the Revolution were not confined to the major urban centers of the North, but that civil organizational cells were also present in smaller towns and villages. The task, therefore, was essentially a matter of consolidating these structures and adapting them to the requirements of the armed struggle and the particularities of the region. It was in this context that the student's (Chaabani's) activity flourished, and he excelled in his efforts to reach out to people and acquaint them with developments, demonstrating in all this the remarkable intelligence and insight with which he was endowed". (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 182)

During the period that Algeria experienced after the ceasefire, and after a time of absence between the two men, Mohamed Jeghaba states: "Today I find him more wise, moderate, and calm-as if these qualities knew no limits. More than that, his experience had given him greater focus. He listened to the opinions of others, including opposing views, with sacred respect, for he was, quite simply, democratic to the core. He had also become more discerning, giving every approach, every decision, and every action their true and proper dimensions while

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anticipating their outcomes-all without compromising, neglecting, or renouncing his principles, beliefs, or the demands of the moment. All these values and qualities he drew from the education and formation of the Ibn Badis Institute, whose teachings he embraced and internalized. Time itself could never erode or diminish them.” (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: Ebbs, Flows, and Aspirations, 2007, pp. 153-154)

5.3 The Leadership Dimension: Mohamed Jeghaba, in his book, points out that the Sixth Wilaya regained its stability only through a leader he described as exceptional, “Si El Haoues,” who, thanks to his strong personality, was able to overcome all difficulties. The void and deep rupture left by his death was subsequently healed with the emergence of another leader, whom Jeghaba described as great-namely, Mohamed Chaabani. (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times), 2007, p. 412)

In his view, the Sixth Wilaya did not experience its true breakthrough until the arrival of Colonel Chaabani, who was one of the graduates of the “free school.” According to Jeghaba, this in no way diminishes the honor, heroism, and integrity of the leaders who preceded him. He emphasized that Colonel Chaabani, Colonel Boumediene, and Colonel Lotfi, represented a generation of educated youth who astonishingly absorbed the social characteristics of the Algerian people, mastered the arts of combat. Consequently, Colonel Chaabani was one of the young men who made the Revolution (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, p. 156).

Mohamed Jeghaba recalls many moments from his journey, among them a discussion he had with Chaabani, in which he states: “... *I spoke with him about the living and combat conditions, and I voiced some criticisms regarding certain issues such as the long and exhausting marches before launching an armed operation, which would drain our strength when the decisive moment arrived. I also criticized the occasional lack of preparation, attributing it either to inexperience or to the zeal of our comrades and some of our leaders. At that moment, the student (referring to Chaabani) would assume the role of the perceptive and insightful political commissar, speaking out clearly whenever and wherever he wished. He knew how to win the approval of his comrades, even if it*

required issuing orders in a firm and stern tone.” (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, p. 183)

Regarding the activities undertaken and the responsibilities assumed by Chaabani, Jeghaba stating: “Our group was composed of mujahideen who came from various social backgrounds, and within it was a nucleus of educated youth entrusted with the tasks of recruitment, awareness-raising, and guidance. These tasks included reading, drafting, and distributing leaflets and directives, as well as explaining the meaning of certain events to the fighters and the population, etc. The student (referring to Mohamed Chaabani) carried out this mission with such remarkable efficiency that the ‘official’ political commissar proposed appointing him formally to this position, one for which he was fully qualified. Chaabani immediately accepted the proposal. From that moment, the student (Mohamed Chaabani) became the true driving force of the group, taking on these responsibilities in addition to performing secretarial duties. He took the initiative to organize a genuine information cell, which eventually led the political commissar to request a transfer to another area. That was practically the only change within our group, until the time came to organize the Sixth Wilaya following the Soummam Conference” (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, pp. 183-184) This change, Jeghaba notes, marked the beginning of a relationship with Chaabani that grew somewhat distant, if not rare (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, p. 184).

In fact, Mohamed Chaabani managed to impose himself in the field, according to Mohamed Jeghaba, thanks to his strong personality, moral integrity, and intellectual qualities. All of this enabled him to contribute to unraveling the threads of the crisis that struck the Sixth Wilaya, and consequently to rectifying its situation. According to Jeghaba, Mohamed Chaabani was a man of thought and action; his word was listened to and his person respected and esteemed, because he had demonstrated in many battles and clashes that he was indeed a true leader. He was renowned for his sound judgment and calm temperament, handling thorny issues with exceptional skill and tact. Jeghaba adds that Chaabani was an outstanding leader who clearly distinguished between compromise by mutual consent and the abandonment of principles, and who excelled in combining leniency with firmness. All these qualities, in his view, were indispensable for

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reshaping and unifying the Sixth Wilaya within a social and cultural environment dominated by tribal and clan spirit. It was an environment in which the policy of division, fueled both by colonialism and the forces aligned with Messali, had taken root-forces that cunningly exploited the deep-seated patriotic sentiments of the population, despite their limited ability to discern clearly between genuine patriotism and its pretenders. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, pp. 185-186)

Regarding Chaabani's mission, Mohamed Jeghaba notes that thanks to his deep knowledge of the social fabric of this environment, Chaabani was able to distinguish between the good and the malicious, and succeeded in raising the population's awareness of the dangers of division promoted by the caïds and their collaborators. This was a task in which Chaabani achieved remarkable success, and it was the secret behind his rapid promotion up the hierarchy of responsibilities until he became the head of the Wilaya. His contribution to overcoming obstacles and solving problems was therefore worthy of the highest appreciation, particularly since the crisis was not limited to structural and organizational aspects. It was compounded by a convergence of social, economic, and military factors, which further aggravated the situation, such as the intensified military presence of the enemy in the region, the escalation of search-and-destroy operations, the shortage or even scarcity of weapons within the National Liberation Army, hunger and thirst, and the expulsion of inhabitants from various localities in the region by the French army. What made matters even more complex was the existence of internal divisions and rivalries, along with the intransigence of certain comrades-in-arms in their positions. (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 186)

Mohamed Jeghaba refers to numerous details about the personality of Colonel Chaabani and his various activities in the historic Wilaya VI (the Sahara). He viewed Chaabani's character with a distinctive perspective, one that left a lasting impression on his mind as the youngest colonel who managed to assume the responsibility of leadership at an early age. He states: '*... I concluded that it is not difficult to bear responsibility and that age is not of great importance ... for Chaabani, despite lacking any formal military training, was able to hold the*

highest position of responsibility at the Wilaya level, with the unanimous approval of his comrades.’ (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times), 2007, p. 341)

Mohamed Jeghaba then wonders about the secret behind Colonel Mohamed Chaabani’s ability to assume the highest rank of responsibility within the Wilaya. He answers: *“It was simply his noble conception of the meaning of responsibility, his profound devotion, and his unwavering faith in the national cause”* (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times), 2007, p. 341). Jeghaba further adds about Colonel Chaabani: *“...Until the very last moment of his life, he was deeply concerned with preserving the ideal image and the admiration that his comrades held for him, as well as that of all the inhabitants who knew him.”* (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times), 2007, p. 342)

Thus, according to Jeghaba, assuming responsibility in wartime could not always be explained solely by purely objective considerations. While experience may indeed be regarded as an important factor in assuming leadership, the weight of experience alone was not sufficient. Other subjective criteria could also exert undeniable influence. Jeghaba stresses that fulfilling the duties of responsibility was not enough; one had to bear its consequences as well (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others (Challenges of the Vast Space and Open Times), 2007, p. 343).

In his book, Jeghaba emphasizes that he personally came to appreciate the soundness and legitimacy of Chaabani’s unanimous appointment by his peers as leader of the Sixth Wilaya. He describes Chaabani’s wise and judicious decisions as being akin to *“fatwas”*-advisory rulings and moral judgments-to which people would refer and adhere in a manner beyond dispute (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: Ebbs, Flows, and Aspirations, 2007, p. 453).

5.4 Military Dimension: Mohamed Jeghaba was able to capture many situations in this regard, particularly the discussions that brought them together, which he describes as never-ending. Jeghaba states:“...They most often revolved around the most effective ways to consolidate the foundations of the Revolution in the region and deepen its roots among the population...Thus, when a member of a large

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family or *kheima* joined the ranks of the Revolution, this was seen as a pledge or guarantee of the entire family's alignment with the cause." (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, pp. 180-181)

Mohamed Jeghaba notes that Chaabani, who had previously struggled within the ranks of the civilian organization, fully understood the decisive weight of popular support in tipping the balance of the struggle. Like other free revolutionaries, he was deeply concerned about the potential consequences of large families not aligning with the Revolution. Jeghaba expresses this by stating: *"This far-sighted and strategic vision, based on the Revolution's openness to all, is precisely what enabled it to wage a dual struggle: a struggle against the enemy and a struggle to rally the entire population to the cause, thereby giving the War of National Liberation its truly popular character. The people's embrace of the Revolution was, in fact, the fundamental pillar of its hierarchical organization and the best guarantee of its success."* (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty, 2007, p. 181)

When Jeghaba met Colonel Chaabani again, during the period following the ceasefire, the meeting took place in (the Sixth Wilaya). Chaabani welcomed him with a special reception that reflected the strength of the friendship that had bound them for years. Jeghaba observed that the prevailing atmosphere was marked by seriousness and perseverance. Everyone was striving to fill the void left by the departure of the French colonial administration, with each officer entrusted with precise responsibilities. The lack of technical skills and administrative expertise in managing public affairs was compensated for by an unparalleled commitment and integrity. In addition, there was a clear sense of composure and self-restraint in the face of enormous challenges. Jeghaba confidently explained this situation by attributing it to the moral authority-legitimate, solid, and well-deserved-that Mohamed Chaabani enjoyed. As he put it: *"From then on, this leader became a reference to be emulated, founded on the exemplary nature of his life and conduct."* (Jeghaba, Dialogue with the Self and with Others: Ebbs, Flows, and Aspirations, 2007, pp. 452-453)

5.5 The Human Dimension : Jeghaba affirms that he shared great harmony and mutual understanding with Chaabani, more so than with any other members of the

group, despite occasional differences in viewpoints that they were always able to overcome. Jeghaba attributes this to the nature of their discussions, which were free of restrictions or oversight. He describes these exchanges as conversations that took place while carrying out their duties in their rear bases, during long marches as they moved from one area to another, and sometimes when interacting with nomadic or settled populations in a given liberated zone (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 183).

Jeghaba recalls the details of a meeting he had with Chaabani in 1956 in the region of Messaad, Regarding the meeting, Jeghaba recounts: *"He was surprised and pleased to see me, as he believed I was still in the Ziban region. It was a very happy encounter, but shortly thereafter I noticed a trace of sadness on his face and realized that he was preoccupied or troubled. After a short pause, he uttered words that froze the blood in my veins: (May God have mercy on the martyrs), and then followed with the sorrowful news: (Si Ziane and Si Ben Boulaïd have passed to the Almighty). The news struck like thunder, for I regarded Ben Boulaïd as the greatest man, without rival."* (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 187).

And Jeghaba adds: *"...When Chaabani noticed the emotions that had overtaken me, he immediately took the initiative to change the subject. Undoubtedly, the man had gained greater experience and wisdom in confronting the most difficult dilemmas. After we had reviewed the major issues and examined many topics from different angles, we turned to the fundamental problem concerning the days ahead, for every new situation, as he said, required a new strategy to face it. That became another opportunity to engage in lengthy discussions, during which each of us unconsciously tried to act as though he were an expert in military matters."* (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 187). And Mohamed Jeghaba comments on this, saying: *"It is clear that Chaabani had gained greater soundness of mind, experience, and composure in the face of the new challenges confronting the Revolution in general. This had a significant and decisive impact on the region, which, despite its latent national energies, was suffering from multifaceted hardships."* (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, pp. 187-188). Regarding the discussions between Mohamed Jeghaba and Chaabani, Jeghaba describes them as a form of "revolutionary

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romanticism,” where, according to him, these discussions became: *“a state resembling an intellectual storm, producing new ideas that projected the present onto the future, and a philosophical theorizing in which our desires and dreams were more evident than the reality before us.”* Jeghaba explains this with wonder, asking the question: *“Isn’t the Revolution a dream before it turns into reality, especially for the youth?”* (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: After Doubt Comes Certainty*, 2007, p. 188)

Mohamed Jeghaba mentions elsewhere, saying: *“Chaabani was at the forefront of those who openly expressed their personal convictions with deep faith... he had no alternative or choice... we were living in a world of values and higher ideals... and with this sense, Mohamed Chaabani sought to embody the national character in his private life and in the reality of his broader environment.”* (Jeghaba, *...And What Never Crossed a Human Mind*, 1997, p. 116)

Supporting Jeghaba’s testimony in this context, the mujahid Medeni mentions in his memoirs an incident that brought him together with Colonel Chaabani during the second week of July 1960. Chaabani requested a private meeting with him, which lasted for more than an hour. During the meeting, he inquired about the armies, leadership, and organizations present at the borders, as well as all types of past and current activities. Bejaoui Medeni provided him with all the information he knew about the army’s situation at the borders, from late 1957 until his departure from Tunisian territory at the beginning of 1960. He recalls informing him about all the problems among the leaders, as well as issues related to armaments, organization, and more (Bejaoui, 2012, p. 229).

Bejaoui Medeni says: *“...We parted ways at night, and the following morning, Si Mohamed Chaabani summoned me again in the presence of some officials. I approached him, and he ordered me to put down my rifle and my cartridge belt and return to my place. After an hour or more, he summoned me again. When I reached him, I greeted him and he said: ‘Sit... Do you know why I ordered you to put down your weapon?’ I replied: ‘I do not know.’ He said verbatim: ‘Nothing, except that the words I heard from you last night—if these people heard them, I would remain alone with you on this mountain. For we,*

inside, study what we say to the mujahideen. When we speak about the state, we say: we have a strong state, equipped with advanced weapons of all kinds... indeed, stronger than France in war, with precise organization and exceptional capacity for creative revolutionary management...' At the end of our conversation, he said to me: 'Take your weapon¹.' So I took it and returned to my place, deeply appreciating the valuable words I had heard" (Bejaoui, 2012, p. 230)

When you read all the expressions with which Mohamed Jeghaba described his friend, Colonel Mohamed Chaabani-expressions he never hesitated to repeat and clarify each time-you might feel that the language is exaggerated, almost as if he is glorifying Chaabani's character. Mohamed Jeghaba himself answers this by saying that words are truly incapable of fully conveying the truth and its brilliance (Jeghaba, *Dialogue with the Self and with Others: Ebbs, Flows, and Aspirations*, 2007, p. 454). This points to the fact that this personality was extraordinary in every respect-a character endowed by God with unique qualities that placed him within the leadership hierarchy of the Sixth Wilaya at the right moment, where he performed admirably.

6. CONCLUSION : In conclusion, it can be said that the book offers a vivid testimony by Mohamed Jeghaba about the environment and roots of the various traits that distinguished Colonel Chaabani. Jeghaba recounts his encounters with Chaabani with affection, admiration, and enthusiasm, narrating the situations they shared and employing expressions that describe this personality with depth and precision. The value of this testimony lies in the authority of its narrator, Mujahid Mohamed Jeghaba, who was close to Chaabani, making his account indispensable

¹ This incident illustrates Colonel Chaabani's leadership qualities, as he combined firmness with wisdom in his actions. The episode reveals the humane and judicious dimension of his character in leadership. He was able to balance military discipline with a keen awareness of the impact of the words he heard from the Bejaoui Medeni on the morale of the fighters. By first taking away his weapon, he asserted his authority, then returned it after clarifying his perspective. Moreover, through his approach, he built trust between himself and the mujahid, thereby enhancing respect and loyalty. As a result, Bejaoui Medeni emerged from this encounter with greater admiration and esteem for the leader.

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in any study of Chaabani's character and struggle. The traits that defined Mohamed Chaabani were essentially leadership qualities that qualified him to head the Sixth Wilaya. He was a sincere national figure who worked tirelessly to embody and realize the principles of the Liberation Revolution.

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