

CHAPTER 8

Ayatollah Khomeini: The Theologian of Discontent

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Prompte et sincere in opere Domini. The Latin motto on Calvin's seal reads, "Promptly and sincerely in the work of the Lord."¹ If Calvin's days long ago demanded such exacting sincerities from a man of God that would make a coward of all lesser mortals, nowadays, in the disenchantments of all (abandoned) god-terms reigning no longer supreme, who else can have the courage of his belated beliefs? Politics is, today as ever, the last bastion of beliefs that once engaged the most private pieties of otherwise perfectly public creatures. Across cultures and centuries, whether in Geneva of the sixteenth century or in Tehran of the twentieth, political terms seem to be the only convincing language to appropriate the public virtues of an otherwise skeptical multitude—knowing not beyond the compelling mandates of bread and dignity. In Geneva or in Tehran, there are no limits to boundaries of political mandates, realms of revolutionary movements, when a Calvin has the power of his theological convictions. The price of politics for one's theology of discontent can be as high as it is exacting. For all his moral convictions, and for all his political rectitude, Calvin of Geneva has endured the fair judgment of history. Other Calvins, of Geneva or of Tehran, can only wait for theirs: "Prejudice and admiration alike have blundered. He was no paragon with the mind of an archangel, nor was he a finished Saint. Nor yet was he a malicious and inhuman tyrant, but, rather, a highly gifted and unreservedly dedicated man, whose moral greatness was marred by serious defects. . . . Something must be allowed to a man harrassed, afflicted, and overwrought as he habitually was."²

Early Life and Scholastic Learning

Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini was born on Wednesday, 24 September 1902, in the small village of Khomein some sixty miles south of Tehran. His

grandfather, Sayyid Ahmad, had moved from Najaf in Iraq to Khomein and married and settled there. He was survived by two children: a son, Sayyid Mostafa, and a daughter, Sahibeh. Sayyid Mostafa married Hajar, the daughter of a distinguished local cleric. Three sons and three daughters were born to them. Sayyid Ruhollah was the youngest son. Sayyid Mostafa was killed sometime in February 1903, when his youngest son, Ruhollah, was less than six months old. Three women became the primary caretakers of Khomeini throughout his childhood: his mother Hajar, his paternal aunt Sahibeh, and a nurse called Naneh Khavar. Khomeini's aunt Sahibeh is noted as having been a particularly distinguished and strong-willed lady. In 1917, at the age of fifteen, Khomeini lost both his mother and his aunt, at which point his older brother Sayyid Morteza (Ayatollah Pasandideh) took charge of his upbringing.³

Khomeini's early education took place in his hometown of Khomein, where he studied under a number of local teachers and seminarians, including his own elder brother Ayatollah Pasandideh. In 1919, at the age of seventeen, he left Khomein for Arak, where he began his preliminary and advanced scholastic studies under the eminent jurist Ayatollah Shaykh Abdolkarim Ha'eri Yazdi. One year later, in 1920, Ayatollah Ha'eri was asked to come to Qom and establish that city's seminary as a leading center of scholastic learning in the Shi'i world. Khomeini followed his distinguished teacher and continued his advanced studies in Islamic jurisprudence. By 1926 he had completed his studies of the canonical sources of Shi'i law. When Ayatollah Ha'eri died in 1936, the thirty-four-year-old Khomeini had completed his most advanced studies. Along his juridical studies, he was particularly attracted to ascetic exercises and philosophical learning.⁴

In 1929 Khomeini married the daughter of a distinguished cleric, Hajj Mirza Mohammad Thaqafi-e Tehrani. Two sons and three daughters were born to them. His oldest son, Hajj Sayyid Mostafa, who died in 1978, became a distinguished cleric in his own right. His younger son, Ahmad, became his closest companion during the revolutionary period.⁵

Khomeini began his teaching career in 1928, before he was twenty-seven years old. His primary interest in teaching was in Islamic mysticism and philosophy. He was very selective in his group of students. Although he had taught preliminary courses in Shi'i jurisprudence throughout the 1930s, it was not until 1944 that he began to teach advanced courses in the canonical sources of Islamic law. His teaching in Islamic philosophy and mysticism was enriched by his long years of apprenticeship with such luminaries as Mirza Ali Akbar Yazdi, who was a student of Molla Hadi Sabzevari (d. 1872), the most distinguished Shi'i philosopher of the Qajar period. Among his other teachers were Mirza Aqa Javad Maleki Tabrizi (d.

1924), Sayyid Abolhasan Rafi'i Qazvini (d. 1975), and Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Shahabadi.⁶

Khomeini's writings, which cover a wide range of subjects in Shi'i jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy and mysticism, Persian poetry, and political polemics, began to appear in the late 1920s. Some twenty-five books and treatises have been identified among his writings.⁷ In *Mesbah al-Hedayeh* (1928), he demonstrated his unique mastery of the gnostic discourse. Many commentaries have been written on this text. In *Sharh Do'a' al-Sahar* (1930), he gave a philosophical and mystical interpretation, in Arabic prose and Persian poetry, to this famous prayer of the sixth Shi'i Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. His *Forty Traditions* includes commentaries on seven prophetic traditions on intellectual matters and thirty-three on ethical matters. His *Serr al-Salat* and *Adab al-Salat* provide mystical interpretations of the designated rituals in the course of the Muslim prayer. *Kashf al-Asrar* (1944) was Khomeini's sweeping attack against pseudosecular polemics against Shi'i beliefs and practices. He also wrote many short and long treatises on Shi'i jurisprudence, chief among which is *Tahrir al-Wasilah*. His *Towzih al-Masa'il* is a collection of his edicts on a variety of practical questions for his juridical constituency.⁸

The Historical Setup

Khomeini's early life and scholastic learning and writing coincided with the two crucial decades of the 1930s and 1940s and then extended into the formative decades of the 1950s and 1960s. The 1930s was a decade of grave political events in Iran. In 1936, Reza Shah ordered Iranian women unveiled, an event with the greatest symbolic significance for the religious establishment. The construction of the trans-Iranian railway in 1934 had signaled the dawn of a new era of technological avalanche that the clerical order always perceived with certain ambivalent hesitation. Established also in 1934 was the Tehran University, which, for a long time, constituted the most patent secular alternative to the traditional madrasah system. As the brutal murder of the Iranian poet Farrokhi Yazdi (1889–1939) signified, Reza Shah did not hesitate to punish severely those who dared to challenge his tyranny. When Sayyid Hasan Modarres died in 1934, Khomeini lost a clerical model whose political activism he greatly admired. A year later, in 1935, Reza Shah brutally suppressed a popular revolt in Mashhad, an atrocity that left an indelible mark on Khomeini's political consciousness. When his principal teacher and mentor, Ayatollah Ha'eri Yazdi, died in 1936, Khomeini was left with a relatively eminent position in the Qom clerical establishment and a highly charged political consciousness.

The Allied occupation of Iran in 1941 ushered in a new era of exposure

to new and renovating forces. On September 16, 1941, the reign of Reza Shah was brought to an abrupt end when he was forced by the Allied forces to pay for his flirtation with Hitler's Germany and abdicate in favor of his young crown prince Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Before the clerical order could determine precisely its responses to such grave changes, the Tudeh (Communist) Party was established in 1941 with the mightiest material and ideological force in modern Iranian history. This movement posed the most serious organizational and ideological threat to the Shi'i establishment.

That such great luminaries of the clerical order as Ayatollah Ha'eri or Ayatollah Borujerdi found themselves in active or passive support of the Pahlavi state was due in part to their perception of a common ideological foe in the Tudeh Party and all it stood for. When Reza Shah abdicated, Mohammad Reza Shah was a weakly installed head of state barely capable of claiming any authority and held in power chiefly by the collective will of the Allied forces and a series of old and wise politicians. By the end of the decade, he was once the target of an assassination attempt, and his chief minister was killed by a member of the radical Fada'ian-e Islam. Fada'ian-e Islam was also responsible for assassinating Sayyid Ahmad Kasravi on 11 March 1946. Kasravi's anticlerical statements had angered much of the religious establishment. Khomeini's *Kashf al-Asrar* (1944) was partially targetted against Kasravi and his supporters. However, this book was much more than a mere attack against certain anticlerical and anti-Shi'i sentiments and thoughts prevalent at the time. Khomeini used this occasion to criticize the tyrannical conditions created during the reign of Reza Shah. The relative freedom after the Allied occupation and the abdication of Reza Shah gave many people, including Khomeini, the opportunity to air long-held grievances against the oppressive measures of the old tyrant. But clearly evident in *Kashf al-Asrar* is the rising concern about the prevalence of secular ideas and the equally powerful preoccupations with "The West." Two years after Khomeini first published this book, Ayatollah Abolhasan Isfahani died in 1946, and the politically mute Ayatollah Borujerdi succeeded him.

In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s Ayatollah Borujerdi reigned supreme upon the highest seat of the Shi'i juridical establishment. His apolitical disposition was, in effect, translated into tacit support for the legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime. Throughout the 1950s, and in the shadow of Ayatollah Borujerdi, Khomeini continued to teach juridical, philosophical, and gnostic texts, attracting, as he did, quite a number of students, devotees, and juridical followers. But this was the decade of liberal democracy to test its viability in the Iranian political culture. Mohammad Mosaddeq successfully checked the Shah's unconstitutional urges towards authoritarianism and chased his megalomaniac ambitions out of the country. But in 1953, the CIA-sponsored American coup returned the monarch to Iran.

The post-Mosaddeq Pahlavi regime grew increasingly in its tyrannies, effectively eliminating both the liberal-democratic and the radical-revolutionary alternatives. Its attendance to "the Islamic Ideology" was quite a different matter.

The 1960s was the crucial decade in which Khomeini's political discourse assumed a particularly sharp bend towards revolutionary claims on Iranian political consciousness. To understand that revolutionary discourse is to reach for the most vital nerves of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

A "Philosopher King"

Although not a "king" in the specific sense of the word and not a "philosopher" according to the established standards of the Islamic discourses, Khomeini's was ultimately the idea of a "philosopher king" in the platonic understanding of the term. As for Plato, "justice" was Khomeini's principal political concern. The Iranians had been wronged. Their just due had to be given to them. This "giving to them" necessitated both leading them through a revolution and remaining in power to secure their this- and other-worldly salvation. With a remarkably Socratic argument, though minus his free spirit and his sense of irony, Khomeini maintained, and honestly believed, that people sometimes do not know what is good for them. Occasional untruth, or the platonic noble lie, is the tacit, yet most emphatic, assumption of a "philosopher king" who knows what is best for his subjects and sees to it that they are "rightly guided" to that end. What doctrinally augmented and ideologically solidified this Platonic assumption on Khomeini's part, with a long historical translation of the platonic ideal into the fabric of Islamic political philosophy, was the notion of "the perfect man" (*al-insan al-kamil*), whereby, in the mystical tradition, the path to spiritual perfection (rendered into political truth) is guided by a master (or *morshed*). Superseding the philosophical discourse by the mystical, Khomeini could only benefit from the enduring political implications of such powerful traits in Persian and Islamic intellectual history.

Phases in Khomeini's Ideas

The gradual development of Khomeini's revolutionary career and discourse may be divided into eight distinct phases, from his pre-1963 political engagements to the penultimate victory of the Revolution on 11 February 1979, to the final establishment of the Islamic Republic on 1 April 1979.

The first phase of Khomeini's revolutionary career began with his earliest political concerns, gradually leading to his first serious challenge to the Pahlavi regime. The June 1963 uprising marked the end of a sustained growth in Khomeini's political activities and, at the same time, inaugurated

the beginning of a new, more powerful, phase of his attempt to topple the Iranian monarch. In the revolutionary annals of modern Iranian history, 15 Khordad 1342 (5 June 1963)—which coincided with 12 Muharram 1383 (the most passionately charged month in the Shi'i calendar)—is recorded as the day on which a premonition of the 1979 Revolution should have given the Pahlavi state the initial sign of its coming problems.

The second phase of Khomeini's revolutionary development began with the massive street demonstrations on his behalf in June 1963 in various cities in Iran. From 4 June 1963 to 4 November 1964, when Khomeini was exiled to Turkey, the Pahlavi state saw one of the most serious challenges to its peacock throne. During those seventeen months the Iranian monarch and Ayatollah Khomeini mobilized all the material, ideological, and symbolic forces at their disposal to challenge each other's legitimacy or even existence. In this first round of their fight, the Iranian monarch emerged victorious and banished the Ayatollah to Turkey and then to Iraq.

The third phase of Khomeini's revolutionary career and discourse commences almost immediately upon his arrival in Turkey on 4 November 1964, continues throughout his active years in Iraq, and enters a new phase on 23 October 1977, when Khomeini's son, Hajj Aqa Mostafa, dies under what the Iranian apocryphal martyrology would later call "suspicious circumstances." While in Iraq, Khomeini would strengthen his ties with his followers inside Iran, develop new ideological and material coalitions with Iranian students abroad, and respond promptly and critically to events inside the country.

The political significance of the death of his son was further intensified in January 1978 by the appearance of a deprecating article written about Khomeini in one of Tehran's daily papers; the fourth phase of his ideological rhetoric then commenced, launching his revolutionary discourse into new directions. This period is brought to a dramatic end on 8 September 1978, "Black Friday," when the Imperial army opened fire on people demonstrating in Zhaleh Square in Tehran. Whatever the exact number of casualties, the compelling image of "Black Friday" marked a serious challenge to the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state. From October 1977 to September 1978, Khomeini mounted a relentless avalanche of attacks against the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state and, at the same time, celebrated the heroic deeds of the "oppressed Iranian masses."

The fifth phase of Khomeini's active and massive orchestration of revolutionary symbolics began on "Black Friday" and reached its most serious climax when he left Iraq for Paris on 6 October 1978. In this fateful month of September 1978, Khomeini took full advantage of the "Black Friday massacre."

From 6 October 1978, when Khomeini arrived in Neauphle-le-Château, to 1 February 1979, when he landed in Mehrabad airport in Tehran,

Khomeini launched, in the sixth phase of his elongated revolutionary career, the most devastating attacks against the ideological and material foundations of the Iranian monarchy. This time, aided by the massive, almost obsessive, coverage of the world media, he attained an audience beyond the measures of his imagination.

The seventh, penultimate, phase of Khomeini's revolutionary momentum occurred between 1 February, his arrival in Tehran, and 11 February 1979, "the ten days of the Morning Twilight," when he destroyed the last trembling remnants of the peacock throne. Through a series of speeches, he forced the shaky government of Shapour Bakhtiar (assassinated in 1991) to crumble and made the last prime minister of the deposed king run for his life.

The eighth and final phase of Khomeini's successful revolutionary movement began on 11 February 1979, when the Revolution attained its goal of toppling the Pahlavi state, and ended on 1 April 1979, when Khomeini outmaneuvered his secular rivals and established, on the ruins of the Pahlavi monarchy, the Islamic Republic, pure and simple.

The Significance of Khomeini's Writings in the Making of the Islamic Revolution

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the significance of Khomeini's declarations and writings in the final making of the Islamic Republic. The hypothetical question of "Would there have been a revolution without Khomeini?" has its pedagogic significance, despite its historical irrelevance. The man and his words are inseparable. If the man and the Revolution are also arguably inseparable, then we have before us the historical momentum invested in his revolutionary logic.

The centrality of Khomeini's writings in the making of the Islamic Revolution is perhaps best captured in an introduction to the official collection of his writings, written by Ali Khamenei, then the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, now its "leader" and successor to Khomeini. Subtracting the obvious, and perhaps inevitable, hyperbole of Khamenei's introduction, we are still left with a clear testimony of how Khomeini's writings were received and perceived during his long and active years of building a revolutionary rhetoric. "The Islamic Revolution," Khamenei testifies, "was begun presently with the far-reaching and not-to-be silenced cry of Imam Khomeini."⁹ Despite the presence and significance of many material conditions paving the way for the Revolution, without the unifying and catalytic voice of the aged revolutionary, there would probably not have been an "Islamic Revolution" as we have come to witness it unfold right before our eyes. The massive orchestration of forces by a police state had made the expression of any mode of political dissent almost impossible.

After the June 1963 uprising, which was effectively crushed, Khomeini's exile, first to Turkey in October 1964 and then to Iraq in November 1965, gave him a golden opportunity to say what others dared not utter.

During the two decades of the 1960s and 1970s, the Shah's ruthless police state, through a paralyzing mobilization of actual and intimidating terror, had increasingly made any form of political expression highly hazardous. During this period, of course, oppositional developments occurred in both ideological and political terms. The secular oppositions either assumed concealed symbolic language in poetry and literary prose or else were channelled through guerrilla attacks against the governmental targets. The result was that no effective political (revolutionary) discourse, in the most common sense of the term, could develop. The two extremities of concealed metaphors in prose or poetry or bullet sounds from machine guns could not be translated effectively into a coherent, sustained, and successful political discourse. But at the same time, the gradual formation of the religious political discourse inside Iran was much more effective. Shari'ati, Motahhari, and Taleqani, among others, each in his own particular way, contributed to the effective formation of a multifarious revolutionary discourse. All these revolutionary ideologues were operating within the context of state-controlled censorship. They could not forcefully and openly present or develop their ideas. The importance and strength of their writings were in their physical presence in Iran. Their weakness was in their inability to speak and write freely. Khomeini, however, wrote and spoke without any significant limitation. With his distance from Iran effectively covered by persistent reports he received from his devout followers inside the country, Khomeini enjoyed the freedom of speech afforded him especially by the hostility between the Iranian and Iraqi governments. As he began to write on specific issues afflicting Muslims in general and Iranian Muslims in particular, he became the spokesman and arbiter of "justice," the single most important concept in both Persian and Islamic political culture. Many indications and occasions of injustice in Iran, and indeed in the Muslim world at large, gave him ample opportunity to call for a reckoning with the tyrannies of the powers that be. As he became the spokesman for the cause of justice, he also assumed the authorial voice of speaking for Islam. His became the voice of authority through which "Islam" spoke. Alternative readings of Islam were either state-sponsored and thus rejected, Orientalist and thus discredited, or equally oppositional but from a slightly different angle, in which case assimilated. A rising banner on the sacred Islamic canopy, Khomeini's became the theological statement of revolt.

One crucial factor in making Khomeini a central figure in modern Iranian history and his writings a major voice in contemporary political discourse is the longevity of his life. Born in 1902, Khomeini was actively

present in the major political developments before, during, and after the Pahlavi reign. When Reza Shah came to power in 1927, Khomeini was a twenty-five-year-old cleric already politically conscious and active. Throughout Reza Shah's reign (1927–1941), the Allied occupation of Iran, the change of reign from Reza Shah to his son Mohammad Reza Shah, the tumultuous 1940s, and the massive orchestration of Marxist rhetoric by the Tudeh Party, the Mosaddeq era, the 1953 coup, all through his own ill-fated uprising in June 1963, his exile, the Shah's consolidation of power in the 1970s, and the final destruction of the monarchical machine in the 1978–79 period, through all these stages, Khomeini seems to have been there all along—as if from time immemorial in modern Iranian history. "The Revolution and Imam Khomeini are two inseparable phenomena."¹⁰ Khomeini's assessment could very well be made into a bona fide argument for the possibility of the Revolution.

The charismatic dimensions of his leadership rest on the dialectical growth of a unique relationship between Khomeini and his followers, whose texture and tone go beyond the ordinary authority assumed by a high-ranking Shi'i cleric. An ayatollah does indeed occupy the highest position of religious authority in a Shi'i community. The years of learning, the mystic of devotion, and the concomitant spiritual presence they all inevitably attain give the high-ranking Shi'i authorities a certain air of genuine respect and lasting loyalty. Yet the mode and intensity of devotion afforded Khomeini by his followers, particularly in moments leading to the revolutionary crescendo, drive deeper into the collective consciousness of his mass of followers. He grasped something deeply disturbing, something deeply moving, in the midst of the misery, actual and imaginary, that defined his followers. He turned that mute anger against indignity into an articulate voice of dissent and then, being an ayatollah, put God's stamp of approval on it.

Khomeini's significance—his mere presence, his words—ought to be considered in the context of his interaction with his followers. The unit of analysis must be his words and his followers' reaction to them. Certain events—the Shah granting diplomatic immunity to American diplomats, the Iranian army attacking the Feyziyyeh Seminary, the celebration of the 2,500 years of Persian monarchy, etc.—gave Khomeini ample excuse to air his grievances. These grievances, put into words, would assume canonical revolutionary status and, in turn, cause further actions, either by the Shah's government or by Khomeini's followers—in both cases one leading to the other.

Thus the best unit of analysis that contextualizes Khomeini's significance is "action-verbal response-action." The first action originates in something major or minor on the part of the beleaguered state. The verbal response is Khomeini's ideological statement against that action. And the second round

of action would be either retaliatory or compensatory policies on the side of the State or revolutionary demonstrations by Khomeini's followers. It is precisely through this chain of events that Khomeini mobilized the Islamic Revolution and brought it to fruition. And the Islamic Revolution, in turn, elevated him to the highest position of a mythical man, turning him into an (eternal) figure of metahistorical authority. "This was not but by God's grace, and by the grace of the vocal correspondence between the leader (Imam) and the led (*ommat*)."¹¹ There is in Khomeini's assessment the precise dialectic of reciprocity operative in making both the Revolution and its leader possible.

Khomeini's words began in his presence. And it is this presence that transforms his words into canonical commands for his close associates, as well as his removed followers. "Like Prophets," Khomeini offers in his close similitude, "in his being, [Khomeini] presents to the perspicacious observant, religion, politics, revolution, God, and the people, all at the same time. His revolt brings to mind the revolt of the divine Prophets."¹² Khomeini is seen by his followers as the organizer of the three most essential virtues missing from a monarchical tyranny.¹³ First, he has revived a religious consciousness without which men are thought to be trapped in a temporal mendacity; second, he has made it possible to believe again in a metaphysics of Ultimate Salvation, whereby limitations of rationality do not hinder a view of the eternal in man; third, he is considered to have enacted a popular epic, an odyssey of revolt for dignity.

Khomeini also points to three prominent features in Khomeini's writings:¹⁴ First, they are chiefly responsible for having moved the people to revolt; second, they have defined the direction and established the course of the revolutionary movement; third, Khomeini has recorded in these writings the historical unfolding of the Iranian Revolution. The most prominent feature of his writings, responsible in part for the massive response to his revolutionary call, is the simplicity of his prose and pronouncements. When he occasionally delivers a lecture on a juridical or mystical topic, it is quite evident that he is perfectly capable of a sophisticated technical prose. But in most of his writings, he speaks to the most common level of his audience. This makes him almost immediately accessible to a mass audience otherwise barred from political participation. Having reached them by a greatly simplified language, Khomeini gave his increasing audience an all but forgotten sense of dignity, a feeling of self-respect, a possibility of better days, and all that in familiar terms. In an almost fatalistic spirit, the Iranian masses seemed like an immobile heap of dead aspirations, lost causes, and betrayed dreams. Khomeini, simply and calmly, with the authority invested in his voice from time immemorial, breathed confidence into that shapeless body of fragmented selves, gave them dignity, and enabled them to see their forgotten dreams made permissible.

Whatever the exact number of casualties in the course of the Iranian Revolution, there is little doubt that this was a historic confrontation between the power of the spoken word and the might of the loaded machine guns. All Khomeini had at his disposal were his words. The king's military might, however hesitantly he could use it, proved useless next to Khomeini's poignantly spoken few words. As his words kept the flame of the revolutionary cause burning in the hearts of the multitude of his followers, Khomeini appealed equally to the revolutionary corps of a variety of ideological persuasions: the young seminarians in Qom and Mashhad, whether they were radical or conservative; students in American and European universities, whether they were secular or religious; and radical and liberal intellectuals in Tehran, whether they had ideological or practical agendas. Without ever compromising his position on Marxism and Communism, Khomeini was always able to bridge whatever gap, ideological or political, that developed among his religious and secular followers. Between the radical and traditional elements among his religious followers and between the liberal and radical elements among his secular followers, he was always able to strike a chord to the tune of which everyone felt compelled, or at least willing, to respond.

Khomeini never appears explicitly in his speeches and correspondences to claim any power or demand any obedience for his person. Even in *Velayat-e Faqih (The Authority of the Jurist)* he argues theoretically for the authority of the jurist without ever explicitly, or even implicitly, indicating that he personally ought to occupy that position. Throughout his correspondences and speeches, more emphatically, he assumes an advisory voice, one that gives guidance and issues warnings. It is only with unspoken words, unwritten declarations, merely by the assumption of an authorial voice for "what Islam truly is" that Khomeini generates in his audience a compelling obedience, a feeling ever so tacit that he is in charge, and that he is to be listened to.

Khomeini's was a cassette revolution. The number of people who could have actually heard his voice personally during the June 1963 uprising in Qom could not have been more than a few hundred. Once exiled to Najaf, his speeches and lectures were taped, and his fiery and defiant voice, smuggled easily into Iran, reached thousands of people. Student organizations in Europe also had his cassettes mailed to them, broadcasting his revolutionary zeal on European, American, and Canadian campuses.

A sense of expectation seems to have anticipated Khomeini's words in Iran whenever the king or his government was about to indulge in yet another pompous ceremony, engage in yet another totalitarian vanity, or experiment with yet another measure of political tyranny. Although the measure of actual expectation was limited to Khomeini's immediate constituency inside Iran and a smaller contingency of Muslim students abroad,

the propagation of his letters, cassette tapes, and pronouncements still reached many diverse groups who would not or could not necessarily come to hear him. While Khomeini's was not exactly a household name, during the pre-revolutionary years enough people knew and anticipated news from him to keep aflame the memory of the June 1963 uprising.

When in the early 1970s an ease in the otherwise hostile Iran-Iraq relations created the opportunity for some Shi'i Iranians to travel to Najaf for pilgrimage, more widespread news of Khomeini's appearance were circulated. Iranian pilgrims would report back to their friends and relatives that in the sacred precinct of Imam Ali's mausoleum they had seen this tall, extremely handsome, and rather radiant man to whom they were attracted unknowingly. Mesmerized by his appearance, the pilgrims would later recover to inquire who he was. They would, of course, be hesitant to approach and speak to Khomeini for fear of reprisals when they returned to Iran. But they would privately report their memorable encounter to friends and families.

A long history of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of the country, the most recent and the most humiliating of which was the CIA-sponsored coup of 1953, had made Iranians particularly responsive to calls of revolt against indications of external domination. Throughout his revolutionary career, Khomeini was always a defiant cry of revolt against foreigners. The term "foreigners" (*ajaneb*) became an outright label of damnation for the revolutionary master. Perhaps the most crucial historical moment of Khomeini's mass appeal occurred when he condemned the Iranian king for having granted Americans diplomatic immunity in Iran. This was portrayed, in the mass perspective of the public eye, as the greatest affront to Iranian sovereignty. Why should Americans not be subject to Iranian law if they commit a crime? This question and all its implications were driven deep into the Iranian heart by Khomeini's famous "anticapitulation" speech. Having failed to respond swiftly and appropriately to such pressing questions, the liberal and leftist forces lost shares of their ideological legitimacy for masses of the Iranian discontent. Having uttered his defiant words in those momentous days in 1964, Khomeini would reclaim, however tacitly, confidence and obedience from his public in the more necessary days of 1977-79.

Throughout the pre-revolutionary years—the closer to the Revolution the more pronounced—Khomeini used to his advantage two most unsuspecting symbolic charts: first, the Muslim calendar and, second, what can be called a constructed calendar of martyrdom. These two sets of revolutionary chronologies fed on each other's symbolic resources. The lunar Islamic (Shi'i) calendar is held together by a set of sacred days that, like lampposts, brighten and energize the annual cycle in preset intervals. Many observers have noticed the significance of Muharram, the first month in the

Islamic calendar, particularly for the Shi'i Muslims. But there are eleven more months to the year, each with its own relative significance. Throughout his years in exile, particularly between 1977 and 1979, Khomeini capitalized heavily on these sacred days, recalling the sacred memory of the occasion of a particular day—an Ashura, an Arba'iyin—and sending its energy in specific political directions. During such recollections of historical memories, there occurs, as it were, a contraction of time, a bridging of the chronological gap. Ahistoricity means nothing. Men, women, and children in the streets of Tehran, Shiraz, or Ahwaz see themselves *actually* in the desert of Karbala—vivid in their minds. Memories in such moments are expanded, emotions charged, sentiments of *gemeinschaft* extended beyond the limits of physicality and historicity. The physical pain inflicted in the course of ceremonial and dramaturgical self-flagellation, as well as those atemporal moments of nocturnal vigilance, chanting verses from dusk to dawn, compel and instill a pervasive sense of transhistorical inspiration: a feeling that the sun that shines, the trees that grow, and the water that flows are all parts of the same eternal cosmic order that was as valid and current when Ali was struck, when Hossein was martyred, and when you are physically crossing the street, passing the green light, reaching for a glass of water, or changing your colorful shirt for a black one "commemorating" the death of Imam Hossein.

With every major confrontation between the crowd and the army, no matter how few or how many the casualties, and with its concurrent registration of a cabalistic number of "martyrs," begins a second, this concocted, calendar. A cycle of "fortieth" would be set in motion whereby on the fortieth day of a bloody confrontation there would be, by Khomeini's call, a commemorative demonstration in the course of which further confrontations were bound to have happened; these new casualties, in turn, would be reclaimed forty days later in yet another demonstration. As this cycle perpetuates itself, the clear winner, no matter what the Shah would do, is Khomeini. If demonstrations were to be permitted, an unrealistic postulation given the king's nervous disposition, they would snowball out of control right in front of an American camera crew. If they were to be stopped, confrontations would ensue, bullets would be shot, bodies would fall, and the martyrological calendar would be prolonged.

As Khomeini set the agenda during the final months leading to the Revolution, he also uttered the final words, never before spoken. *Shah bayad beravad*. That "the king must go" was perhaps a possibility in many people's minds. But none was brought to utter the actual words. The umbilical cord to a history of monarchical memory was simply too strong for weaker wills. When Khomeini said, "the king must go," he set a new level of emotional courage, a sharper cut to the revolutionary discourse. Until then the very possibility, if not the inevitability, of the continuation

of the king's reign in his son defined the language, limited the horizons, and shortened the range of political possibilities in terms of which the revolutionary momentum could unfold. But when Khomeini made the pronouncement that "the king must go," he suddenly unleashed the deeply suppressed anger of a nation and opened a whole new passage of revolutionary possibility, pushing the momentum he had created into a faster and more furious pace. Khomeini cut the Iranians' umbilical cord to their monarchical history.

Once in Tehran, with Shahpour Bakhtiar still prime minister and the monarchy still there in theory, with one speech Khomeini threw the existing government into utter despair. The most memorable statement in that speech, delivered with devastating force at the Tehran cemetery, was a phrase that would enthrall the young revolutionaries in sheer ecstasy. *Man tu dahan-e in dowlat mizanam!* This was the collective voice of a deeply oppressed, deeply wronged, deeply expectant people: "I will slap this government in the face!"

To realize the thunderous impact of this phrase, we have to have experienced the deep fear and even deeper resentment that the reign of a tyrant persistently accumulates in the hearts and minds of his subjects. A tyrant, particularly when weak and characterless in front of foreigners and yet pompous and presuming with his own people, engenders deep senses of resentment and disgust that surface in every aspect of political engagement—revolutionary or otherwise. The mere presence of the Iranian monarch was an insult to his nation's sense of dignity. He would sit on the edge of the royal sofa, while the Secretary of (the American) State, Henry Kissinger, sat comfortably there. But he would look down at his own nation from the dizzying height of the peacock throne. That he was thrown hard from that height, to die in the deep indignity of an exiled nonentity, was but the historical judgment of a deeply hurt nation. The ecstasy of Khomeini's words, *man tu dahan-e in dowlat mizanam*, can be measured only in terms of the opposing sense of disgust that the rule of tyranny, inflicted by a phony dictator, perpetrates on the collective dignity of a nation.

The King and the Cleric

For all intents and purposes, Ayatollah Khomeini's June 1963 uprising seemed to have been crushed by the Iranian monarch. The massive demonstrations that had erupted in Qom, Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, Tabriz, Mashhad, and Isfahan subsided almost immediately when Khomeini was exiled to Turkey on 4 November 1964. After spending almost a year in Turkey, the Ayatollah went to Iraq in October 1965 for what appeared to be a permanent exile.¹⁵

The June 1963 uprising was predicated on a decade of rapid consolidation of power by the Pahlavi state. After the CIA-sponsored coup of 1953, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi returned to his throne still shaken by the Mosaddeq experience. But the successive and increasing American support, as well as the capable premierships of a number of Iranian prime ministers, consolidated the political and administrative foundations of the Pahlavi regime. Mosaddeq's trial and the execution of some of his ardent supporters, such as Hossein Fatimi in 1953, the ruthless suppression of the Tudeh (Communist) Party, and the execution of some of its most loyal members, such as Khosrow Ruzbeh in 1957, established the Pahlavi state as the sole claimant to the Iranian political agenda.

Following the formative period of the 1950s, the 1960s constituted the decade during which the Iranian monarch sat firmly on his peacock throne. Under the guardian care of three successive premiers—Ja'far Sharif Imami, Assadollah Alam, and Amir Abbas Hoveyda—and wholeheartedly sponsored by the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations, the Pahlavi state fully commanded the Iranian political scene, except for the brief, but prophetic, uprising of Khomeini in June 1963 and the commencement of urban guerrilla movements, announcing the radical claims of the young Iranian political consciousness.¹⁶

A number of crucial events occurred in Iran during the fateful year of 1963. On 26 January, the Iranian monarch announced wide-ranging economic changes that would lay the foundation for ambitious, however ill-fated, programs of reform. Clerical opposition, triggered by certain aspects of these reforms, ensued and led to the Imperial army's attack against the seminary students in Qom on 22 March. On 3 April, Khomeini denounced the Pahlavi regime for its ruthless acts. After a series of verbal attacks exchanged between the Iranian monarch and the Ayatollah, Khomeini was arrested on 5 June. Massive demonstrations erupted throughout the country. On 2 July, Khomeini was released from the prison but placed under house arrest. When Tayyeb and Isma'il Hajj Reza'i, two chief organizers of demonstrations in Tehran, were executed, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi probably felt he had the situation under full control.

When, in October of the next year, 1964, the monarch gave diplomatic immunity to Americans working in Iran, Khomeini's anger was rekindled, leading to his famous "anticapitulation" speech, delivered on 27 October. This speech aroused the monarch's anger; the sixty-two-year-old cleric was expelled from his homeland on 4 November 1964. Ayatollah Khomeini spent the next eleven months—from November 1964 to October 1965—in Turkey before he left for what appeared to be his final exile in Iraq. But the signs of trouble for the Pahlavi state were perfectly clear even while Khomeini was in Turkey. On 10 April 1965 Reza Shamsabadi tried but failed to assassinate the monarch. And then, on 21 January 1966, in the

wake of Khomeini's arrival in Iraq, the Iranian prime minister Hasan Ali Mansur was assassinated by the Fada'ian-e Islam Organization.¹⁷

Despite these troubling indications for the Pahlavi state, the Iranian monarch felt secure enough on his throne to launch an extravagant celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy on 15 October 1971. The regime equally met the leftist challenge, executing in 1973 a group of Marxists, chief among them Khosrow Golsorkhi and Keramatollah Daneshian. The 1973 Arab oil embargo, in which Iran did not participate, offered the Pahlavi state historically unprecedented access to petrodollars, giving rise to the megalomaniac dream of creating "the Japan of the Middle East." When President Carter offered his champagne toast to the success of "the island of stability" and its monarch in 1977, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi must have felt quite secure at the peak of his reign on the peacock throne.¹⁸ And thus when Khomeini left Iraq and entered the small suburban village of Neauphle-le-Château on 3 October 1978, the monarch could not have fully grasped the depth of difficulty into which his throne would be cast.

Formation of a Revolutionary Language

Between 1964 and 1977, as the Iranian monarch spent his oil millions on the expensive toys of a modern arsenal, the aged Ayatollah sharpened his pencils and sat cross-legged at his tiny desk to write letters, issue edicts, announce declarations, and dispatch telegrams. Khomeini's pencils and papers proved to be not only massively less expensive but infinitely more effective than the monarch's state-of-the-art military technology.

Between the commencement of his exile in November 1964 and the launching of his final putsch against the Pahlavi state in 1977, Ayatollah Khomeini created, gradually but consistently, unsystematically but coherently, a language of revolt with which he would reclaim the scepter of power from "the King of Kings." In Iraq he gradually developed a revolutionary discourse that, combined with concomitant events in Iran, would lead to his dramatic return and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Although the roots of this revolutionary discourse go back to the preparatory stages of the June 1963 uprising and although the ultimate making of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 depended on a variety of ideological frames of reference (sacred and secular) other than that of the Ayatollah, this formative period has had a lasting impact on the very constitution of the Islamic Republic.

Most important, the chief ideological statement by Khomeini in this period is the now-famous *Velayat-e Faqih* (*Authority of the Jurist*), first published in 1970, in which he outlined the juridical argument for the assumption of political authority by the clerics. The juridical roots of the

notion of *velayat-e faqih* are most immediately in the writings of a nineteenth-century Shi'i jurist, Molla Ahmad Naraqi,¹⁹ with deeper traces in the earlier notions of political and juridical authority in the Safavid period.²⁰ A more detailed consideration of these notions can also be traced back to the earliest periods of Shi'i history and the conception of its jurisprudence.²¹ Of equal importance, though not examined as thoroughly, are the letters and proclamations of Ayatollah Khomeini during the period between 1964 and 1977.²² In this collection of writings, considered chronologically, the essential features of Khomeini's revolutionary discourse, the language of his revolt, and the terms of his discontent are orchestrated in a relentless attempt to mobilize his growing constituency for the final assault against the Iranian monarch.

From the viewpoint of the public mobilization of collective Shi'i memory, these writings are perhaps even more important than the single statement in the *Velayat-e Faqih*. Whereas the circulation of *Velayat-e Faqih* was rather limited during the pre-Revolutionary period, these letters and proclamations were widely distributed. Whereas the language of the *Velayat-e Faqih* is technically juridical and elitist in tone, the language of these letters is easily comprehended by the majority of Khomeini's supporters. Whereas the authority of *Velayat-e Faqih* was limited to that of a learned juridical treatise, some of these proclamations were in the form of legal edicts thoroughly binding on the followers of the aged Ayatollah. These features of Khomeini's writings and proclamations, written and issued between 1964 and 1977, render them essential for understanding the growth of his revolutionary discourse. While *Velayat-e Faqih* made the calm and deliberate claim for the supreme authority of the jurist in religious and political domains, the letters and proclamations assumed the validity of this authority as self-evident and sought to implement it in practice. If *Velayat-e Faqih* was the de jure argument for Khomeini's authority, his letters and edicts were the de facto extension of theory into action.

A Storm Gathers

It would be a mistake to assume that Ayatollah Khomeini went into exile determined to topple the Iranian monarchy. In a letter to Ayatollah Najafi, dated December 1964, he seems to have submitted to his fate and asserts that "whatever God Almighty has ordained, He would know best. I beg God Almighty for success in compliance with His judgment."²³ Khomeini's revolutionary discourse, instead, had a gradual and rather accidental course of development. He would respond appropriately to specific events that would occur in Iran, and gradually, in the course of his responses, a unique revolutionary discourse would emerge. Events in Iran were the cause and

the target of his statements; the Iranian monarch provided many occasions for these statements to be grievous.

The summation of Khomeini's political disposition in the wake of his arrival in Najaf is expressed in a statement about "the responsibilities and duties of presidents and kings of Islamic societies, and those of the ulama'."²⁴ As he begins this period of his political activities, he has a clear understanding of what constitutes his primary enemy. During this period the most important enemy against which Khomeini believes the forces of Islam ought to be mobilized is "The West," consisting of Jewish and Christian elements. Just like their ancestors during the Prophet's time, the Jews and the Christians conspire against Islam. They resist the righteous cause of Islam to expand into "the four quarters of the globe."²⁵ The most intolerable symbol of "The Western" tyranny against the Muslims, Khomeini believes, is the state of Israel. Muslims should be united under their "kings, presidents, and shaykhs" against their common enemy, the conspiracy of the Jews and the Christians in the form of "The Western" creation of the state of Israel. He argues that had "the seven hundred million"²⁶ Muslims been united, the Jews would not have been able to establish their state in Palestine or the Indians dominate Kashmir.²⁷

With "The West" as the primary target of Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric, the next immediate question is how Muslims are to fight this enemy. Here Khomeini offers both the material and the ideological instruments with which "The West" must be confronted. For this purpose he turns to Islam as the chief ideological force that can unite Muslims against their common enemy. It is important to note that throughout his writings during this period—and indeed any other period—he makes no distinction between the Shi'i and the Sunni branches of Islam. Although he operates primarily within a Shi'i juridical discourse, he intentionally stays clear of any sectarian division within Islam. His language has a universally Islamic tone to it. Given that he was living in the Arab world during this period, the overwhelming majority of which is Sunni, and that his political agenda, particularly in relation to the Palestinian question, was beyond the specifics of Iran, it is quite understandable why he diminished the Shi'i particularity of his revolutionary language. The result of acquiring this language was that when his writings were translated into Arabic not only the Arab Shi'is but also the Sunnis could identify with his cause.

Thus united in faith against their common enemy, "The West," all Muslims ought to fight, with Islam as their chief metaphysical force, to regain their lost dignity. Here the primary objective of Khomeini's statement is to pronounce the political dimension of Islam. The subtext of his argument seems to be directed against those who wished to depoliticize the faith. Since he had just been expelled from Iran because of his political engagements, it is conceivable that certain oppositions to his political uses

of Islam had been raised by such scholarly minded and apolitical clerics as Ayatollah Kho'i.

In this statement, Khomeini refers to the putative letters of the Prophet Muhammad to the kings and emperors surrounding Arabia, inviting them to join Islam.²⁸ If the Prophet of Islam translated his religious message into a political agenda, so should his followers, no matter how distant in history. Here, Khomeini makes specific references to Christianity as a religion that is concerned primarily with the personal relationship of individuals with God. "It should not be presumed that Islam is like Christianity: just a spiritual relationship between individuals and God Almighty. Islam has a program for life, . . . [and] for government."²⁹ Khomeini insists that contrary to a church, which is the site for paying personal tribute to the majesty of God, a mosque is a place for both worship and organizing an army for battle, just as in the time of the Prophet. The patently political activities of the Prophet in establishing Islam in its formative period provide Khomeini with the set of commonly held sacred symbols and memories through an activation of which he legitimates his own insistence on the political charges of Islam. The archetypal memory of Muhammad in the Muslim collective consciousness is the primary source of authority for Khomeini's drive towards the construction of his revolutionary discourse.

But it should not be assumed that at this stage Khomeini claims the political authority inherent in Islam to be a prerogative of the ulama'. He indicates explicitly that "those who bear the utmost responsibility are the Islamic governments, Islamic presidents, Islamic kings."³⁰ He further adds that "those leaders to whom God Almighty has given leadership are responsible. They have to propagate Islam as it truly is."³¹ If there is any doubt that by "leaders" Khomeini means kings and presidents, he eliminates it by insisting that the kings and presidents "must consult with the Islamic ulama' to clarify the truths of Islam for them, and then they [that is, the presidents and the kings] would propagate them in radio and other publications."³² Or, further confirming this advisory capacity for the ulama', he asserts, "this is so insofar as our political leaders are concerned, as for the other group who are the Islamic ulama' . . . , they too have grave responsibilities."³³ This is a crucial statement in demonstrating the gradual formation of Khomeini's political ideas. It is not until later, particularly in the lectures that were subsequently collected as *Velayat-e Faqih* in 1970, that Khomeini specifically claims political authority for the ulama'.

Having articulated the political aspect of Islam as the chief ideological force with which Muslims can and should defend their rights against "The West," Khomeini insists that the propagation of this political agenda of Islam has first priority. He emphasizes the significance of propaganda to the point of actually identifying Islam as a "commodity" that has to be advertised loudly: "Such a good commodity!" Khomeini exclaimed. "You

have access to such a good commodity and yet you cannot introduce it to the world. They . . . introduce their Bible. Their propagators have gone all over the world."³⁴

To carry out the crucial task of the ideological leadership of the movement, Khomeini sets the necessary ascetic standards of training the revolutionary cadre. He insists on the ethical rectitude of the ulama' which, in his judgment, is as important as their scholastic learning. Both their scholastic learning and their ascetic rectitude are the primary prerequisites for assuming revolutionary leadership. Learning alone is not sufficient; what is needed is also revolutionary asceticism:

There are many people who know the minutiae of the [religious] sciences better than anyone else, and yet God Almighty does not grant them that necessary light. For that they need asceticism, hard labor, and self-denial. Sir! You who have come to join the ranks of this group [of ulama']! You have to practice asceticism. You have to do hard labor. You have to be observant. Put your carnal soul on trial!³⁵

With such disciplinary asceticism on the agenda, the object of Khomeini's revolutionary discourse could not remain for long either an abstract entity called "The West" or its ancillary power, the state of Israel. Gradually, the focus of his attention is redirected to Iran. After his establishment in Iraq, Khomeini kept a vigilant contact with his colleagues and constituencies inside Iran. In a telegram to Ayatollah Montazeri, sent sometime in 1964 while he was still in Turkey, he assured his long-time associate that "I truly wish I was with them [the clerics], sharing their joy and sorrow. . . . As soon as the prohibition [against my coming back to Iran] is lifted, God willing, I shall be with them."³⁶

The Question of Insurance: Attending to More Mundane Realities

While becoming increasingly engaged in a campaign of writing letters and building up his wider constituency, Khomeini also took time to address some of the essential, though more mundane, problems facing the community of believers. Such occasions provide further opportunities to see the particular cast of his mind. One of the interesting occasions on which Khomeini's "rational," as opposed to "traditional," bend of mind becomes apparent is in his discussion of the question of "insurance." The "rationality" of Khomeini's approach to this question, as well as to many other similar issues, is a clear indication of his built-in *usuli* approach to matters of modern juridical concern. It is important to keep in mind that this "rationality" is an innate juridical principle in Shi'ism and has nothing to do with the so-called "modernization" or "Westernization." Juridical rationalism (*usuli*) was articulated expressly against juridical literalism or traditionalism (*akhhari*). Khomeini's juridical preference for the rational ap-

proach has far-reaching implications in his political ideas. This should become evident through a brief consideration of his treatment of the question of "insurance."

Like Motahhari, but with less of an engaged juridical language, Ayatollah Khomeini addressed the question of "insurance" as a modern phenomenon and defended its compatibility with Shi'i law. He has specifically addressed the question of insurance at least three times: first, in 1964 during his regular advanced (*kharej*) classes in fiqh; second, in the passage in his *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, written during his short exile in Turkey; and third, in *Towzih al-Masa'il*.³⁷ His positive edict, affirming the feasibility of insurance, is based on the same kind of *usuli* argument as that of Motahhari, demonstrating how, like Motahhari, he had a principally rational, rather than traditional (*akhhari*), juridical attitude. When asked about the feasibility of "insurance," in view of the fact that no such transaction existed during the time of the Prophet, Khomeini responded:

First, some [jurists] have considered it similar to "guarantee" (*zemanat*), or "guarantee in kind" (*zemanat-e beh avaz*). Secondly, suppose that [this] transaction has no antecedent. Why should a transaction have an antecedent? Of course in the early Islamic period, most transactions that are carried out today have been in practice. But there is no absolute necessity that the legislator should have stipulated that such and such a transaction is lawful or unlawful. Instead, the legislator has legislated every [kind] of contract and arrangement that could have been drawn between two parties, whether with or without antecedent, unless there is a reason contrary to that [lawful contract].³⁸

In response to the further question that, contrary to other kinds of contract, in "insurance" you pay for something you may or may not receive, Khomeini insists on the acceptability of this transaction and maintains that "it is a rational contract. Such contracts are valuable to rational people."³⁹

As with Motahhari, the significance of Khomeini's argument is in his principal or rational (*usuli*) defense of the insurance contract. This otherwise tangential treatment of a juridical question demonstrates the degree to which Khomeini believed in updating and rendering socially responsive the fundamentals of the (Shi'i) Islamic doctrines. Modern realities, Khomeini's extrapolation clearly implies, demand historical verification of Islamic (Shi'i) doctrines by rendering them still valid and operative. "Insurance" is as much a part of contemporary social contracts as political order. No domain of social action, political or otherwise, remains outside the Islamic claim to continued legitimacy and authority.

Connections Are Made

There were more pressing problems at hand than a juridical consideration of the question of insurance. Khomeini had to carry from Turkey to Iraq his wishes to be in Iran. In a letter to Ayatollah Najafi Mar'ashi, dated 25 October 1965, he assures his colleague that although it is a great honor to reside in the holy city of Najaf, he prefers to be in Iran and asks his supporters not to lose hope.⁴⁰ In the meantime, he begins to consolidate various oppositional forces that were active inside and outside Iran and were ready to accept his general leadership. Chief among these oppositional forces outside Iran were the Muslim student organizations in Europe, the United States, and Canada. A report had been circulating in Iran to the effect that Ayatollah Khomeini had refused to meet with the representatives of the Muslim Students Association in Europe. Khomeini immediately issued a statement denying such an incident, attributing its circulation to the Pahlavi regime, and asking the students to join him in denying the validity of such reports.⁴¹

During 1966, Khomeini was unusually quiet. The vicissitude of the relationship between the Iranian and the Iraqi governments, in which Khomeini's presence in Najaf must have been a crucial factor, may have had something to do with this long silence. Such occasional and rare moments of silence are uncharacteristic of Khomeini.

The Putsch Tested

During 1967, some occasions lead us to believe that Khomeini had a sense of getting old and not living to see the downfall of the Pahlavi regime. In a letter to the Muslim students in Europe, dated sometime in 1967, when Khomeini was sixty-five, he wrote, "In these last moments of my life . . . I feel joy and pride . . . to see students of old and modern [schools] cooperate in this sacred Islamic movement."⁴² If there is hope, Ayatollah Khomeini seems to invest it in the unification of diverse forces, such as the students in secular modern universities and their counterparts among the seminarians. Khomeini calls for a collaboration, in the spirit of the Islamic cause, between the students of the old and modern colleges. In the 1967 letter to the Muslim students in Europe, he commends the Islamic virtues of the young students abroad, as well as those of their brethren in scholastic schools.⁴³

Despite these occasional feelings of old age, and perhaps encouraged by the high-spirited expectations of his young admirers, as early as 1967, some four years after his initial bid for power against the Pahlavi regime, Khomeini seems to have become convinced of the possibility of an all-out revolution. Encouraged by the news of young Muslim students in Europe being politically active and willing to join ranks with their clerical counterparts,

he now spoke of a "sacred Islamic movement that, God willing, leads to cutting off the hands of the instruments of foreigners, those who advocate colonialism, and the Westoxicated."⁴⁴ He further proceeds to "give myself the good tidings that, God willing, a bright future awaits the oppressed nations."⁴⁵ His contacts with Muslim students in Europe was one of the chief sources for keeping the revolutionary cause alive.

With the direction of his revolutionary rhetoric focused on Iran, Khomeini launches, from 1967 onward, a series of denunciations against specific events in his homeland. For example, in his letter to the Muslim students in Europe he bitterly criticizes⁴⁶ the so-called "Religious Corps" that the Pahlavi regime had mobilized to assimilate the religious institutions into its state machinery. Subsequently, early in 1967, after four years in exile, Khomeini felt secure and confident enough to write a direct letter to the Iranian prime minister. The incident that prompted this letter was the news that the Iranian monarch was about to coronate himself, a momentous event that he actually carried out with great pomp and ceremony—the Kiani crown on head, the jeweled scepter in hand, all wrapped in the royal cloak—on 26 October 1967, at the Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran. On 16 April 1967, having heard the news of the upcoming coronation, the Ayatollah wrote an angry letter to Prime Minister Hoveyda. Judging from the language of this letter, Khomeini's revolutionary discourse clearly assumes a more direct and determined tone. This letter is the most serious statement, after his exile, in which Khomeini challenges the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state.

Early in the letter, Khomeini states that he has been expelled illegally from the country simply for having opposed giving undue diplomatic immunity to Americans. It is important, however, to note that at this stage he refers to both "the religious law and the constitutional law" to argue for the illegality of his expulsion.⁴⁷ This is the same constitutional law that legitimates the monarch. Although he tacitly acknowledges the Iranian constitution, Khomeini proceeds to deliver the most serious challenge to the legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime based on a number of essential charges against the government.

First, there is the massive poverty of the Iranian people. "Everyday, people's poverty and destitution are increased,"⁴⁸ he charges. "You keep people in a state of poverty and backwardness in the name of progress."⁴⁹ Against the background of this poverty, the monarch's celebration of his coronation is ludicrous and appalling. "The expenses for these [celebrations]," he charges, "are taken with bayonet from the wretched people."⁵⁰ Second, there is a general state of bankruptcy among the Iranian merchants. Khomeini attributes this bankruptcy to "the dominance of Israel in economic matters."⁵¹ Third, the economic and political domination of the foreigners has been at the expense of Iranian prosperity. "There is a black

market for [the benefit of] the foreigners.”⁵² While local merchants suffer, foreign capitalists prosper. Fourth, there is a grave danger against Islam. “In the name of Islam,” Khomeini warns, “the heaviest blows are struck against the Holy Qur’an and the Divine commandments.”⁵³ Here he particularly attacks the attempt to assimilate the Shi’i clerical order into the state bureaucracy. Fifth, there is not the slightest indication of democracy in the state. “You are incapable of giving freedom, *the traitor is fearful*,” he charges. “Denying the freedom of the press and the dictating [of what can or cannot be printed] by the so-called Security Organization [SAVAK] are indications of backwardness.”⁵⁴

Khomeini concludes his letter to Prime Minister Hoveyda with a clear ultimatum:

Fear the anger of God! Beware of the wrath of the people! Do not tamper with the commandments of God Almighty, calling it “the progressive religion!” Do not jeopardize the Islamic commandments in the name of the Qur’an! Do not behave so violently with the seminarians, the servants of the people and their culture, in the name of conscripting them as useless soldiers. And finally, do not force the ulama’ of this people to take a different course of action with you!

These were not empty threats. Khomeini was now pursuing his campaign against the Pahlavi monarchy with a fuller attention to details. As Khomeini’s revolutionary momentum began to take shape and purpose in 1967, one of the immediate questions that obviously faced him was the financial aspect of the movement, directly connected to the whole political economy of mass mobilization against the enemy.

Sometime during 1967 Khomeini is officially asked, *estefta’*, whether those Iranian ulama’ who had permission from him to collect the religious taxes, and yet were now supportive of the Pahlavi state, were still in possession of such authority.⁵⁵ “Those who have approved of the tyrannical state,” he responded in his edict,

or do so now, and thus act contrary to the Sacred Law, should they have any permission from me [to collect religious taxes], it is now nullified. The [Muslim] believers should not pay them religious sums of the *sahm-e Imam*, peace be upon him. *May God protect us against the evils of ourselves!*⁵⁶

The last invocation is the clear indication of Khomeini’s anger against those clerics who supported the Pahlavi state. In the same year, and following the same format of a religious edict, Khomeini also declared an economic war against the state of Israel. He emphasized that

helping Israel, whether in the form of selling arms and ammunition or oil, is forbidden and contrary to [the commandments of] Islam. Any connection with Israel and its agents, whether commercial or political, is forbidden and contrary to [the commandments of] Islam.⁵⁷

Ayatollah Khomeini’s connection with Iran during 1967 is evident from his correspondence with Hojjat al-Islam Sa’idi, a pro-Khomeini activist who continued his antigovernmental activities after the June 1963 uprising. Educated in Mashhad and Qom seminaries, Sa’idi stayed in Iran after Khomeini’s exile, became the public prayer leader in a downtown Tehran mosque, and both directly and through Morteza Motahhari was in contact with the exiled leader. He was subsequently arrested and killed in prison. In a letter dated 29 June 1967, Khomeini writes to Sa’idi to take care of “the sick.” He insists that “it is pointless to postpone the treatment any further.”⁵⁸ Since Sa’idi at the time was quite militant in antigovernment activities, the reference to “the sick” and to “treatment” could very well be some secret communication to political activists who still supported the exiled leader. The active presence of a group of Khomeini supporters at that time is also evident from a later letter to Sa’idi, dated 12 September 1967, in which Khomeini writes,

I believe I have received one letter from your highness that I have not yet responded to. Mr. Montazeri has written, however, that you have said there are a number of letters by you which I have not answered . . .⁵⁹

It is also quite possible that the Iranian secret service intercepted Khomeini’s correspondence.

Further Finance: Extended Connections

After he disqualified those ulama’ who had not joined ranks with him, Khomeini issued a new edict, dated 24 March 1968, designating Morteza Motahhari, his former student, as his sole representative in collecting the religious taxes. “His highness . . . Mr. Hajj Sheykh Morteza Motahhari . . . is authorized,” Khomeini decreed,

to collect the sacred *sahm-e Imam*, peace be upon him, and to spend half of it in matters beneficial to the advancement of Islam, the propagation of the sacred commandments, and the consolidation of the righteous religion; and to send the other half to me in order to spend in [other] important Islamic centers.⁶⁰

In the same year, Khomeini also authorized the donation of such religious taxes as *zakat* and *sahm-e Imam* to be given to factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization.⁶¹ “It is absolutely worthy, nay mandatory, that some necessary portions of such religious sums as *zakat* and the like be allocated to these [Palestinian] fighters in the path of God.”⁶² He further stated that

the best way [to proceed] is that the Muslim people of Iran try with whatever is at their disposal to cut their transactions with the local Zionists and their like in Iran . . . leading an economic battle against them.⁶³

In yet another religious edict, dated 28 August 1968, Khomeini responded positively to the inquiry of a group of his supporters who had asked whether "religious taxes, such as *zakat*, can be used to arm and train the Muslims [against 'the Jewish infidels']."⁶⁴

Khomeini was as concerned about unifying his forces outside Iran as he was about consolidating his bases inside the country. This he had to do by maintaining his former constituency, opposing the clerics who had not joined ranks with him, and, perhaps most important, winning new members to his cause among the young clerics. In a letter to Morteza Motahhari, written some time in early 1968, Khomeini gives proper instructions as to how the internal forces ought to be kept alert.⁶⁵ He seems to be concerned that Motahhari is in Tehran, and Qom is left to other ulama'.

The reason I am concerned about your being away from Qom, and concerned about certain other gentlemen (clerics) whom the seminarians in these anarchical time could benefit from, is precisely for such corruptions [that Motahhari had apparently mentioned in his letter].⁶⁶

Khomeini then concludes with a hopeful sign for the future of a unified clerical stand:

Their Excellencies [the ulama'], thank God, have been admonished [enough] and [thus] changed their path. I hope that people will take heed of this, and that conflict and segmentation will be eliminated or at least subsided.⁶⁷

From the tone of Khomeini's response, it appears that Motahhari had complained of the infiltration of leftist ideas into the seminarian circles. "In a letter that I have just written in response to the confederation of Muslim students in Europe," Khomeini reassures Motahhari,

I have thoroughly explained the principal problems and shown the way. I have emphasized the corruptive [forces] of this misguided ideology [= Marxism?]. . . . Should there be an[other] occasion, I shall [further] explain this in a letter to the Qom seminary. However, admonition alone is not enough. Such diversions ought to be opposed with action.⁶⁸

This could very well be a reference to those high-ranking clerics who advocated the Pahlavi state openly and then were persuaded otherwise by the local supporters of the exiled Ayatollah, or else a reference to the leftist infiltration among the seminarian students, or even to Shari'ati's ideas or to the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization.

While engaged in these crucial maneuvers against monarchical and leftist infiltrations into the high-ranking clerical orders, Khomeini was equally attentive to those mainline supporters who served his revolutionary cause selflessly. In a short letter dated 3 November 1968, he expresses his deep appreciation of Sa'idi's endeavors despite the fact that "the majority have secluded themselves."⁶⁹ In another letter, written sometime during the

same year, he demonstrates one of the rare occasions in which he speaks of his deep emotions. "I like people like you so much," the sixty-six-year-old Ayatollah writes to Sa'idi, "that perhaps I am unable to express my deep emotions properly. [It is not but] God Almighty who has graced you with His favours to serve the faith."⁷⁰ In a later letter to Sa'idi, dated 5 November 1968,⁷¹ Khomeini makes a cryptic reference that could be an indication of a widespread propaganda network established in the Iranian mosques. "As for the mosques," he writes to Sa'idi,

I have already been informed. It has even been reported that [something or somebody?] has been designated for the Sayyid Azizollah Mosque. But I am not sure of the accuracy of the report. The point is, however, that no front should be easily abandoned.⁷²

That Sa'idi, the recipient of this letter, is killed by the Shah's police some time later in 1970 could be an added indication that there were underground movements, organized through the local mosques as early as 1968, to mobilize pro-Khomeini support should the proper occasion manifest itself.

There is, however, a reference in this letter, again, to old age. "I am spending the last moments of my life," writes the sixty-six-year-old Khomeini, "and I worry about the general and specific conditions of the scholastic centers."⁷³ This pessimistic reference, however, should not be overinterpreted. Khomeini's general attitude during 1968 is quite optimistic and determined. At sixty-six, he, of course, could have felt old, but not so much as to lose hope. He gives encouragement to Sa'idi that "you the young generation should not be disappointed. With determination and resolution, be prepared to serve at the right moment!"⁷⁴

In the same letter of 5 November 1968, Khomeini seems to oppose some extreme factions of his followers: "With such extremisms on their part, and such laxities on our part, I do not know what will ultimately happen."⁷⁵ More than anything else, he is dismayed with those among the ulama' who have not joined him in his revolt. He complains of "duplicity at home,"⁷⁶ meaning at the Qom seminary. He reminds Sa'idi of the lost historical opportunities.

Our most righteous ancestors, may they rest in peace, lost a golden opportunity when the wicked ancestor [of the Shah, namely Reza Shah] left. There were other lost opportunities too, until the present calamities appeared. As long as this wicked tree is implanted, there is no hope.⁷⁷

Moments of Disappointment

The periodic negative ring to Khomeini's voice continues well into 1969. Almost a year after this letter to Sa'idi, sometime in November or Decem-

ber 1969, he wrote to Mohammad Reza Hakimi, a devout follower, "I am spending the last days of my life, and yet unfortunately could not do anything for the beloved Islam and the Muslims."⁷⁸ In the same letter, moved by a poem that M. Azarm, an Iranian poet, had composed for him, he admits, "the spirit of disappointment and resignation, which has been injected by the colonialists in the people and even in their Muslim leaders, prevents them from doing something."⁷⁹ Disappointed in his old age, Khomeini hopes that "the younger generation" will lead the cause.

Indictment of the Left; Ultimatum to the King

Such momentary pauses were not to last. The year 1970 produced yet another fierce ultimatum to the Pahlavi regime. Khomeini's denunciation was brought on by the murder of Hojjat al-Islam Sa'idi.

The year had started on a pessimistic note for Khomeini. The same sentiments of "I am spending the last days of my life" and the hope that the younger generation will assume the responsibility are expressed in a letter to Muslim students in Europe, dated 1 January 1970.⁸⁰ On 31 May 1970, Khomeini wrote a letter to Muslim students in Europe, expressing his appreciation of their attempt to understand and propagate "the true Islam" and accusing the European Islamicists and Orientalists of having distorted Islam. Concentrating on "buildings and paintings" of Islam and giving credence to the illegitimate rule of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, and by doing so having "kept the true countenance of Islam behind these veils,"⁸¹ the Orientalists have falsified the true message of Islam. By using the key term *gharbzadeh*, (Westoxicated), Khomeini also criticizes those nominal Muslims who have been misguided by "Western propaganda." He urges his student followers "to wake [them] up."⁸²

In May 1970, Mohammad Reza Sa'idi, who had been in close contact with Khomeini, was arrested in Iran and killed in prison. On the occasion of his death, which coincided with the Pahlavi regime's striking lucrative commercial contracts with foreign capitalists, Ayatollah Khomeini sent a telegram to his followers in Iran, dated sometime in late July or early August 1970, in which he attacked both leftist and rightist forces, the Soviet Union and the United States, for plundering the national wealth of the Iranian masses. He openly declared that the continuation of the Pahlavi state spelled poverty and destitution for the Iranian masses, humility and bankruptcy for the Iranian merchants, yet lucrative deals for the foreign capitalists.⁸³ He challenged the legitimacy of the members of the Iranian parliament and appealed to "impartial international authorities" to intervene and prevent the execution of such illegal contracts.⁸⁴ He openly declared void and invalid any kind of commercial contract between the Iranian government and foreign companies. Among his growing constitu-

ency, he appeals in particular to the religious and political leaders and the seminarian and university students.⁸⁵

By The Authority Vested in Me

Haphazard and occasional responses to the specific events inside Iran would not have accumulated into a forceful political pressure unless accompanied by a deliberate reflection on the nature of political authority in (Shi'i) Islam. By far, the most significant event of 1970 was the series of nineteen lectures soon to be known as *Velayat-e Faqih* (*The Authority of the Jurist*) delivered over the course of nineteen days, from 21 January to 8 February 1970. Since then a number of official and clandestine editions of these lectures have appeared under three different titles: (1) *The Islamic Government*, (2) *Authority of the Jurist*, and (3) *A Letter from Imam Musavi Kashef al-Qita'*.⁸⁶ But all three titles refer to this series of lectures. These lectures were delivered and the subsequent volumes were published in Persian, Khomeini's native tongue.

The Arabic rendition of the Persian original does not appear until 1979, some ten years after its original publication and in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. In the publisher's preface to this version there are repeated references to the fact that these lectures were delivered ten years earlier. The assumption that these lectures were delivered or published in Arabic is false.⁸⁷ A comparison of the Persian and Arabic texts clearly shows that the Arabic version is an abridged translation of the Persian, and not vice versa.⁸⁸ Whereas the Persian text is in the normal diction and fluency of Khomeini's other writings, the Arabic text is verbatim and artificial. A comparison of this Arabic translation with *Sharh Do'a' al-Sahar*,⁸⁹ a treatise Khomeini did write in Arabic, further testifies that the text of this Arabic translation is not Khomeini's.

The Arabic version of *Velayat-e Faqih* is a condensation and a paraphrasing of the original Persian. However, occasional phrases are added to the Arabic translation that do not exist in the original Persian. One such key addition is to the sentence on page 172 of the Persian text where, in a reference to Molla Ahmad Naraqi, Khomeini maintains that the jurists have precisely the same privileges as the Prophet.⁹⁰ In the Arabic translation, the following subordinate clause is added: "with the exception of such privileges by which he [that is, the Prophet] is [uniquely] distinguished."⁹¹

The assumption that the original lectures were given in Arabic is further discredited by the fact that in the original text all Arabic phrases, such as the Qur'anic passages, the Prophetic hadiths, or excerpts from the *Nahj al-Balaghah* are immediately translated and explicated in Persian. If the original delivery were in Arabic, the Persian explication would be both redundant and ludicrous.

Upon the publication of the first edition of *Velayat-e Faqih*, as Khomeini himself testifies,⁹² the Iranian embassy in Iraq sought to thwart its circulation. But apparently it was unable to do so, and the book was made widely available. Its publication in Iran was facilitated by its clandestine distribution under one of the alternate titles noted above, "A Letter from Imam Musavi Kashif al-Qita'." These editions usually contain another treatise of Khomeini's, *The Greater Holy War*, as a supplement. Although printed unprofessionally, hurriedly, and on very cheap paper, these editions offer eye-catching subtitles, provocative Qur'anic passages, and a laudatory statement by the unknown "publisher" on Khomeini's great revolutionary merits. The date of this introduction by "the publisher" is Dhi al-Hajjah 1392, which corresponds to sometime between 6 January and 3 February 1973. This indicates that as early as three years after its original delivery in early 1970, *Velayat-e Faqih* was widely available in Iran. The typography of these Iranian versions also differs from the one published in Iraq. The typography of the Iraqi version has certain indications in its alphabet that show the printing house in Iraq did not have access to all the Persian letters. Although the letters "P" and "G" are represented properly in the actual text, there is no exact reproduction of the Persian "Y," and the Arabic "Y," with two dots under the letter, is substituted. One crucial exception is the key footnote to the Qur'anic passage 4:59, the famous "authority verse," quoted to support the argument for the political authority of the religious figures such as Khomeini. In this footnote, pages 27–28, the three exclusively Persian letters "CH," "G," and "P" are approximated to their closest Arabic equivalents, that is, "J," "K," and "B," respectively. The Arabic "Y" is also used for the Persian "Y." This may indicate that the footnote was a later addition to the text, printed by a different printing house (probably in a rush) where the Persian letters were not available or the publisher was in too much of a hurry to secure them from other sources.

Velayat-e Faqih is delivered from an essentially juridical point of departure. It identifies the concept of *velayat-e faqih* as one of "the topics discussed in jurisprudence [*fiqh*] in religious seminaries."⁹³ That its discussion has been neglected in recent times, Khomeini charges, is precisely because of its political nature, antithetical to the powers that be. Oblivion of the political implications of *velayat-e faqih*, as a contemporary reality, is deeply rooted in the Jewish propaganda against Islam, Khomeini recalls, and its contemporary counterpart in the colonial designs against the faith. Since the Crusades, the colonial powers realized how important Islam has been in unifying Muslims, and now they seek to obliterate it to dominate the Muslims more effectively. Through a variety of agents, chief among them the Orientalists, the colonial powers have sought to eradicate the revolutionary and political nature of Islam. The result is that not only the masses but even the educated Muslims have been led to believe that Islam

is a "deficient faith."⁹⁴ Islam, in Khomeini's definition, was 99 percent more concerned with society and politics than with matters of ritual purity and personal ethics. It is incumbent upon Khomeini's students to propagate the true nature of Islam and show that Islam is not like Christianity, "the nominal not the actual," limited to "a few commandments concerning the relation between God and the people."⁹⁵ On the contrary,

when there was nothing in the West and its inhabitants lived in barbarity, and America was the land of half-barbarian Indians . . . and Iran and Byzantium were under the rule of tyranny . . . God Almighty, through the noble Prophet (God's benedictions be upon him), sent such laws that one is amazed by their majesty.⁹⁶

Islamic laws, Khomeini declared, are "progressive, complete, and all-inclusive." But following the designs of the foreigners, certain members of the clergy have played in their hands and propagated an apolitical reading of Islam.

Constitutionalism was a design of the British, Khomeini declared, implemented in Iran through their local agents.⁹⁷ The result was a constitution more in tune with Belgian, French, English, and American laws than compatible with Islam. Islam does not recognize monarchy. The Prophet sent letters to the Persian and Roman kings admonishing them and inviting them to embrace Islam. Imam Hossein fought against Yazid and his monarchical claims. The result of this anti-Islamic constitution is injustice for the Muslims, whose rights the present civil law cannot secure.⁹⁸ The civil law is selective in its punishment. It executes a heroin dealer but refuses to ban alcoholic beverages, just "because the West does the same."⁹⁹ These, Khomeini decided, are all indications of a massive conspiracy designed by "The West" against Islam to rob Muslims of their most effective arm against the colonial powers. Helping the colonial interests of "The West" are their local agents who have been fascinated by the technical achievements of Europe and the United States. "As soon as they go to the moon, for example," Khomeini warned, the "Westoxicated" locals "imagine they have to abandon their [Islamic] laws. [But] what has going to the moon got to do with the Islamic laws?"¹⁰⁰ Conquer the universe how "The West" may, Khomeini reassured his students, they are incapable of solving their moral and social problems. To cure their moral malaise, "The West" has to turn to Islam.

Contrary to the propagandas of "The Western" colonialist, Khomeini charges, Islam is not merely an embodiment of ethical and legal injunctions. It has equally specified the necessity of the executive branch to complement the legislative.¹⁰¹ Khomeini appropriates modern terms such as "the executive" and "the legislative" branches of the government into his otherwise (Shi'i) juridical parlance as if such conceptualizations of power were innate to the Islamic political discourse. The executive aspect of Islam, Khomeini

proceeds to argue, is necessitated both doctrinally and as indicated by the exemplary conduct of the Prophet. Doctrinally, the Qur'an has mandated the necessity of obedience to God, the Prophet, and "those of authority among you." As indicated by the exemplary conduct of the Prophet, he too (in Shi'ite understanding) designated his successor. From these two sources emerges the Shi'i doctrinal necessity of *velayat*, or successorship to the authority of Muhammad, as the executive power of the Islamic political order. Translating the executive aspect of the Islamic political order into "Islamic government" as such, Khomeini extends the (Shi'i) doctrinal mandates of his version of the faith to the most immediate ideological agenda of his time: questioning the monarchy. "To fight towards the establishment of the Islamic government," Khomeini decreed, "is the logical conclusion of the belief in *velayat*."¹⁰²

Khomeini charges his students with moral encouragement against two principal enemies: the "Westoxicated" secular intellectuals, who are the local agents of the colonialists, and the colonialists themselves. While the secular intellectuals import the barrage of their "Western" ideologies and with them intimidate the clergy, the colonialists propagate the false notion that in Islam religion and politics are separate and thus rob the religious authorities of their historical responsibility.¹⁰³ Should, as "The West" wishes, Islam be limited to mandating rules and regulations for ritual routines, no one would challenge the plunder of the colonialists. "You can pray as much as you want," Khomeini poignantly reminded his apolitical students and colleagues, "they [the 'Western' colonialists] want your oil. They would not bother with your prayer. They want our natural resources. They want our country to be the market for their goods."¹⁰⁴

Muhammad: The Chief Executive

For a religious order to be operative in a society, Khomeini decreed, it needs more than merely the legislative doctrine; it also needs the executive force.¹⁰⁵ Muhammad was not only instrumental in bringing the Islamic law, he was also its first executor. He "cut off hands, chopped off limbs, stoned adulterers to death."¹⁰⁶ Upon his death, he had designated a caliph, in Khomeini's Shi'i judgment, to do precisely the same. Execution of the Divine will is part and parcel of its legislation. To execute the legislated Divine will, beyond His last emissary (Muhammad), God has designated "those in authority among you." These are primarily the Twelve Infallible Shi'i Imams. After them, their function as the interpreters of the Divine law, its execution, and the propagation of its validity falls upon the "just jurists."¹⁰⁷ Khomeini considered himself a "just jurist."

The exemplary conduct of the Prophet makes it obligatory for the successive religious authorities to assume active political power. Execution of

the Islamic laws was not limited to the Prophet's time. Their atemporal validity makes it necessary for contemporary religious authorities (like Khomeini) to assume political power and seek to implement them on a permanent basis. Thus both doctrinally (the mandate of *Shari'*) and logically (the mandate of *aqil*) the clerics are entitled to political authority. In a profoundly sarcastic tone, Khomeini rhetorically asked:

One thousand and a few hundred years have passed since the Lesser Occultation. One hundred thousand more years may pass and conditions may not permit that His Holiness [the Twelfth Imam] come back. Should during this period the Islamic laws remain idle? Could anyone do just as he pleases? [But] that is anarchy. Were the laws for the expression, propagation, and execution of which the Prophet of Islam suffered limited to only a short period of time? Did God limit the execution of His laws to only two hundred years? Did He let go of everything after the Lesser Occultation?¹⁰⁸

It is in the very nature of the Islamic laws to cover every aspect of Muslim life—public and private, political and personal. From cradle to grave, Islam has rules and regulations about everything and the Islamic government ought to be established at a most comprehensive level. The elaborate rules and regulations controlling the financial, territorial, and legal aspects of a Muslim society are clear testimonies that the government of a Muslim people should be Islamic.

Revolution is Mandatory

Under these circumstances there is no way to remain a believing Muslim without revolting against the status quo. Except for the reign of Ali, Khomeini considers all postprophetic governments as un-Islamic, from the reign of the Umayyads to the present.¹⁰⁹ To restore the true Islamic rule, as modelled on those of Muhammad and Ali, to oppose the Satanic reign of nonbelieving rulers, and to prepare a social condition congenial to the ethical virtuosity of Muslims, there is no way but to revolt and "abolish the corrupt and corrupting governments."¹¹⁰ To return the previous ideal unity to the Muslims and prevent the tyrannical anti-Islamic governments from jeopardizing this unity, the establishment of an Islamic government is absolutely necessary. The colonialists have dominated the colonized world by dividing it into a small minority of tyrants and a large majority of tyrannized. Islam cannot accept this and necessitates the establishment of a righteous government to prevent it.¹¹¹

A Cascade of Arguments

Khomeini thus brings together a number of arguments for the necessity, indeed the religious obligation, of establishing an Islamic government. Log-

ically, God could not have meant the execution of His laws for only a short period of time. In the absence of the Hidden Imam, Islamic laws ought to be equally binding, and for their execution a religious authority like Khomeini must be in control. Doctrinally, the Qur'an has commanded that beyond the Prophet and (for Shi'ites) the Imams, people of religious authority, in Khomeini's reading of "those of authority among you," ought to be in control. The exemplary conduct of the Prophet himself and that of Ali are equally binding in necessitating an "Islamic government." The very nature of Qur'anic commandments and the received traditions of the Prophet and the Imams necessitates an all-inclusive "Islamic government." Further verifying the Qur'anic passage designating "those of authority among you" is the tradition attributed to the Eighth Shi'i Imam, al-Rida, which is equally emphatic in the necessity of an Islamic government so that Muslims act according to the Divine mandates.¹¹²

Khomeini further advances these doctrinal arguments with a political translation of a mystical notion of the innate "incompleteness" of man and his need for guidance towards perfection. "People are deficient," he decreed, "and they need to be perfected."¹¹³ "The perfect man" (*Insan-e Kamel*), as a mystical notion stipulating the ideal-typical striving of man towards total identification with all the Divine attributes, is here translated into political terms necessitating the active operation of an "Islamic government" leading people towards their own perfection. To implement this objective and other tasks of the "Islamic government," *Vali-ye amr* (The Person of Authority) is the central political figure. This *Vali-ye amr* is none other than "a ruler who is the agent of the perpetuation and operation of Islamic law and order."¹¹⁴ In the absence of such a central, commanding figure, Iranians have been subjected to "alien laws and foreign cultures," leading to the creation of "Westoxicated people."¹¹⁵

Theocracy Defined: Characteristics of the Islamic Government

"Islamic Government," Khomeini declared, "is like no other government."¹¹⁶ It is not absolutist. It is constitutional,

of course not constitutional in the regular sense of the term in which ratification of laws is contingent upon the [approval of the] majority of the people. It is constitutional [conditional] in the sense that those who govern are subject to a set of conditions in their reign that are specified in the Qur'an and the traditions of the most noble Prophet, God's benedictions be upon him.¹¹⁷

"The Islamic government," Khomeini concludes, "is the rule of the Divine law upon people."¹¹⁸ Consequently, there is no legislative body in the "Islamic government." There are only "planning bodies" whereby the Divine Law is administered into different social programs. Since all people

have already accepted Islam, the Divine laws are more democratic than those of a republic or of a constitutional monarchy where the members of parliament claim to represent the people, whereas they actually legislate whatever they want and impose it on all the people as laws.¹¹⁹ From the Prophet himself, to all his legitimate successors, to "those of authority" at the present time—all are executioners of the Divine Law. Thus the "Islamic government" is the rule of the Divine Law.

Because the "Islamic government" is the rule of virtuous models like the Prophet and the Imams, there is no corrupt ruling class wasting the nation's resources. The vast bureaucracy that the monarchy has created is wasteful. Under the "Islamic government" just one "Qadi with two or three agents, a pen and an ink box" can take care of a city.¹²⁰

The supreme figure of authority in the "Islamic government" is qualified by virtue of two characteristics: knowledge of the Divine Law and justice.¹²¹ Any other kind of knowledge, sacred or secular, is irrelevant. By virtue of the knowledge of the Divine Law, "the jurists have authority upon the rulers."¹²² Then Khomeini takes one step further and, with the Socratic voice in his tone and an Islamicized version of the philosopher/king in his mind, emphatically declares:

If rulers are Muslims they ought to obey the jurists. They have to ask the jurists about the [Islamic] laws and regulations, and then act accordingly. Thus the true rulers are the jurists themselves, and the government ought to be officially given to them, not to those who because of their ignorance of the [Divine] law have to obey the jurists.¹²³

Next to knowledge of the Divine Law, the Islamic ruler has to be just in order to be in a position to execute religious mandates. Both of these qualifications "are present in many contemporary jurists. If they cooperate, they can establish the general righteous government in the world."¹²⁴ The obvious conclusion is that in the absence of the Hidden Imam:

should a meritorious person who has both of these qualifications emerge and establish a government, he has the same authority (*velayat*) in ruling the society as that of the Prophet, and it is incumbent upon all the people to obey him.¹²⁵

As he formulated this revolutionary Shi'i position about government, there is little doubt that Khomeini saw himself as this qualified person. He further explained that although the spiritual virtues of the Prophet and Ali were superior to those of anyone else, the political authority of the jurist is no less than theirs.¹²⁶ Khomeini is quite careful not to offend the doctrinal sanctity of Prophet Muhammad and Ali's characters and insists that the jurist's position, spiritually, is, of course, inferior. But politically he is on a par with them. This is not so much a privilege for the jurist as it is a responsibility. The jurist's responsibility towards a nation is like that of a

guardian over an underage individual.¹²⁷ The assumption of such authority is no one's but "the jurist of the time" (*faqih-e asr*), a term with a remarkable assonance with *vali-ye asr*, exclusively reserved for the Twelfth (Hidden) Imam.

Khomeini has equal circumspection for his fellow jurists. Although the authority (*velayat*) of Muhammad and Ali was "absolute" in their respective times, the contemporary jurist has no such claim to his fellow clerics. To assume this responsibility is absolutely mandatory (*vajeb-e ainyi*) for those jurists who can do so and "relatively mandatory" (*vajeb-e kefa'i*), if they cannot.¹²⁸ But Khomeini insists that the jurist's assumption of political authority as "absolutely mandatory" on his part is not concomitant with his (doctrinally unacceptable) assumptions of some "spiritual" status as those of the Imams or the Prophet.

The Teleology of the Islamic Government

The ultimate purpose of assuming the supreme political authority is to establish a reign of justice.¹²⁹ Government is but an instrument to guide people to their potential perfection. As for the jurist, assumption of power is a responsibility, not a prestigious position. The position is sanctified for the jurist by the prophetic tradition, transmitted through Ali, according to which Muhammad is reported to have blessed his "successors" (*khulafa'*) three times. The Prophet has further identified his successors as "those who come after me, relate my traditions and my exemplary conduct, so that people will learn them after me."¹³⁰ Through a meticulous hermeneutic explication of this hadith, Khomeini concludes that these "successors" are none other than the "just jurists."¹³¹ There is another tradition, this one attributed to Imam Musa ibn al-Ja'far, the Seventh Shi'i Imam, according to which the jurists are considered to be "the fortress of Islam."¹³² This is no mere formalism, Khomeini contends. The jurists cannot simply attend to the ritual obligations of the Shi'i believers and leave these grave responsibilities to others, who are not qualified to perform them anyway.

The next tradition Khomeini quotes, through Molla Ahmad Naraq, identifies the jurists as "the trusted associates" (*omana'*) of the Prophet.¹³³ Since the Prophet's function was to execute the Divine commandments, then the jurists, too, as those to whom the Prophet entrusted his legacy, are entitled to the same authority.¹³⁵ More specifically, the function of judgment on matters of dispute among Muslims, Khomeini argues through a tradition attributed to Imam Ali,¹³⁶ and another tradition attributed to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq,¹³⁷ is specifically that of the jurists. Although some jurists, Khomeini concludes, have disagreed with Naraq and Na'ini's position on the general authority of the jurists over all aspects of Muslim life,

all agree that legal judgment is exclusively that of the clergy.¹³⁸ The inevitable conclusion is that

The jurist is the deputy (*wasy*) of the most noble Prophet, God's benedictions be upon him, and in the period of Occultation, he is the leader of the Muslims, the supreme figure of authority in the nation. He has to be the judge; and nobody other than him has the right to judge and prosecute.¹³⁹

Extrapolating from a tradition attributed to the Twelfth (Hidden) Imam, Khomeini argues that in the absence of the last Shi'i Imam, the jurists are of central authority in matters pertaining to the community.¹⁴⁰ It is on this authority that Khomeini asks the Iranian monarch, "Why did you spend the people's money on [your] coronation and on all those celebrations?"¹⁴¹ Driving these rhetorical questions further home, Khomeini altogether challenges, through two traditions twice attributed to Imam al-Sadiq,¹⁴² the Sixth Shi'i Imam, the legal validity of injunctions issued by nonreligious courts,¹⁴³ and, in turn, the very legitimacy of the political order that validates a civil juridical system. In matters both juridical specifically and political in general, the only legitimate authorities to turn to, according to Khomeini's reading of this tradition, are the religious jurists by virtue of their knowledge of the Divine Law and proof of their personal justice.¹⁴⁴ This designation of authority is not limited to the time of the Infallible Imams and is always atemporally valid.¹⁴⁵

Khomeini then proceeds to quote, after Naraq, a Prophetic tradition¹⁴⁶ and a tradition of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq¹⁴⁷ according to which "the jurists are the inheritors of the Prophet." After an extended hermeneutic explication of the phrase "the jurists are the inheritors of the Prophet,"¹⁴⁸ he concludes that the jurists are the Prophet's successors and are in charge of the "Islamic government."¹⁴⁹ To substantiate this further, he quotes Naraq's version of a tradition according to which jurists are said to have the same authority as the prophets of Israel, for whom Khomeini designates political authority.¹⁵⁰ There are other traditions according to which Muhammad is believed to have said that "In the Day of Judgment, I shall be proud of the ulama' of my people, they are like prophets before me,"¹⁵¹ or that "the matters and injunctions are in the hands of the ulama'."¹⁵² The ultimate conclusion of these and other traditions is that to be true to their faith, Muslims ought to engage in "armed struggle"¹⁵³ to have an "Islamic government" established.

Upon these readings of the traditions congenial to a politically conscious and active participation in a revolutionary movement, Khomeini turns to one of the essential tenets of Shi'ism, again accentuating its political tone. "Enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" is a mandatory obligation of all Muslims. Should they obey it fully, Khomeini contends, "the tyrants and their agents could not confiscate people's property."¹⁵⁴ He admonishes his

fellow clerics for having limited the implications of this doctrine to petty crimes in their vicinity and having forgotten the larger, greater in ferocity, and more vicious political crimes. He encourages them not to be afraid of the powers that be. "They are extremely fearful," he assures his students and followers, "they retreat very fast."¹⁵⁵ To compel his audience to assume this responsibility, Khomeini's leitmotif throughout *Velayat-e Faqih* is that the canonical commandments of the Shi'i sacred sources are universally and atemporally valid. "Every ruler, every vizier, every governor, every jurist" is subject to Islamic doctrines mandated by these texts.¹⁵⁶

Khomeini concludes his doctrinal exposition of *velayat-e faqih* by insisting that it is a self-evident Shi'i precept, supported by the Qur'an and by the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams, as well as by a logical consideration of these sacred sources (in addition to their doctrinal authority).¹⁵⁷ Among the previous jurists who have supported the idea, Khomeini refers to Mirza Muhammad Taqi Shirazi and his edict against the use of tobacco during the Tobacco Revolt, to Kashif al-Qita', and to Molla Ahmad Naraqhi.¹⁵⁸

A Blueprint for Action

Khomeini proceeds to draw a general course of action that ought to be taken in order for the "Islamic government" to be established. Propaganda, he insists, is the chief mechanism of action at the revolutionaries' disposal. "You have neither a country nor an army," he reminds his supporters in Iraq, "but propaganda is possible."¹⁵⁹ Next to propaganda is training the revolutionary cadre.¹⁶⁰ Training is essential to combat the Jewish design to rule the world and the attempt of the Orientalists to distort the true Islam.¹⁶¹ Students of secular universities in Iran and abroad ought to be told of the true revolutionary Islam. Public gatherings such as Friday prayers and pilgrimages to Mecca ought to be recognized for their political dimensions.¹⁶² An "ashura'" has to be created through active political participation. There is a long struggle ahead, Khomeini anticipated in 1970, "no one in his right mind expects that our propaganda and training will soon lead to the establishment of the Islamic Government."¹⁶³ But programming is essential in any revolutionary movement. Of central significance is the massive politicization of the religious seminaries and an all-out war against the educational, political, and ideological hegemony of "The Western" colonialism. Clerical look-alikes ought to be severely admonished. If they are not thusly rectified, "then they will be dealt with differently."¹⁶⁴ The religious seminaries must be cleared of elements who are not active in this all-out war against tyranny. All the "court clerics" ought to be banished. But ultimately the revolutionary clerics must discipline themselves spiritually in order to lead the cause against the tyrannical regimes.

"God Almighty!" Khomeini pleads, "Cut off the hand of tyrants from the Muslim lands! Cut off the root of those who betray Islam and the Islamic countries!"¹⁶⁵

By What Authority?

Velayat-e Faqih is the masterful construction of a relentless argument, supported by the most sacred canonical sources of Shi'i Islam, for the absolute necessity of the "Islamic government" led by the religious authorities. In it, Khomeini proceeds from a very simple premise: It was the Divine will to establish a just and sacred community on earth, for which purpose He sent His last emissary, the Prophet Muhammad. Upon the death of the Prophet, the future of the Islamic community, thus Divinely established, could not have been left to chance or reversal to ungodly rule. Thus the doctrinal position of Shi'is on the designation of Twelve Infallible Imams perpetuates that Divine will. But in the absence of the Twelfth (Hidden) Imam, neither God Almighty nor the Sacred Text He revealed permits the rule of injustice, or tolerates a reversal to ungodly rule. Before the Twelfth Imam physically reappears, Khomeini, based on the phrase, "those of authority among you" in the Qur'anic passage, charges the ulama', who are just and most knowledgeable of the Divine will, with actual command over the political authority of the Muslim community. All other authorities, such as that of a monarch, not thus defined are illegitimate and opposition to them religiously mandatory.

Voicing the First Battle Cries

Beyond the (successful) formulation of the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* in 1970, in early 1971 Khomeini summarized his chief ideological positions in a message he sent to the hajj pilgrims. In this message, dated 8 February 1971, Khomeini made one of his most convincing appeals to repoliticize the hajj pilgrimage, to which he had already hinted in the *Velayat-e Faqih*:

It is incumbent upon you, the beloved Muslims . . . to take advantage of this opportunity and try to find a solution . . . for the Muslim problems. . . . You ought to be united in your thoughts and in your determinations towards independence and the uprooting of the cancer of colonialism.¹⁶⁶

In the same letter he addressed the Palestinian issue and charged that the persistence of this humiliating sore on the Islamic body politics is due to disagreement and hostility among the Muslims themselves. He blames the leaders of the Muslim countries for such counterproductive animosities. He then turns to a number of dissenting voices among the Muslims themselves, particularly in reaction to Shi'i-Sunni hostility, and suggests that these are

all plots of the colonial powers to divide the Muslim ranks to facilitate their own rule.¹⁶⁷

The central focus of Khomeini's hajj message is the illegitimacy of the Iranian government. He directs his charge against the Pahlavi regime via a reference to the friendly and cooperative relations between the Iranian and Israeli governments.¹⁶⁸ By this reference, he appeals particularly to the humiliation of the Arabs and recruits their sentiment, if not their active support, for his cause.

Having addressed the Muslim pilgrims in general, Khomeini then turns to Iranians in particular. Through a remarkable synthesis of diverse political forces, he makes a sweeping statement against the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state:

The foreigners have complete immunity in this country. And yet the ulama', the men of knowledge, the high school teachers, and other groups are not protected from any tyranny. The respectable merchants are all going bankrupt, one after the other. The tyranny and repression of the ruling regime is strangling this oppressed nation. Repression, incarceration, and medieval torture rule freely. In the name of the "Literacy Corps" and the "Health Corps" and other such illusive terms, the wicked goals of colonialism, as well as the dispersion of immorality into the heart of villages and towns, are in full sway.¹⁶⁹

Khomeini's last powerful strike is at the heart of the mass misery in the background of the stupendous extravaganza of various national celebrations of the Pahlavi glory:

This shameful and bloody "White Revolution," as they call it, that in one day annihilated some fifteen thousand Muslims, as is known, with tanks and machine guns, has caused more misery for the nation. The livelihoods of the captive peasants and farmers have worsened. Now in many cities and most of the villages there are no physicians, no hospitals, no drugs. There are no traces of public baths, no drinking water, no schools. According to some newspapers, in certain villages people take their innocent hungry children to graze on grass. And yet the tyrannical regime spends hundreds of millions of Tumans from the national treasury for shameful celebrations: The birthday party of this or that, the celebration of the twenty-fifth year of [the Pahlavi] monarchy, the celebration of [the Shah's] coronation, and, worst of all, this diabolic celebration of Two Thousand Five Hundredth anniversary of monarchy that only God knows what calamity for the people and what source of bribery and extortion for the instruments of colonialism it entails. Had the stupendous budget for such despicable events been spent on feeding the empty stomachs and providing a living for the miserable, some of our calamity would have been alleviated.¹⁷⁰

At the end of his message, Khomeini seeks the help of all Muslims in assisting him to "cut the root of colonialism and the colonialists" in the Islamic world.¹⁷¹

While Khomeini's concern was directed at Iran via a mass repoliticization of the universal Muslim gathering at Mecca, the first signs of Iraq turning into an inhospitable environment for the Ayatollah and his activities became evident in 1971. Sometime during that year Khomeini wrote a letter to the Iraqi president pleading for the cause of Iranians living in that country.¹⁷²

But Khomeini was not to be distracted by such events. His active and systematic contact with his supporters becomes evident from the prompt responses he writes to their regular correspondence. For example, he received a letter from the Muslim students in Europe on Monday, 26 April 1971, which corresponded in that year with 30 Safar 1391. In the Muslim (Shi'i) lunar calendar, the end of Safar is a particularly sacred period. The twentieth of Safar commemorates both the anniversary of the death of the Prophet Muhammad and the martyrdom of Imam Reza, the Eighth Shi'i Imam. The combination of these sacred days makes the thirtieth of the month a particularly reserved moment for a devout Shi'i, too sacred, perhaps, to be engaged in such mundane matters as routine correspondence. Yet on the very day that he receives the letter, Khomeini sits down to write a rather long response, outlining the course of action he thinks they ought to take. He again begins with the leitmotif of his getting old and not having seen his wishes come true. But, again, he expresses hope and optimism for the promising unification of the secular university students and the students of seminaries. In the same vein, he demonstrates his particular responsiveness to the ideological sensitivity of the students in secular universities. In inviting them to join ranks with their brothers among the seminarians, he urges them to "understand the corruption of the present culture, . . . and God willing throw away the [colonial] culture and replace it with the Islamic-humanistic [*Islami-Insani*] culture."¹⁷³ The key term here is "Islamic-humanistic," where the hyphenated "-humanistic," an alien term in Khomeini's juridical discourse, is, in fact, a concession and a signal, however inadvertent, that the contribution of the secular liberals will be recognized in the final composition of the revolutionary movement. Of course, the concession is made at the most tacit level. There is nothing essentially wrong with hyphenating the "Islamic" with the "humanistic." But the Persian neologism "*insani*" in this context is a clear reference to "secular humanism" that, consciously or unconsciously, Khomeini's hyphenating the "Islamic" acknowledges. Yet, it is quite evident, even at this early stage, that Khomeini has a noncompromising attitude toward leftist tendencies. He emphatically asserts that

if the young generation . . . understood . . . the goals of the Islamic government . . . the foundation of tyrannical and colonial states, as well as the misguided Communist schools and their like, would automatically crumble;¹⁷⁴

or "should the Islamic government . . . come to power, the very foundation of leftist diversions will be blown away."¹⁷⁵

The composition of these Muslim students who studied in Europe and in the United States and who were attracted to Ayatollah Khomeini, regularly corresponding with him and receiving his revolutionary messages, is also of some significance in the future making of the Revolution. In their letters to Khomeini, repeated references occur to two major characterizing aspects: First, they insist on being identified as "Muslim students"; and second they have an "annual meeting—the Persian language group" to distinguish them from other, non-Iranian, Muslim students. Given that during the 1960s and 1970s there was a pervasive process of secularization among the Iranian students abroad, in the course of which both Islam and the Persian language were beginning to lose their historical grip on their identity, the former more than the latter, this repeated emphasis on Islam and the Persian language demonstrates a deliberate and conscious effort to remain isolated from "The Western" transformative forces and contexts. They had, of course, physically moved to European and American cities. They were bright young students who studied mostly physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, and computer science. But the minimum language requirement to study in these disciplines meant that they could go to Paris, London, or Cambridge (Massachusetts) and spend four to eight years earning their degrees without any significant modification in their received and perceived notions of history, religion, or politics. Their deliberate seclusion behind the protective, however vaguely constructed, walls of "Muslim" and "Persian-speaking" inevitably spelled an innate suspicion of anything alien (particularly "Western") and an equally compelling propensity to respond positively to signals and symbols of traditional authority. A religiously minded student, seventeen or eighteen when transplanted to a European or American university campus, with a petrified and estranged constitution and no inquisitive mind beyond the call of scholastic duty, who could just barely cope with the boisterous noise of an erupting "Western" youth movement, and who had neither the capacity to evaluate independently nor the spirit to experiment freely, would generally be attracted to distant calls of a familiar voice. Khomeini was that distant call. He spoke with that familiar voice.

For their secular-minded compatriots, these religiously minded students were something of an antiquarian oddity. The separation between the two types originated in Iran where decades of secularization had created an urban bourgeoisie, liberal or left in its ideological disposition, vis-à-vis the traditional (bazaar) bourgeoisie. Although exceptions could be found, children of the modern (comprador) bourgeoisie had a greater propensity to be secular in their ideological disposition. Dividing the political loyalties of these secular students were left and liberal ideas. Confronting them on both

constitutional and ideological dispositions were children of the traditional (bazaar) bourgeoisie who were born and bred with a stronger dosage of Shi'i sentimentalities. While the secular students would be automatically attracted to left and liberal political groupings, the religiously oriented would gather around their politically resensitized public pieties. Friday prayers were the most public form of their gatherings. Such gatherings were not necessarily political in nature. They were, in effect, a transplanted similitude of nostalgic memories about their home. Yet it was precisely such communities of faith and fidelity that responded positively to Khomeini's call for revolution.

Comparing Good and Evil: Ali and Mohammad Reza

Back in Iran, the preparation for the international celebration of the 2,500 anniversary of the Persian monarchy, highlighted in Persepolis on 15 October 1971, was underway and gave Khomeini the most striking opportunity to lash out against the Pahlavi state. In a statement dated 27 May 1971, Khomeini updated his revolutionary message to the Iranian public. He addressed his message first and foremost to his clerical colleagues. "Under certain circumstances," he declared, "I feel obligated to remind Your Excellencies of the Muslims' predicament. Perchance Your Excellencies, too, would feel obligated. Perchance, you too would do your share to help your Muslim brothers."¹⁷⁶ The stupendous extravaganza of Pahlavi vanity in these celebrations was the occasion that Khomeini thought would incite the moral indignation of his apolitical colleagues. He proceeds to deliver a poignant admonition against "the carnal soul," which he considers the chief barrier preventing the historical realization of a "truly Islamic government under Ali" or afterwards. The reference to the hazards of following the carnal soul could not be lost on Khomeini's clerical colleagues who had chosen to support or at least with their silence condone, and thus give their active or passive blessings to, the Pahlavi monarchy. In this statement Khomeini deliberately sets the agenda for reconstructing a historical image for "the Islamic government." Throughout Islamic history, after the period of the Prophet himself, he considers the short caliphate of Ali (656–661) as the only ideal state when "Islam as it truly is"¹⁷⁷ manifested itself. The most prominent feature of this short-lived but ideal state, which renders it an archetypal model for all legitimate modes of political order, is "justice." Ali's justice as a binding virtue is best demonstrated in the purposeful ascetic exercises that he willingly endured. The admiration with which Khomeini speaks of Ali, his ascetic exercises, and the ideal Islamic state he created and ruled leaves no doubt as to how Khomeini sees himself in the mirror of Shi'i collective memory. Ali, according to Khomeini's recollection of his ideal image,

was such a person that when he came to power, his life, while a ruler, was more meager than those of us [clerics], of you seminarians, or those of these shopkeepers and greengrocers. A piece of barley bread which was so hard that . . . towards the end of his blessed life he could not break it with his hand. He would break it with his knee and would eat it [moistened] with water. That was the Islamic government.¹⁷⁸

Such renunciatory demands put upon oneself, particularly when amplified in a Shi'i context, are at the heart of the legitimacy that justifies a ruler and his reign. "I am afraid," Khomeini paraphrases Ali as having said, "that someone in my kingdom [sic = he means 'dominion'] would go hungry. . . . How can I go to bed with a full stomach, while even one of my subjects is hungry."¹⁷⁹ Justice, that no ruler should go to bed with a full stomach while his subjects are awake hungry, is the basis of legitimacy. Injustice, that a ruler should spend millions of dollars on flagrant pomposity while millions of his subjects live in destitution, was the most serious challenge to the legitimacy of a ruler. With such a powerful orchestration of historical imageries, the Iranian monarch was in deep trouble explaining himself to Khomeini's self-understanding and the virtuous images of Ali he provoked.

In a truly remarkable passage, Khomeini argues that the tragedy of Ali's rule coming to an abrupt end is even greater than that of the Karbala, when Ali's son Hossein and his supporters were massacred by Yazid's army on 10 October 680. Then with a deliberate pun on "celebration," he declares that if one has to celebrate anything in this world, it should be the short rule of justice under Ali. Against the reconstruction of such historical and mythical images the Iranian monarch did not have the slightest possibility of a convincing counterimage. In this universe of discourse, increasingly assuming revolutionary ascendancy, Cyrus the Great did not mean a thing.

Under the "Islamic government" there is also "the Islamic law" that Khomeini begins to propagate as a legitimate term in his political lexicon. Contrary to the non-Muslims, by which he also meant to include the ex-Muslims, the post-Muslims, and the lapsed-Muslims, who in Khomeini's sight thrived on an insatiable appetite for lust and debauchery, the true followers of Ali had but one simple source of legitimate sustenance, validated by "the Islamic law." Such moral extrapolations would later become the cornerstone of Khomeini's ethical codification of the revolutionary period. Beyond the immediacies of his revolutionary agenda in the early 1970s stood, somewhere remote in the horizons of Khomeini's agitated imagination, the vague but compelling image of a Republic of Justice and Austerity he wished would reign one day supreme in the four corners of the world.

As for the more immediate realities conducive to the revolutionary cause, Khomeini strikes hard at the sheer stupidity of the "2,500 Celebration" on

two fronts. First, despite the massive poverty that Khomeini's supporters have written to him about from all over Iran, "millions of Tumans are spent on the celebration of monarchy"; and, second, while Israel is "the enemy of Islam and currently at war against Islam,"¹⁸⁰ Israeli experts are organizing the celebration. Based on these two principal grounds, Khomeini categorically challenges the entire monarchical history and, with it, denies legitimacy to the very notion of the Persian monarchy which, he decreed, "from the day it started to this very day has been the shame of history."¹⁸¹ He refers to tyrannical kings, Reza Shah (reigned 1925–1941), Aqa Muhammad Khan Qajar (reigned 1794–1796), Nader Shah (reigned 1735–1747) and asks what there is to celebrate about the murdering and plundering of these rulers. Balancing the image, he refers back to the rule of Ali—the rule of humility, asceticism, and justice—that puts Mohammad Reza Shah's celebration to shame and renders his reign utterly illegitimate.

Khomeini lashes out against his apolitical clerical colleagues, too. He questions the relevance and validity of their quiet pursuit of jurisprudence while the Shah sells Iranian oil to Israel which, in turn, has endangered the Muslims' very existence. He urges the ulama' to send telegrams prohibiting the king from such shameful acts. But he immediately reminds himself that "how could such a thing happen? I would be very grateful if they did not object to my objections."¹⁸² Responding angrily to those apolitical clerics who had maintained that religious authorities should not interfere in politics, Khomeini asks rhetorically were not Prophet Muhammad and Ali religious leaders? He insists that interfering in politics is the responsibility and duty of the clerics should they be true to their calling. Assuming total historical responsibility in fighting against injustice, he argues that from the very beginning religious figures have opposed monarchical tyranny. "God Almighty," speaks Khomeini from Qur'anic memory, "sends Moses to annihilate this king [Pharaoh]."¹⁸³ There is no excuse for sitting idly, wasting the Muslim money they receive as various religious taxes, and not lifting a finger to help them fight against their misery. His followers should have courage. Victory is not such a far-fetched ideal. "Should we stay alive, we will do something. Do not make any mistake [assuming this government invincible]!"¹⁸⁴ This was in May 1971, some eight years before the Revolution.

Some Preliminary Preparations

Khomeini calls for two specific courses of action at this stage: first, that people engage in passive resistance, and, second, that all Iranian clerics express their disapproval of these celebrations. He assures the clerics that the government cannot imprison or kill them all.

If they could get rid of us, they would have killed me. It is not to their advantage. But I wish it were to their advantage. What do I want this life for?! Death to this life of mine! Do they think I am enjoying this life?!¹⁸⁵

Turning to the international attention that the celebrations were attracting, he calls on his clerical colleagues to write letters, "a stamp is not that expensive,"¹⁸⁶ to political figures in various Muslim countries prohibiting them from participating in a celebration the Israelis are organizing.

After the news of the "2,500 Celebration," the establishment of the "Religious Corps" was another occasion to incite Khomeini's wrath in 1971. This time he knew perfectly well the hidden dangers should the government successfully appropriate the religious institutions. On 12 November 1971, he sent a message vehemently denouncing the formation of the "Religious Corps" and branded it yet another plot by the colonial powers and their agents to subvert the sacred authority of the Muslim clerics. He saw the formation of the "Religious Corps" as an attempt on the part of the Pahlavi state to appropriate the Islamic medium of legitimacy away from its historical institutional basis in the clerical class. Khomeini, of course, would not tolerate this for a moment. The political authority was in no position to appropriate from the religious establishment its historical claim to safeguarding the Islamic doctrines. Quite the contrary, it has been the religious authorities, Khomeini remembered, who have safeguarded the territorial integrity of the state in times of crisis, as the Tobacco Revolt and the Constitutional Revolution clearly demonstrate. Khomeini calls on all members of the clerical class, regardless of their internal conflict, to unite against the formation of this corps and particularly attend to remote villages and towns to which this new plot of the state was targeted.¹⁸⁷

Five days after his statement on the "Religious Corps," on 17 November 1971, Khomeini issued a religious edict that has two crucial references. He had received an *estefta'* asking him about the juridical feasibility of spending portions of religious taxes for the families of political prisoners. He responds that one-third of the *sahm-e Imam* may be used to provide for the families of those Muslim activists who had been imprisoned or killed.¹⁸⁸ Significant as this edict is in financing, in effect, the oppositional movement, it is more important as the causal explanation for the juridical feasibility of such an allocation of religious taxes, because it is in this explanation that we see a truly revolutionary reading of an otherwise prosaic Shi'i ethical doctrine.

One of the seven "minor" (*foru'*) doctrines of Shi'ism is "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" (*al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa'l-nahy an'l-munkar*). The doctrine commands the Shi'i Muslims to encourage people to do the right thing and prohibits them from committing forbidden acts. Although this is a "mandatory" (*vajeb*) doctrine, it is in the category of "sufficiently

mandatory" or "relatively mandatory" (*Vajeb-e Kefa'i*), which means once one Muslim, or one group of Muslims, depending on the nature of "enjoining" and "forbidding," has fulfilled it, other Muslims are relieved of the duty. Shahid Thani (1505–1557), one of the chief theoreticians of Shi'i jurisprudence, in *Sharh-e Lum'ah*, one of the canonical sources of Shi'i law, identifies five major requisites for fulfilling this obligation: (1) the person who does the enjoining and the prohibiting ought to be knowledgeable of what is good and what is forbidden; (2) the person who is being thus admonished is persistent on doing otherwise; (3) the person who does the enjoining and the prohibiting is safe from personal damage and injury; (4) there is the possibility that the act of enjoining and prohibiting would, in fact, be effective; and (5) the act of enjoining and prohibiting ought to begin with guidance and admonition and, if that is not effective, then harsher measures are to be taken.¹⁸⁹

Both in the *estefta'* sent to Ayatollah Khomeini and in the edict he issued in response, the juridical obligation of "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" is cited as the doctrinal justification for such extreme political activities that have resulted in the incarceration or death of Muslim activists. In Khomeini's reading of this otherwise ethical doctrine, aggressive political actions by lay Shi'i activists against an illegitimate state on the authority of a "source of exemplary conduct" (*marja'-e taqlid*) are rendered mandatory. The juridical mechanism of this logical conclusion is impeccable. On the authority of Ayatollah Khomeini, as a supreme *marja'-e taqlid*, his personal followers could enjoin the good and prohibit the forbidden in any realm, including politics, with perfect juridical justification. Translated into lay terms, this means that Ayatollah Khomeini's followers were doctrinally and legally bound, in the context of Shi'i dogma and jurisprudence, to engage in active political struggle against a government they considered both illegitimate and the propagator of forbidden acts. It is precisely this doctrinal explanation that justifies Khomeini's allocation of money from the *sahm-e Imam* for the families of those imprisoned or killed by virtue of having obeyed this juridical injunction. The legal and doctrinal argument of the edict is flawless.

The significance of this revolutionary reading of the doctrine of "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil" cannot be overemphasized. With the existence and active operation of such simple doctrinal mechanisms, Khomeini's simultaneous construction of the *velayat-e faqih* argument, as the chief ideological justification of his revolutionary movement, is almost superfluous.

Some ten days later, on 27 November 1971, Khomeini was on the verge of leaving Iraq for Lebanon. The status of the Iranian community in Iraq was always subject to the fluctuation in the relationship between the governments of Iran and Iraq. Tension between the two governments had

grown when Iraq suspected Iran's involvement in a coup against the Ba'ath government. This led to the expulsion of an Iranian diplomat from Iraq on 22 January 1970. Iranian citizens were also subject to suspicion and harassment. Mass expulsions of Iranians were ordered by the Iraqi authorities. Khomeini was deeply distressed by the expulsion of the Iranians. "Under the present circumstances, I think my presence here is unnecessary. I shall send my passport to the proper authorities tomorrow, asking for an exit visa."¹⁹⁰ Much to the emotional distress of his audience, Khomeini declared that he wished to move to Lebanon and, "like the other Two Martyrs [Shahid-e Awwal (d. 1384) and Shahid-e Thani (1505–1557)], we too be blessed [with martyrdom]."¹⁹¹ This movement, however, was not to materialize. Although it is not quite clear how and why Khomeini changed his mind, there were indications that Muslim student organizations, or perhaps their Iraqi members, had intervened on his behalf.¹⁹²

Toward the end of 1971, Khomeini seems to have become resigned to remaining in Najaf while most of the Iranian community was expelled from Iraq. In a speech delivered on 23 December 1971, he encourages his student supporters not to lose hope. He reminds them that the Prophet Muhammad, too, had tactical setbacks when he was in Mecca. Khomeini contributes this problem to conflict among the two respective governments. He instructs his students to continue their studies, attend to the purification of their souls by asceticism, and more than anything else, seek to serve Islam, which is much more important than simply "learning a few words and concepts."¹⁹³ From the content of Khomeini's speech, it is quite evident that there were Iranian seminarians studying with him in Iraq who were subjected to deportation. He assures them that "God willing, we shall meet again here. Even if I, spending the last days of my life, may not be with you, you will come together here."¹⁹⁴ With a subtle but compelling messianic undertone, Khomeini assures his followers that the hostile governments cannot oppress the seminaries, and that the Muslims, particularly the Shi'ites, will support them. He particularly appeals to non-Iranian seminarians—the Afghanis, the Pakistanis, the Iraqis, etc.—and expects them to stay and not to lose the battlefield. In a mysterious reference he asserts, "of course my departure is due to certain considerations that many may not know. But other gentlemen [clerics] ought to stay and should not leave the battlefield vacant."¹⁹⁵ He is not specific as to precisely what these "certain considerations" are. He concludes with a reference to the recurring theme of "the victory of the oppressed" and reminds his Shi'i students that after all his tyrannies, Mu'awiyah is so obscure a figure now that nobody knows where his grave is. He expresses hope that the Iranians will support the "more than one hundred thousand refugees who have been expelled from Iraq."¹⁹⁶

Undoubtedly, this massive expulsion of Iranians from Iraq, instigated by

the outbreak of hostilities between the Iraqi and Iranian governments in 1971, damaged Khomeini's growing constituency in Najaf. However, the transference of many of his student supporters from Iraq to Iran consolidated his active representation inside Iran. He recommends to his students "to give my regards to the Iranian brothers, and tell them he begs you to be helpful . . . to their expelled Iranian brothers."¹⁹⁷

A Determined Revolutionary Survives the Mass Expulsion of His Supporters

During the first half of 1972, Khomeini seems to have remained silently observant of the effect of this mass Iranian expulsion from Iraq. The first time we hear from him is in a letter, dated 13 July 1972, in response to a group of Muslim students in the United States and Canada in which he is particularly emphatic about the inhibition of mixing Islam with "deviant and misleading schools which have emanated from the human mind."¹⁹⁸ This could very well be a reference to the emerging forms of "Islamic Socialism" à la the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization, which undoubtedly had a mass appeal to Muslim students abroad. In this letter Khomeini equally condemns both "the Left and the Right" plots against the unique promise of Islam for this-worldly and other-worldly salvation. He attacks both the United States and the Soviet Union for having conspired against Islam. He considers the creation of Israel a manifestation of this conspiracy between "The East" and "The West" to annihilate Islam and the Muslims.¹⁹⁹

Here, in the middle of 1972, there is no ambiguity that Khomeini's ultimate goal is to establish "the Islamic government." He asks for the active support of Muslim students to help him achieve this end and provides them with tactical and strategic guidance as to how to engage in propaganda warfare against the Pahlavi regime.²⁰⁰

On 11 September 1972 Khomeini sent a message to "the honorable people of Iran, especially Their Excellencies the clerics, the men of knowledge, the seminarians, God Almighty help them all."²⁰¹ Specifically attacking actions on the part of the Pahlavi state such as the conscription of the clerics, the attack against the seminaries, and the imprisonment, exile, and murder of opponents, Khomeini once again declared the Iranian government illegal and a puppet of the colonial powers. The appearance of such new terms as "neocolonialism," "developing country," and "the state-controlled press" indicates that Khomeini's political vocabulary is being expanded gradually beyond his ordinary juridical discourse. What is precisely the source of this expansion, what material he reads or whom he consults is difficult to ascertain. He obviously reads the Iranian newspapers. What other sources were at his disposal is subject to future biographical

studies. Among his reading material, there seems to be the Shah's *Mission for My Country*,²⁰² which he ridicules, accusing the Iranian monarch of having no other mission but

to suppress the students . . . annihilate the seminaries, imprison and torture the ulama', entrust the sacred [precepts] of the nation to Israel . . . give the control of what is left of the country's wealth to foreign investors, propagate adultery . . . give [diplomatic] immunity to foreign advisors . . . expand the neocolonial culture to the farthest reaches of the country.²⁰³

Khomeini concludes this message with a strong appeal to three broad groups of Iranians. First, he calls on the Iranian masses and asks them to "disobey the unjust laws as much as you can." Second, he urges clerics and seminarians to "study jurisprudence, cleanse your ethics, and enlighten and guide the oppressed nation [of Iran]." And finally, and most important, he obligates the soldiers in the Iranian army, whom he refers to as "the soldiers of the Hidden Imam, may God Almighty hasten His Appearance," to

stay firm in their military trainings, so that like Moses, peace be upon him, who was raised in the bosom of the Pharaoh and then annihilated the foundation of his tyranny, you too, on the day that the conditions permit, under the command of a righteous authority, can cut off the hands of these evils and uproot this corruption and injustice.²⁰⁴

The last we hear of Khomeini in 1972 is a statement, dated 11 October, on the occasion of the commencement of the holy month of Ramadan 1392.²⁰⁵ With a passing reference to those who, in pursuing their colonial and anti-Islamic goals, occasionally even use Islam itself, a probable reference to leftist tendencies with Islamic postures, he turns the sharp point of his discourse towards the Palestinian question. Throughout his years in exile, Khomeini was an active, perhaps even a pioneering, supporter of the Palestinian cause. He clearly and without the slightest hesitation in his language permitted Shi'i religious taxes to be spent actively on training Palestinian fighters and supporting Palestinian refugees. In this statement he openly declared:

Today it is incumbent upon all Muslims in general and upon the Arab governments and administrations in particular—to safeguard their own independence—to commit themselves to support and assist this valiant group. They should not spare any effort in arming, feeding, and supplying material for these fighters. It is also incumbent upon the valiant fighters [themselves] to trust in God, be bound by the teachings of the Qur'an, and with steadfastness and determination persist in their sacred objective.²⁰⁶

"The Greater Battle"

Khomeini's political objectives, both immediate and distant, stemmed from an inner conviction and determination, whose specific nature is worth considering further. In late 1972, in the course of a public lecture in Najaf, he confessed that his knowledge of what was happening in Iran was rather limited.²⁰⁷ Actively engaged in constructing his revolutionary discourse, he left the task of propagating his ideas to his students and followers in Iran. The numbers of these followers in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s should not be exaggerated. At best, this support was more intense in Qom, in Tehran Bazaar, and perhaps in old commercial centers of certain other large cities. The bond between the aged Ayatollah and his militant constituency throughout these trying years will have to be understood in deeper terms of a shared mystical conviction, operative at the most sublimated levels of subconsciousness. The revolutionary contraction of public and private ethics involves the social particulars of the mystical universe of shared sentiments that became operative between the aged Ayatollah and his distant followers. This distance itself, this physical invisibility, became an archetypal expression of something enduring in the Shi'i political culture. Since his exile in the early 1960s, Khomeini was both absent from and present in the Iranian political scene. He was nowhere to be seen visibly, to be sought out personally, yet his voice and presence were perfectly audible and visible among his constituency. Through that dual paradox is precisely how the Shi'i collective memory remembers its last figure of cosmic authority—the Hidden Imam. The identification need not have been final, absolute, total, or articulate. Mental pictures of communal and doctrinal origin, on one hand, and social and political realities, on the other, have a way of finding each other out.

Towards the end of 1972, Khomeini wrote his famous treatise on "the Greater Jihad." According to a famous prophetic tradition, battle against the carnal soul, a necessity, is a harder task than fighting the enemies of Islam. In his extended exegesis on this tradition, Khomeini charged the cutting edge of his ethical criticism particularly against his fellow clerics:

The ordinary people never let themselves have any claim to being an Imam, or a Mehdi, a prophet, or a divinity. It is the corrupt clergy that corrupts the world. *Once the clergy is corrupted, the world is corrupted.*²⁰⁸

Moral rectitude combined with the necessary knowledge of jurisprudence are the elementary prerequisites of leading an ascetic revolutionary cause towards a just moral society. Only through personal ascetic exercises, combatting the evils of the carnal soul, can men achieve the necessary moral authority to lead a nation. True to the essentials of his juridical profession, Khomeini stated that

If you want to be a useful and consequential member for Islam and for the society, lead a nation towards Islam, and defend the foundations of Islam, you ought to consolidate your [knowledge of] jurisprudence, and become an expert in it.²⁰⁹

But in addition to this indispensable achievement, and particularly for his present students, Khomeini anticipated future responsibilities of grave consequences, which necessitated unprecedented attention to moral rectitude. Yet he was not a man who dreamt minor dreams or envisioned limited roads. Ethical and juridical preparations were for higher and more ambitious purposes:

When you enter the seminary, more than anything else you ought to reform yourself . . . so that when you leave and . . . assume the leadership of a group of people in a city or in a neighborhood, people can benefit from your deeds. . . . Now that you are free, if you are negligent of your ethical purification and reform, when the society turns to you, you cannot reform yourself.²¹⁰

The voice of moral rectitude thus heard and sustained reaches far beyond Khomeini's immediate clerical constituency. Perhaps his greatest moral strength came from having waged, in his mind and in his body, ethical warfare against vices of all sorts, demanding virtues in both public and private domains. As a jurist, he had, of course, a canonical belief in scholastic learning. But in this address to his fellow seminarians, he admonished them for having been inadvertent in their ethical purification while attending their scholastic studies:

Concomitant with learning the scholastic issues, the seminarians equally need to learn and to teach themselves ethical concerns and spiritual matters. They need ethical guides, masters of spiritual virtues, sessions of advice and guidance.²¹¹

From Private to Public Virtues

Khomeini goes so far as to consider technical scholastic learning merely a preliminary agenda for the more essential objective of ethical purification.²¹² In his writings public and private virtues assume supremacy over the technical virtuosity of scholastic learning.

The first group Khomeini admonishes for ethical self-purification is the clergy. He instills in them a deep sense of responsibility towards society and warns them not merely against transgressive (*moharramat*) acts, but even against remissive occasions (*mobah*): "When you leave the scholastic center, you are expected to be [ethically] purified and rectified, so that you can guide the people . . . you have grave responsibilities."²¹³ Khomeini was quite sensitive to the dwindling status of the clergy in the Iranian society, which even bordered occasionally on ridicule. Demanding the highest manifestation of public virtues from the clergy, Khomeini warned them:

If a greengrocer committed a transgression, people say "that particular greengrocer is a transgressor." If a druggist committed a vice, people say "that particular druggist is an evildoer." But if a clergyman did something wrong, they won't say "that particular clergyman is misguided." They would say "the clergy are bad!"²¹⁴

Khomeini's actively political view of the clergy and his belief that they have a leadership responsibility towards the masses led him to expect the highest standards of ethical conduct from them: "The [ethical] responsibilities of the clergy are very demanding and much more than other people."²¹⁵ There is a direct relationship between the public and private virtues of a clergyman and those of the society:

If a clergyman is misguided, he may misguide a nation and lead them to corruption; if a clergyman is [ethically] purified, living up to Islamic ethics and customs, he would purify and guide the society.²¹⁶

In advancing the issue of private and public virtues, Khomeini faced not only the obvious rarity of profound scholastic achievements, which created a presumptuous position for the clergy, but certain notions of public decorum and propriety valid among the seminarians as well. One such notion was that distinguished scholars would not deliver sermons from the pulpit. Thus, being a *manbari*, a clergyman who delivered moral speeches from the pulpit, was associated with a lower rank cleric, unbecoming of a distinguished scholar. Khomeini condemned this tacit but obviously elitist code of propriety severely. Invoking the greatest code of Shi'i collective memory, he observed:

Nowadays in certain seminaries going to the pulpit and delivering ethical admonitions is considered rather shameful! Do they not know that His Holiness Ali, peace be upon him, went to the pulpit, admonishing the people, informing and guiding them, and keeping them alert. Other Imams did the same.²¹⁷

A necessary, perhaps inevitable, component of Khomeini's collective rejuvenation of public virtues was a latent xenophobia usually expressed in the conspiratorial "certain hidden hands"²¹⁸ or "certain secret elements."²¹⁹ Like most active, or passive, participants in Iranian politics, Khomeini believed foreigners were always secretly plotting against Iranian interests. Reaching the extremities of Anglophobic dimensions, such conspiratorial theories of Iranian history would ordinarily lead to refusing direct and unmitigated responsibilities for Iranians in their national history. In Khomeini's case, he does manage to keep an active political assertiveness in conjunction with his conspiratorial suspicion of foreigners.

In articulating public virtues, Khomeini sometimes uses frames of reference completely out of the Shi'i doctrinal context. In referring to Ali's virtues as a model, for example, he is reported to have fought against "tyranny, injustice, and class interest."²²⁰ The Marxist notion of "class

interest" enters his terminology without the slightest self-consciousness. To be sure, the occurrence of such terms in his discourse is relatively limited. To the degree that he used such terms, he appealed, whether he knew it or not, to a range of secular political activists who were particularly responsive to standard Marxist terminologies. Khomeini does not appear to recognize such terms as "class interest" as patently Marxist in their origin. But, in effect, he assimilates a large and active political community, presumably secular in its self-perceptions, into his redefinition of public virtues. The larger the ideological and ethical domains of this political constituency, as defined by Khomeini, the more effective a revolutionary instrument it would be when occasions for such instrumentalities arise.

Bridging the domains of private and public virtues, revolutionary asceticism was the chief attribute Khomeini celebrated for the clerics.²²¹ He referred,²²² for example, to a report he had read according to which the annual budget for the Vatican to send a priest to Washington equals the annual budget of an entire Shi'i seminary. This meager living, he agreed, obligated the clerics to abandon their petty competitions and concentrate on their moral purification. Such comparative imageries performed a dual function. Christianity and "The West" approximated each other; the opulence of each was identified as a corrupt and corrupting feature. Simultaneously identifying poverty with Shi'ism and Shi'i seminarians would ensure a great source of political and spiritual legitimacy. Asceticism and voluntary poverty breed authority. The prophetic tradition that "my poverty is my pride" is the quintessential legitimating force of both ascetic exercises and their concomitant, however tacit, political claims to authority. If a man has renounced worldly comfort, so the unspoken logic would read, his calls for political and revolutionary actions ought to be, ipso facto, altruistic and, in the Shi'i context, Divinely ordained.

Not to think him an antiquarian ascetic who works primarily through outdated symbols, preaching old virtues to a changing generation, we ought to observe Khomeini using modern imageries in driving a point home. In the world to come, he promised, we will witness our deeds performed in this world, "as if our life is being filmed, to be shown in that world."²²³ Or during the month of Ramadan, when satanic forces are in chains, one should not be "like a watch that has been wound by Satan . . . and automatically goes on doing evil deeds contrary to Islamic injunctions."²²⁴

The tone of Khomeini's speech on ethical conduct, which was delivered towards the end of the month of Sha'ban, before the beginning of the holy (fasting) month of Ramadan, is a clear indication of a religious leader, set on a revolutionary course of action, putting his own house in order. He wants the clergy under his instructions to be the perfect examples of ethical conduct so that they would function as the best exemplars of moral behavior in a show of force against a regime he considered deeply and irreversibly

rotten. At the same time, the subtext of Khomeini's treatise clearly indicates that he is extremely angry with the petty internal fighting among the clerics. He constantly warns his own rank against back-biting, libel, malicious intents, hatred, envy, and cynicism.²²⁵ Here he severely criticized the artificial and insignificant barriers in the path towards the political unification of the clergy as a potential revolutionary force. The subjects of his admonitions at this point were not merely the limited audience who attended his lectures in Najaf. Obviously, the tape machine that recorded his lectures reminded him of the larger political constituency in Iran that needed his fiery remarks.

A Revolutionary Reading of "Infallibility"

In his articulation of public and private virtues, Khomeini gives a new definition of "infallibility" (*esmat*) that is revolutionary not only in the canonical doctrines of Shi'ism but also in its implications for the nature of contemporary political authority. As a doctrinal foundation of Shi'ism, *esmat* is exclusive to the Twelve Imams, who are Divinely prevented from committing any sin. Khomeini redefines *esmat* to mean "nothing other than perfect faith."²²⁶ He reconstructs the canonical definition of *esmat*: "The meaning of the *esmat* of prophets and saints (*awlia*) is not that, for example, Gabriel holds their hand [and guides them]. (If Gabriel held Shimir's hand too, he would of course not commit a sin)."²²⁷ Upon this reunderstanding of *esmat*, Khomeini emphatically asserts that "infallibility is borne by faith. If one has faith in God, and if one sees God with the eyes of his heart, like sun, it would be impossible for him to commit a sin."²²⁸ His argument is that "in front of an armed powerful [master], infallibility is attained."²²⁹ That is, when one constantly sees himself in the presence of God, one is bound to avoid sinful acts. This argument is extended to account for the infallibility of the Shi'i Imams: "The [Shi'i] infallibles [the Twelve Imams], peace be upon them, after having been created from a pure substance, they constantly saw themselves in the presence . . . of God Almighty through asceticism, acquisition of illumination, and virtuous dispositions."²³⁰ The subtext of the argument, quite obviously, is that anyone who sees himself in the constant presence of God, through such acquisitive virtues as asceticism, would be infallible.

At this stage, Khomeini shifts the level of discourse to a mystical dimension that immediately suggests his own infallibility. The shift from a theological/Imamological to a mystical discourse is meticulous and rather remarkable in its logical consistency.

Khomeini had established that through acquisitive virtues such as asceticism, and the illumination that ensues, anyone can achieve infallibility. But it is by virtue of putting men in the constant presence of God that asceticism

and illumination can lead to infallibility. By the time the trilateral signals of asceticism, illumination, and the constant presence of God are invoked, we are already translated into a mystical discourse. Khomeini then takes this lead and, by invoking other ancillary mystical signals, guarantees the possibility of infallibility for a mystic who is not one of the Twelve Imams. This is how he transforms his language from, technically speaking, a theological to a mystical discourse:

The Infallibles . . . see themselves (*moshahedeh*) in the presence of God Almighty. They have faith in the meaning of "there is no divinity but Allah," that everything and everyone except God is perishable and cannot have a role in man's destiny: "Everything will perish save His countenance" [The Qur'an, 28:88]. If man has certitude (*yaqin*) and faith (*iman*) that the manifest and the latent worlds are [both at] the presence of His Majesty, and that Truth Almighty is omniscient and omnipresent, in the Presence of Truth, and in the bounty of His favors, it would be impossible for him to commit a sin. In front of a child who distinguishes [between good and evil], one does not commit a sin, would not appear naked, how can he appear naked [that is, commit a sin] in front of the Truth Almighty, in the Majesty of His Presence?²³¹

Such key mystical notions as "the presence of God in everything" and "there is nothing in existence but God," which are immediately related to the Sufi notion of *wahdat al-wujud* as particularly expounded by Muhy al-Din Ibn Arabi,²³² provide Khomeini with an accessible leverage to seek his way out of the Imamological impossibility of infallibility for a Shi'i cleric who obviously is not, nor has any claim to being, one of the Twelve Imams. Khomeini's infallibility is thus argued by a crucial and strategic shift in the level of discourse from an Imamological to a mystical language. Crucial in making this shift in polemical discourse possible are the collective writings of Muhy al-Din Ibn Arabi and Sadr al-Mote'allehiyn Molla Sadra Shirazi,²³³ of which texts Khomeini was a distinguished teacher for many years. Ibn Arabi had strongly argued for the primacy of an archetypal manifestation of historical *awlia'* (friends of God) whose criteria of recognition were established on a wide range of mystical exercises and their concomitant experiences. By wedding Ibn Arabi's mystical discourse to the rigorous canonical language of the Shi'i doctrines, and by then subjecting the two to the overriding scrutiny of a deeply philosophical mind, Molla Sadra had (successfully) demonstrated the feasibility of a gnostic, a philosophical, and a dogmatic concurrence of a "transcendental" view of the Divine Unity. Upon this strong Sadraian tradition, Khomeini constructs his revolutionary possibility of claiming "infallibility" for a Shi'i cleric, and that *within* the doctrinal confinements of the faith.

Immediately related to the question of infallibility, as now established for Khomeini, is who, accordingly, constitutes a figure of authority. In the same passage that dealt with the question of infallibility are three crucial

references to figures of authority. These references are particularly important because of their casual occurrence. Quite subconsciously, Khomeini makes the following three references to the supreme figures of authority in Islam: (1) *anbia'* and *awlia'* are believed to be the exclusive figures endowed with infallibility;²³⁴ (2) God, prophets, *awlia'*, and the angels are considered the target of animosity by those who love this world, as opposed to the other;²³⁵ and (3) God and *awlia'* are again considered the object of animosity by those who have lost their faith.²³⁶ The crucial point is that Imams, the Twelve supreme canonical figures of Shi'i authority, have been systematically excluded from this constructed hierarchy of command and obedience, particularly as the authority of these Shi'i Imams is derived from their infallibility. The shift of discourse that carefully establishes infallibility for Khomeini as one of the *awlia'*, as opposed to one of the Imams, is here further substantiated by putting the category of *awlia'* next to the Prophets, under God, and bypassing the Shi'i Imamological stipulation.

The established hierarchy of these seminal figures of authority is important. In his casual, and thus subconsciously revealing, references to these figures, Khomeini has virtually eliminated the categorical necessity, and the intermediary function, of the Shi'i Imams, established God as the Supreme Figure of authority, under whose authority those of the prophets and *awlia'* are, on equal standing, legitimated. Below both prophets and *awlia'* stand the angels. But this has a long tradition in various Islamic discourses that goes back to the famous passage in the second chapter of the Qur'an (2:30).²³⁷

To be sure, Khomeini's shift of discourse and his bypassing the categorical necessity of Imams as figures of authority are done in a perfectly bona fide mystical language. Within the context of the mystical discourse, in which he operates, it is the *velayat* aspect of the Imams that becomes relevant, not their *imamat*. In other words, it is as *awlia'*, and not as Imams, that Ali and his eleven descendants figure in the hierarchy of authority that Khomeini reconstructs here. Khomeini has been able, by a remarkable and rather revolutionary shift of discourse, to secure the all-important attribute of infallibility for himself as a member of the *awlia'* by eliminating the simultaneous theological and Imamological problems of violating the immanent expectation of the Mahdi.

Khomeini never claimed to be the Twelfth Imam. Nor has anyone serious among his companions suggested that. The root of his authority, and the honorific title of Imam attributed to him, will have to be understood on a continuum between the notion of *velayat-e faqih* and the range of deeply felt communal reverence offered him voluntarily. If we consider carefully the interplay between the two terms of *vali* and *Imam*, we should get to the heart of Khomeini's claim to legitimate authority, as well as to the theological, juridical, mystical, and Imamological roots of this claim.

From Ethics to Politics

The cumulative effect of *Jehad-e Akbar* is a forceful call for a revolutionary and politically committed reconstitution of the clerical order. In an emotional appeal to his fellow clerics, the then seventy-year-old Khomeini warned that

I am spending the last few days of my life. Sooner or later I shall not be among you anymore. But I predict a dark future and black days for you. Should you not rectify yourselves, prepare yourselves, discipline your studies and lives, God forbid, you would be condemned to annihilation in the future.²³⁸

Very clearly, Khomeini drew the lines where the battle was to be fought. On his side would stand the militant clergy. The seminarians would be readied for combat. Agents of colonialism were all conspiring against them; the clerics had to be alert.²³⁹ To combat the enemies, Khomeini spoke for the militant clergy: "I have to be an armed Muslim soldier, and be ready to sacrifice myself for Islam. I have to work for Islam, until I am annihilated."²⁴⁰

This is a critical reconstitution of what *Jehad-e Akbar* has meant historically. In the prophetic tradition, it was meant to balance *Jehad-e Asghar* (the lesser holy war). Khomeini's reading of *Jehad-e Akbar* totally repoliticizes the fighting against the carnal soul and redirects its moral energy against the "external" enemy of the faith. Here, he redefines the notion of *Jehad-e Akbar* from the mystical discourse, where it has meant to balance the exclusive preoccupation with worldly affairs, political or otherwise. Khomeini takes this concept from its mystical context, carries its obvious spiritual weight, imbues it with massive political content, compounds it with such strong emotional, prophetic, and millenarian appeals as "I shall not be among you, but . . .," and thus launches the doctrinal notion with tremendous cultural and political force.

Khomeini's severe admonitions of the Shi'i clergy in 1972 are an astounding indication of the terrible disciplinary disarray they must have been in at the time. These admonitions resemble, indeed, the self-disciplinary measures of a revolutionary leader who seeks to have his camp in order before a battle. To be sure, Khomeini's ardent criticism of the clergy in Najaf was in no way unique or peculiar. We witness more or less similar criticisms by some leading scholastic figures inside Iran, with or without a revolutionary disposition.²⁴¹

The Old Man and the Sea of Troubles

In 1973, Khomeini further consolidated his ties with his followers inside and outside Iran, hammered harder at the atrocities of the Pahlavi regime,

and thus gave more evidence of the illegitimacy of the state. But more emphatically than ever, he bitterly attacked those members of the clerical order who had not joined him and were, in fact, actively or passively supporting the Pahlavi state. In early 1973, it was quite evident to Khomeini that the Iranian government was in a massive process of appropriating the religious institutions. His letter of 15 March 1973 to Muslim students in Europe, the United States, and Canada, taking note of this fact, was thus targeted more for internal consumption in Iran.

By exploiting the propaganda possibilities at its disposal—radio, television, newspapers, and its various ministries—the Pahlavi regime, charged Ayatollah Khomeini, was acting on behalf of the colonial powers to destroy Islam in the name of Islam. Whether in organizing Islamic conferences, publishing new editions of the Qur'an, establishing the Ministry of Religious Endowments, forming the "Religious Corps," or "any other deceptive title," the ultimate purpose of the government was to "confiscate the Islamic circles, control and check the religious ceremonies, and infiltrate the seminaries."²⁴²

Assisting the Iranian monarch and his colonial masters in attaining these goals were a "bunch of misguided pseudoclerics who were directly or indirectly in the service of the tyrannical regime"²⁴³ and who, Khomeini commanded, had to be expelled from the seminaries. "If the fabricated clerics and the dishonorable ulama' look-alikes were to disappear from the society, so that they could not deceive the people," Khomeini promised, "the tyrannical regime will never be able to implement the wicked designs of the colonialists."²⁴⁴ He was so enraged by the possibility of the Shi'i institutions and figures of authority being appropriated and assimilated by the state that no more than a month after this letter to the Muslim students abroad, he sent a message directly to Iran, dated sometime in late March or early April 1973, in which he reiterated his suspicion that the Pahlavi state was actively determined to obliterate the historical independence of the Shi'i ulama':

Today there are vast and pervasive designs in operation . . . , designs with the implementation of which they want, in their rotten imagination, to turn all grand ayatollahs, distinguished scholars, and honorable orators into worthless and insignificant governmental employees.²⁴⁵

In the same statement, Khomeini is appalled by the news that the Iranian king is purchasing "two billion dollars" in arms and spare parts from the United States, in addition to other purchases from "the colonialist English." He accuses the Iranian monarch of going mad towards the end of his life. "I am concerned about Islam and the Muslims from the psychological maladies that afflict these thugs in their old age."²⁴⁶

At the end of this letter, Khomeini, for the first time since his exile in

November 1964, calls for open defiance by the clerics. Prohibiting the Iranian masses from going to mosques and other religious gatherings organized by the Ministry of the Religious Endowments, he calls on his clerical followers, "should conditions permit, to strike and not go to mosques and pulpits for a limited time."²⁴⁷ He equally commands his mass of followers to support these clerics should they decide to strike.

In a simultaneous letter to his "dear young seminarian and university students, the merchants, the peasants, and other groups," dated 25 March 1973, Khomeini's tone of voice has a particularly sharp edge. He calls on his young supporters to "throw out these shameless oilmongers and their despicable agents from the country like garbage."²⁴⁸ He again expresses hope for their doing what he may not live to see. As a final and crucial blow to the legitimacy of the Iranian monarch, he refers to the Iranian youth as "the dear ones in the country of Amir al-Mu'menin [Ali]." The country belonged to the first Shi'i Imam, not to the last Persian king, as the Iranian soldiers were the army of the last, Hidden, Shi'i Imam, not the instruments of "the First Person of the Kingdom."

The second anniversary of the "2,500 Celebration" in 1973 coincided with the Arab-Israeli war. Khomeini did not miss the dark irony of the Iranian monarch celebrating his royal lineage when Muslims were fighting against Israel. In a statement to the Iranian people, dated Friday, 14 September 1973, he bitterly condemned the Iranian monarch and his support for Israel and called on Iranian clerics to force the monarch to join other Muslim countries in attacking Israel. He urged the Iranian masses—openly, clearly, and loudly—to "oppose the interests of the United States and Israel in Iran, attack them even to the point of destruction."²⁴⁹ He called on Iranian Shi'is to counterbalance the help of the Iranian Jewish community to Israel by establishing and contributing to funds for Palestinians and others who fight against Israel.²⁵⁰ In a separate statement, issued on 7 November 1973, Khomeini addressed all the Muslim countries and nations, asking for their help in the Palestinian cause. He encouraged the Arab oil embargo against the governments that support Israel and asked for "material and spiritual support . . . blood, medicine, arms, and food"²⁵¹ to be sent to the fighting Muslims.

Signs of Silence

The year 1974 was the occasion for yet another long pause when the exiled revolutionary master remained secluded with his private assessments of what was to be done. The strained relationship between the Iranian and the Iraqi governments, which almost resulted in war, the mass expulsion of many Iranians from Iraq, accompanied by some prominent clerics, may have been the external causes for Khomeini's yearlong silence. Perhaps

advisedly, he did not wish to issue hostile proclamations against the monarch of his native land while his host country publicly opposed him.

The "Resurrection Party" Resurrects Khomeini's Wrath

But Khomeini's silence did not last long. On 12 March 1975 he issued a rather long edict in response to an *estefta*' by a group of his followers about the "Resurrection Party."

In March 1975 the farce theatricality of a dual-party system, which gave a thinly disguised posture of political civility to the Iranian monarch's reign by brute force, came to an abrupt end when Mohammad Reza Pahlavi considered it more efficacious to have one all-embracing political party that would extend his authoritarian rule deep into totalitarian dimensions. Reminiscent of the National Socialist Party in the 1930s Germany, the Resurrection Party, *Hezb-e Rastakhiz*, was to include all Iranians from all walks of life in all their political and civil aspirations. The monarch's argument, put very explicitly, was that you either believed in the ideals of modern Iran designed by His Imperial Majesty or you did not. If you did, you would join the party; if you did not, you would leave the country. Joining the Resurrection Party became the subject of serious fear and concern for ordinary Iranians. For Iranians with a religious bent, or for those with serious sympathy for Ayatollah Khomeini, it was a matter of ideological and religious principle. Khomeini's supporters lost no time in officially asking for his edict in the matter, nor did he lose any time in emphatically issuing his opinion and thus emerging from more than a yearlong silence.

"In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate," Khomeini's statement began ever so officially, ever so emphatically. "Because this party is opposed to Islam and to the Muslim nation of Iran, participating in it is forbidden and [tantamount to] helping the oppression and destitution of Muslims."²⁵² This was, of course, a religious commandment obligating believing Shi'is to abstain from becoming members of the Resurrection Party. However, the declaration that followed this inhibition was even more crucial in drawing the battlelines between the megalomaniac monarch and the angry Ayatollah. "Opposing it," Khomeini decreed about the Resurrection Party, "is one of the clearest cases of 'forbidding the evil [act].'"²⁵³ This made active opposition to the latest, most politically ambitious, wishes of the Iranian monarch more than just an ideological conviction—it rendered it a mandatory religious obligation. Khomeini turned the formation of this party around and made it into the most emphatic mark of the failure of the monarch's so-called "king and the people revolution." "If this so-called revolution was by the king and the people," he asked rhetorically, "then what is the need for this mandatory party?"²⁵⁴

Khomeini challenges the validity of this party on constitutional grounds

and on "international principles."²⁵⁵ He enumerates the number of ways in which the monarch has violated the Iranian constitution. But lest he would appear to approve the Iranian constitution, according to which the ceremonial position of the king is legitimated, he takes one last step and charges that "the rotten monarchical system is Islamically annulled."²⁵⁶ By having sold the Iranian national wealth and honor to foreign, particularly American, interests and having failed to provide the Iranian masses with a decent standard of living, the Iranian monarch, Khomeini charged, has lost all basis of his legitimacy. It is thus all too conceivable for Khomeini to call, now that with the mandatory establishment of a totalitarian party, the king has confessed his failure to secure his legitimacy, for "this rotten regime to change, God willing."²⁵⁷

Towards the end of his statement, Khomeini calls on his fellow clerics, seminarians and university students, merchants, workers, and peasants to defy the wishes of the monarch and refuse to join the Resurrection Party. Although he appears to ask merely for "passive resistance,"²⁵⁸ he does, for the first time since his exile, promise that "the regime is about to fall."²⁵⁹ He assures his followers that "victory is yours"²⁶⁰ and warns them not to be fooled by the duplicity of the government that while it "disregards the Qur'anic commandments, publishes [the Holy Book] itself."²⁶¹

Khomeini concludes this statement with the first allusion, since his 1964 exile, to his wishes to return to Iran and lead the movement against the Pahlavi state:

Secluded here in my exile, I am in agony for the miseries of the Iranian nation. How I wish I could be with them in these trying times, cooperating with them closely in these sacred struggles to save Islam and Iran. I beseech God Almighty to cut off the hands of the foreigners and their agents.²⁶²

Some four months later, on 11 July 1975, Khomeini followed up his March statement with yet another signal of the coming Revolution. "The news from Iran, though the cause of utmost sorrow and sadness, is [also] the cause of hope and the shining promise of victory."²⁶³ On Saturday, 7 June 1975, some three months after his initial statement on the Resurrection Party, on the occasion of the twelfth anniversary of the June 1963 uprising, there had apparently been a demonstration in Qom with some reported casualties.²⁶⁴ Khomeini commended his followers for having defied the monarch's sham political party, declared the Pahlavi state "reactionary" and "medieval,"²⁶⁵ and once again expressed fear that the mad Iranian monarch might take drastic measures out of desperation and because of psychological defects.²⁶⁶ Feelings of "these last days of my life"²⁶⁷ still persist in Khomeini.

Towards the end of August, Khomeini's hopes for a revolutionary movement seem to be quite high. In a letter to the confederation of Muslim

student associations in Europe, dated 25 August 1975, he speaks of "good tidings . . . which strengthen the hope for a near future."²⁶⁸ He is optimistic that the close association between the old and the new, the seminarians and the university students, will lead to tangible results. He charges the Muslim students to do their best from their vantage point.²⁶⁹

Khomeini's optimism is extended well into the next month. On Wednesday, 24 September 1975, he responds to a letter from the Muslim student associations in the United States and Canada. Again he expresses hope for the "commencement of the people's awakening,"²⁷⁰ of the shameful defeat of the king and his party, and of the desperate measures of the regime that now during the month of Ramadan was broadcasting religious programs from the radio (24 September of that year coincided with 17 Ramadan, two days before one of the most sacred days of the month, 19 Ramadan, when Ali was struck by Ibn Muljam's sword in 41 A.H./661 C.E.).

Taming the Excitement

For some reason, the revolutionary excitement apparent in Khomeini's writings during 1975 disappears in 1976. Except for two instances, he is not heard from. And in these two instances the color of his optimism has faded.

Early in 1976 Khomeini arranged for some financial aspects of the revolutionary momentum. In an edict issued in response to an *estefta'*, dated 21 February 1976 (which coincided with 20 Safar 1396, the Arba'in, the fortieth day after the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, a sacred date in the Shi'i calendar), Khomeini permitted the use of portions of the religious taxes due to him to be spent on "the printing and publication of political-Islamic books which express the Islamic truths and the opinions of the grand religious authorities on opposing and fighting the tyrants."²⁷¹

We next hear of Khomeini some seven months later, in a statement issued on Saturday, 25 September 1976, on the occasion of *Id-e Fetra*, 30 Ramadan 1396, the last day in the holy month of Ramadan. The only significant reference in this statement is to the news of the Iranian monarch's latest wishes to change the Iranian calendar, an event that demanded Khomeini's full attention.

For most of its Islamic period, Iran has regulated its history with the common Islamic calendar, which is lunar and begins with the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina on 24 September 622 C.E. In modern Iranian history, however, two other calendars have been commonly used as well. First is the Iranian calendar, which, contrary to the Islamic, is solar, with pre-Islamic Persian names for its twelve months and which, like the Islamic, commences with the same migration of the Prophet. Second is the common Gregorian calendar which, with increasing contact

between Iran and the world's commercial and political organizations, became inevitable. Thus, on a normal day Iranians thought of themselves as living their lives in three concurrent chronological universes: the Iranian, the Islamic, and "The Western." Which day of which month of which year an Iranian would reckon a particular Monday was perhaps the most symbolic gesture of his or her self-perceived identity. The more religiously oriented were sensitive and alert to the passage of time in lunar terms, with Arabic names of the months, hallowed and venerable, charted and sanctified by the regular intervals of sacred days, months, periods. The more nationalistically oriented Iranians counted the days of their lives in solar terms, with archaic but much too dear Persian names of the months, all culminating in the single most important day on the calendar, the celebration of the national new year, *Nowruz*, on the vernal equinox, 1 Farvardin (21 March) of every year. But when in "The Western" mood of their assumed identity, the "modern" state of their mind, Iranians were equally, if not increasingly more, sensitive to the passage of the Occidental time, to the 1 January when the post-Muslim regulars of uptown nightclubs left no available seat for the local Armenians, to 14 July when the Francophiles stormed the Bastilles of their imagination, to 25 December when the misplaced American-educated elite sat around their Christmas trees opening boxes of their nostalgic youth from New York or San Francisco.

As yet another measure of his attempt to shift the cultural basis of his legitimacy from Islamic to Iranian symbolics, the monarch decided to alter this arrangement. He wished for the Iranian calendar, the one particularly dear to the nationalists, to begin not with the migration of the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, but, instead, to commence with the presumed date of the coronation of Cyrus the Great, the assumed royal progenitor with whom the man identified. Thus, instead of 1,353 years after the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, the year was, in fact, the Iranians were informed one morning, 2,535 years after the coronation of Cyrus the Great. By some happy accident, or perhaps through some ingenious calculations, the last two digits of the year, 35, were also the number of years that His Imperial Majesty was in power.

Khomeini in Najaf did not like these numbers or the idea behind them. He considered them the clear indications of the anti-Islamic designs of the regime and forbade Iranians from using the new calendar.²⁷²

The Final Pre-Revolutionary Statement

What rekindled Khomeini's revolutionary zeal in 1977 were events in Lebanon, not in Iran. His first official announcement in 1977 was in reference to the Palestinian predicament in Lebanon.

His close proximity to events in Lebanon had made Khomeini particularly sensitive to the fate of the Palestinians and the Muslim community in general in that country. The indirect intervention of Syria in the Lebanese civil war in January 1976 led to a more active role for this country in the internal affairs of Lebanon. The abortive coup d'état of General Aziz al-Ahdab in March 1976 led to the full-fledged Syrian invasion in June 1976. The Palestinian opposition, the Syrian second offensive in September 1976, and the formation of the Lebanese Front and the Lebanese Forces all made 1976 one of the fiercest and bloodiest years in the history of the civil war in that country.

In a statement publicized on 22 January 1977, Khomeini refers to the temporary halt in hostility in Lebanon. This must be a reference to the Riyad and Cairo agreements that briefly ended the Lebanese civil war in October 1976. The principal point of this statement is to draw attention to the miserable survivors of the Lebanese civil war—women and children in particular. Repeatedly emphasizing the procedure of this help to be "respectful and honorable," lest the recipients be offended, Khomeini calls on all Muslims, particularly Iranians, to organize material assistance for the Lebanese victims. He permits portions of monies from religious taxes due to him to be spent on this endeavor.²⁷³

Later that year, Khomeini's attention was redirected to a principal ideology of "the Islamic Ideology," a man who did his best, however inadvertently, to prepare the state of psychological expectation for Khomeini's coming. On 19 June 1977, Ali Shari'ati died in London of a heart attack. This resulted in many letters to Ayatollah Khomeini from Muslim students abroad, expressing their condolences. Sometime in July, Khomeini sent a letter to Ibrahim Yazdi, a leader of the Iranian Muslim Students Association in the United States and a future participant in the Revolution, acknowledging the sympathies expressed in these letters. His actual reference to Ali Shari'ati in this letter is terse, rather dismissive, and even unattentive. "Many telegrams have been received from associations of Muslim students and other respected brothers in Europe and the United States on the [occasion of the] death of Dr. Ali Shari'ati."²⁷⁴ That is the only time Khomeini actually refers to Shari'ati's name. He does not say anything else about him, his significance, or his contributions to the Islamic cause. He demonstrates no appreciation of Shari'ati's role in Islamicizing a significant portion of the contemporary political culture. Even more significant, towards the end of the letter he severely criticizes "mysterious elements who wish to create divisions among Muslim associations."²⁷⁵ He accuses these forces of being agents of foreigners and orders them expelled from the Muslim associations. He commands his student followers to gather around "the flag of Islam which is the only banner of unity."²⁷⁶

It is possible to assume that Khomeini was not particularly attracted to Shari'ati's version of a reconstructed Islamic consciousness. It is quite possible that he suspected Shari'ati and his followers of Marxist tendencies. Some members of the Muslim student associations abroad were indeed attracted to Shari'ati's ideas. This might have created certain tensions or even factionalism in the student body. "Agents of foreigners" is usually Khomeini's key word for Communists, in his judgment agents of the Soviet Union. At any rate, the lack of a record of written communication between Khomeini and Shari'ati during the crucial decades of the 1960s and the 1970s and a comparison between Khomeini's affection for Hojjat al-Islam Sa'idi and his genuine sadness at his death and a complete lack of sentiment at Shari'ati's death suggest that Khomeini was probably suspicious of the whole Hosseyniyyeh Ershad movement as later dominated by the Paris-educated sociologist. The cleavage that critically alienated Shari'ati and Motahhari from each other, in light of the close ties between Motahhari and Khomeini, may further confirm this possibility.

What is certain, however, is the growing suspicion, in fact outright condemnation, of Islamic activists with Marxist tendencies, or, what would amount to the same ideological hybrid, Marxists with Islamic postures. Some time in July or August 1977, Khomeini receives a letter from his supporters inside Iran asking him to clarify his position on

certain ["Communists, followers of Marx, and those who have been diverted from Ali's, peace be upon him, status of *velayat*"] who unfortunately introduce themselves as related to you, and as your followers.²⁷⁷

This could be either a specific reference to the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization or a generic reference to them, all supporters of Shari'ati, and any one else who would fit the description.

Khomeini denounces such leftist tendencies with one of his strongest key terms, reserved for Communists. "It is quite possible," he surmised poignantly, "that groups engaged in anti-Islamic and antireligious activities in Iran, under various names and with different methods, are political organizations created by foreigners in order to weaken Islam, the sacred Shi'i religion, and the exalted position of the clerics."²⁷⁸ Even more emphatically, he identified these groups as those engaged "in creating misguided parties, connected [to foreign powers], and groups apparently Islamic but in truth hostile to it."²⁷⁹

Khomeini condemns the local agents of the foreign powers, "whether leftist or rightist," and considers the claim of his being connected to such leftist groups as one of their many stratagems. Foreigners, as enemies of Islam, he contends, have recognized the righteous cause of the Muslim clerics and have historically tried to suppress it through a variety of political means:

Sometimes through the empowering of their wicked agents upon the Muslim countries; sometimes through creation and propagation of such false religions as Babism, Bahatism, and Wahabism; and sometime through misguided parties.²⁸⁰

To leave no room for misinterpretation, he emphatically proclaimed:

I hate and despise these treacherous groups, whether Communist, or Marxist, or those diverted from the Shi'i religion. . . . I consider them traitors to the country, to Islam, and to the [Shi'i] faith.²⁸¹

At the end of this statement, Khomeini makes two references that could gather in the figure of Ayatollah Taleqani. First, he admonishes that

it is necessary for those who belong to the clerical [class], and who defend Islam and the [Shi'i] faith, to stay away from these corrupting groups. They are to defend the exalted position of the clerics, avoid diversion and dispute, and with alertness dispel the stratagems of the foreigners.²⁸²

Taleqani was the chief clerical figure who actively supported the Mojahedin. Second, Khomeini commands that "the respected writers and thinkers ought to refrain seriously from interpreting and explicating the Magnanimous Qur'an and the Islamic commandments according to their personal opinion."²⁸³ Taleqani, as we have noted,²⁸⁴ was the author of the multivolume *Partovi az Qur'an*, which offered a markedly modern and pronouncedly evolutionist reading of the Holy Text.

Although pending further concrete evidence it is incorrect to assume any particular bend in the mode of the relationship between Ayatollah Khomeini and such figures as Ali Shari'ati and Ayatollah Taleqani, it is quite evident from these past two documents that by disposition Khomeini did not particularly trust the kinds of rival ideological reconstitutions that updated Islam in the 1960s and 1970s.

The last we hear from Khomeini before the death of his son on Monday, 23 October 1978, is a comprehensive statement to his students in Najaf, dated Wednesday, 28 September 1977. The opening section reveals one of the rarest moments of humor in his written records. He reports that after his lecture on "forceful appropriation" (*ghashb*) the day before, one of his students had reminded him that he had covered that topic in a previous lecture.

This is not unusual from the likes of me. When one grows old and age conquers him, all one's powers weaken. As one's physical powers grow weak when one becomes an old man, so does one's mental and spiritual strength, as well as one's power and spirit to express one's obedience [to God].²⁸⁵

One other remarkable moment in this speech is when Khomeini contemplates the nature of man—whom he calls "the very essence of the universe"²⁸⁶—consisting of three simultaneous states of mineral, animal, and sublime

existence. Here is a rare glimpse of Khomeini as his more serious students remember him teaching mysticism in Qom. His reference to these hierarchical states of man is an allusion to an elaborate tradition in Islamic mysticism best captured in the following verses of Rumi:

I died to the inorganic state and became endowed with growth, and (then) I died to (vegetable) growth and attained to the animal.

I died to the animality and became Adam (man): why, then, should I fear? When I become less by dying?

At the next remove I shall die to man, that I may soar and lift up my head amongst the angels;

And I must escape even from (the state of) the angel: *everything is perishing except His Face*.

Once more I shall be sacrificed and die to the angel: I shall become that which enters not into the imagination.

Then I shall become nonexistence: nonexistence saith to me (in tunes loud), as an organ, *Verily, unto Him shall we return*.²⁸⁷

Khomeini then links this hierarchical conception of man's spiritual growth to the ancillary notion of "the Perfect Man,"²⁸⁸ according to which there is an archetypal model of perfection towards which ordinary man ought to strive.

The idea of "the Perfect Man" has a long and elaborate tradition in Islamic mysticism. One of the chief theoreticians of the concept is Aziz al-Din al-Nasafi who, in his *al-Insan al-Kamil*,²⁸⁹ gives an elaborate description of how, through ascetic and spiritual exercises, man achieves the highest potentials that are divinely entrusted to him. To help attain this state of perfection, Islam has its own political agenda, Khomeini argues, which is essentially different from man-made schools of political order. "Secular governments . . . are only concerned with the social order."²⁹⁰ In these secular modes of political order, he believes, insofar as one is socially harmless, the government will leave him alone.

What he wants to do in the privacy of his home, drinking wine, . . . gambling, or other such dirty deeds, the government has nothing to do with him. Only if he comes out screaming, then he would be prosecuted, because that disturbs the peace.²⁹¹

But this, Khomeini contends, is the way secular governments work.

Islam and divine governments are not like that. These [governments] have commandments for everybody, everywhere, at any place, in any condition. If a person

were to commit an immoral dirty deed right next to his house, Islamic governments have business with him.²⁹²

The business of Islam with man is not limited, Khomeini assures his students, to merely political matters.

[Islam] has rules for every person, even before birth, before his marriage, until his marriage, pregnancy, birth, until upbringing of the child, the education of the adult, until puberty, youth, until old age, until death, into the grave, and beyond the grave. [The Islamic rules] do not come to an end simply [because the person] is put into the grave. . . . That is just the beginning.²⁹³

To put it very simply, "the Islamic rules are not limited just to this world, and they are not limited just to the other world."²⁹⁴ When translated into political terms, the idea of "the perfect man," perfectly harmless in its mystical context, necessitates a total, final, and absolutely unconditional program of moral and ideological righteousness upon which Islam, as a social and metaphysical order, teaches, regulates, guides, and controls every conceivable move and manner of a Muslim individual, from before-the-cradle to after-the-grave, in this and in the world to come, from pre- to posteternity.

Next in Khomeini's agenda in this long lecture is a clear admonition of the kinds of Qur'anic exegesis pioneered by Ayatollah Taleqani. After a preliminary discussion of the modes of Qur'anic commentary, which he divides into two categories of philosophical and gnostic, at one end, and theological and juridical, at the other, Khomeini turns to "some writers . . . [who] are turning all spiritual matters to material ones."²⁹⁵ He makes sure to refer to "these writers" as "good Muslims who serve [the people]" and who "write very well."²⁹⁶ But he admonishes them for having gone to the extreme opposite of those who merely emphasize the other-worldly and spiritual aspects of the Qur'an. With the following passage, he makes an explicit indictment of this "material" mode of Qur'anic exegesis:

Now that materialism has become so powerfully predominant in the world, and there is much glitter in the world . . . there are many who are particularly attached to this world. Consequently, a group of people have now come forward who maintain that the ultimate principle of all Islamic rules is to create social justice, that social classes are [to be] eliminated, and that there is nothing more to Islam.²⁹⁷

The description fits Taleqani's reading of the Qur'an in his *Partovi az Qur'an*. Khomeini, without naming Taleqani, assures him that although he likes him, he thinks he is mistaken in such readings.²⁹⁸ This kind of Qur'anic exegesis, Khomeini contends, merely attends to verses that support one's opinion and leaves others uninterpreted.²⁹⁹ The philosophers and mystics, too, made the same mistake, but from the other extreme point, transforming every aspect of the Qur'an, Khomeini charges, into spiritual matters.

In making such conclusive statements about the nature of Qur'anic exegesis, Khomeini assumes an authorial and definitive voice for Islam. "It may be said that Islam began incognito, and it is still incognito. From the beginning until now, Islam has been incognito. Nobody has known Islam."³⁰⁰ By merely saying so, Khomeini's becomes the definitive voice of Islam—Islam as such, "Islam as it truly is."

Khomeini then wishes to mediate between an apparent schism in Iran between the supporters of a radical (socialist) reading of Islam, represented by Ayatollah Taleqani, Ali Shari'ati, and the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization, and a more traditionally normative Islam, perhaps represented in the ideas of the politically mute clerics. Khomeini condemns both kinds of extremism, one insisting on the religious dimension of Islam, the other on the political. Islam is at once religious and political; one has to be Muslim in thought and in action.³⁰¹

The last word of advice that Khomeini issues is for such divisions to be set aside. In view of the atrocities and immoralities that the Pahlavi regime has perpetrated, the last of which in the form of an art festival in Shiraz, "the staging of the sexual intercourse, the act itself!"³⁰² the concerted energy of all parties, regardless of their particular interpretation of what Islam is, will be needed for days to come. "Should, God willing, this regime fall," Khomeini anticipated, "people will celebrate. You do not know how wonderful that celebration would be!"³⁰³

In an undated letter to the Muslim students in the United States and Canada, Khomeini refers to "internal and external" conditions that have made the situation ready for a final putsch against the regime. He calls on Muslim students to put pressure on the Carter administration to withdraw its support of "the illegal and servile Pahlavi regime."³⁰⁴ "From God Almighty I seek the success and victory of all Muslims in implementing the enlightened Qur'anic and Islamic commandments. Peace and benedictions of God Almighty, and His beneficence be upon you all!"³⁰⁵

Khomeini in Iraq: An Assessment

Khomeini cannot be assumed to have had a warlike appointment, let alone a revolutionary agenda, when his initial challenge of the Pahlavi state was chased out of his immediate constituency in Qom. But once stationed in Najaf, one of the most sacred precincts in the Shi'i imaginative geography, he was in full command of the most cherished collective memories of his faith. For his part, the Iranian monarch should not have thought Khomeini made of stuff so flat and dull as to resume his scholastic pursuits quietly. Assuming that, and under the spell of a persistent orchestration of common Shi'i memory launched against him from Najaf, aggravated by being deeply entrenched in his megalomaniac pomposity, the king could not but fall

from public grace, which is tantamount, but not necessarily equal, to a fall in deed.

Lest the passage of idle time would qualify the spark and compromise the fire of his wrath, Khomeini kept a vigilant watch on events in Iran and an even more vigilant persistence in creating a revolutionary discourse, a collective myth of mass movement, that would become the political machinery upon which he would ride back home.

Beginning with an uncertain standing and a dubious future, Khomeini gradually focused on "The West" as the primary target of his wrath and as the ultimate cause of the Muslim misery, the fight against which he felt compelled to lead. To project the common cause of all Muslims against "The West," he totally underplayed the deep historical animosity between the Shi'ites and the Sunnites. His physical presence in the Arab world, his deep concerns with the plight of the Palestinians, and his intention to address the Islamic world at large, prevented any particular identification with the exclusionary Shi'i cause. Although the tone of his language remained essentially Shi'i juridical, he appealed to all Muslims throughout the Islamic world.³⁰⁶

Perhaps the most crucial challenge Khomeini faced in the mid-1960s, energizing his emerging political agenda, was the powerful grip of secular—both liberal and radical—ideologies to which an increasing number of Muslim, or ex-Muslim, intellectuals were attracted. By this time, Iranian intellectuals and political activists in particular had experienced some two centuries of (secular) liberal, as well as close to a century of radical, ideologies. The increasing migration of Iranian students to Europe and the United States had actually intensified this process of secularization, whether in a liberal or a radical direction. Khomeini recognized the challenge and set out to meet it almost immediately upon his arrival in Najaf. He maintained a close watch on and a vigilant contact with the student associations in Europe and the United States and thus indirectly curtailed their secular urges.³⁰⁷

To present the Muslim political activists with a viable alternative to the glaring secular ideologies, the most important item on Khomeini's agenda was to repoliticize Islam to the fullest degree of modern possibilities. Islam, from its very inception, had a built-in political dimension that has been revived and rearticulated throughout its history. Khomeini's task, which he met successfully, was to strike a tangible and convincing reciprocity between the contemporary political exigencies and the doctrinal and symbolic repertoire of the Islamic collective consciousness. That challenge successfully met, he was able to supersede the secular alternatives to his brand of repoliticized Islam to an ideologically significant degree. What helped him to achieve his objectives was the persistent and conscious uses of ideological propaganda with which he charged his young followers.³⁰⁸

Khomeini appealed to his young followers perhaps more for his stubborn resistance to tyranny than for the specifics of his ideological positions. Many professedly secular, even Marxist, students testify to their attraction to Khomeini's single-minded perseverance against the Iranian monarch. His stubborn disposition was perhaps nowhere better demonstrated than in his pronounced asceticism. Always austere and astringent in his appearance, he personified the utmost of his ascetic preachings to his students. He never failed to urge his student followers to purify their souls, abstain from luxuries, refrain from excesses, and totally devote themselves to the revolutionary cause. One explanation for this perhaps excessive, almost compulsive, concern with purity, cleanliness, and asceticism, might be an unconscious personification of precisely the opposite of what is loathed in the enemy. Since the enemy, whether it is personified in the Shah or symbolized in "The West," is always identified with excess, defilement, conspicuous consumption, overindulgence, and extravagance, the accuser conspicuously, however unconsciously, distances himself from such attributes by assuming precisely their opposites.³⁰⁹

A similar explanation may account for Khomeini's repeated, almost ritual, references to his mortality—that he does not have much longer to live. Repeated and almost irresistible references to his own mortality may be another conscious effort at distancing himself from the pompous representations of immortality chiefly behind the monarch's chronic celebrations of his grandeur.³¹⁰ Perhaps unconsciously personifying precisely the opposites of what he loathed in his archenemy, Khomeini sincerely projected an austere and ascetic image that would unfailingly command the respect and even devotion of his young admirers.

The genuine portrayal of a revolutionary ascetic thus personified, Khomeini's focal point of anger could not for long remain on a vast abstraction called "The West." An absolute personified good necessitates an absolute personified evil. As he projected the Iranian monarch as the archvillain, and to focus his attention more specifically on Iran, Khomeini further consolidated his forces within the clerical establishment in the country and expanded his active constituency to include the all-too-important group of young Muslim students in Europe and the United States. Whether these students remained in their host countries or returned to Iran, their collective correspondence with Khomeini became a crucial aspect of their coming to political consciousness, in turn effectively translated into active propaganda for the Ayatollah's cause.

Among his student supporters, Khomeini recognized the difference between those in secular universities in Europe and the United States and those in religious seminaries in Iran and Iraq. The students in the secular universities, usually in "hard sciences," must have had a religious bent to their political activism before they were ideologically committed to Khomeini.

But a vast difference in their curricular training was translated into a difference of perspective in their political agenda. Khomeini successfully bridged the gap between these two types of students. However that bridging might have been temporarily constructed and subject to future ideological disjunction, it worked as designed for the common cause of opposing the Iranian monarch.

With a variety of forces thus ideologically mobilized, Khomeini did not miss any opportunity to attack the Iranian monarch. The monarch did provide him with many occasions for public outcry. But when Khomeini attacked the extravagant expenditure on the king's coronation, the celebration of 2,500 years of the Persian monarchy, or the establishment of "The Religious Corps," he did not merely question the wisdom behind these pompous or politically motivated gestures. He took these occasions one step further and, through them, challenged the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state.³¹¹

The language of this challenge often assumed the juridical discourse of a religious edict (*fatva*). This was the language with which Khomeini was most comfortable. The juridical nature of these *fatva*'s not only provided a bona fide ideological medium to challenge the legitimacy of the Pahlavi state, it also entitled Khomeini to direct the financial resources at his disposal for specifically revolutionary purposes. "The share of the Imam," as this particular religious tax is known, was stipulated in juridical terms with Khomeini as the judge of how it could be spent appropriately. He used this financial source not only to organize his forces inside Iran, but also to finance aspects of the Palestine Liberation Organization with whose cause he intimately identified.

On the home front, in order to organize a unified stand, Khomeini met a number of challenges simultaneously. Through the agency of Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari he unified the hard core of his immediate supporters. The active intermediary role played by Motahhari, linking Khomeini and his supporters between 1964 and 1977, is evident from the edict according to which Khomeini appointed him the sole representative to collect the religious taxes due to him. Motahhari was also instrumental in combatting what he reported to Khomeini as the infiltration of Marxist ideas into the seminary circles. As Motahhari took charge of the larger ideological issues, Khomeini organized his mass support at the local mosque level through such clerics as Hojjat al-Islam Sa'idi. He took two other crucial steps towards an ideological consolidation of his forces. First, he criticized and thus curtailed more radical tendencies among the clerical groups; second, he charged the more tacitly liberal elements by branding them "Westoxicated," a term that he most probably learned from Jalal Al-e Ahmad's famous essay on the subject.³¹² Although the arrangement of this diverse set of crucial moves cannot be attributed to a calculated master design,

their collective effect was to consolidate the clerical forces behind the recognized leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini.

While attacking the radicalization of Islam into a socialist ideology à la Shari'ati, while severely confronting the infiltration of Marxist notions into the clerical rank, and while opposing the radical political uses of the Qur'anic text à la Taleqani, Khomeini himself repoliticized aspects of the Shi'i doctrines within the legitimate confinements of his juridical discourse. Perhaps the most important doctrine, other than the *velayat-e faqih*, which was extensively repoliticized, was the principle of "enjoining the good and forbidding the evil." Although primarily an ethical—not a political—doctrine, the ideological extension of the term into broader social jurisdictions was carried out quietly and without the slightest doctrinal difficulty. What facilitated this smooth transition from ethical to political domains was perhaps some characteristic feature in the historical divisions in Islamic philosophy. Divided into theoretical and pragmatic, the Islamic philosophical discourse has attended to ethical and political matters as related topics in the domain of practical philosophy.³¹³

But philosophical matters are elitist concerns; they can persuade only the theoretically minded, who are not always politically responsive. Perhaps more important for the transition of ethical concerns to political matters in the public perception, where a revolution works itself out, is the collective mythology that holds them, and with them their shared hagiological history, together. The working of common symbols that bind a community of believers together is always on a borderline between myth and reality. It is precisely the dialectic of the two that gives revolutionary momentum to an otherwise mute public mythology. All that is needed for that mute myth to narrate and articulate itself at some time is just a word, a mere word, only a word.

Imam Khomeini

"Imam"—the mere word—is an invitation to obedience. More: It is a command to believe. Take it or leave it, it says. Defying all doctrinal problematics, the term "Imam" rings of infallibility and of immortality in a Shi'i ear. It approximates the man to the sacred vicinity of the Twelve Infallibles, the Immortals of the Shi'i attendance upon metahistory. Its designation and collective approval are the revolutionary recognition of a thankful crowd which, in want of this- or other-worldly rewards, can only bestow epithets of immortality—the Great, the Immortal, the Infallible, the Imam. In giving such recognitions, the crowd can only retrieve the terms most sacred to its shared imagination. There is scarcely any term more sacred than "Imam" in the cherished remembrance of a Shi'i mind. They have had it somehow exclusively for Ali, that very archetype of "the Perfect

Man." And then for a particular line of his Infallible descendants, chief among them, in moments of Shi'i collective anxiety, Imam Hossein. One utterance of "Imam Hossein" and you are set on a plane of self-sacrifice, transfixed onto a state of metahistoricity, that denies legitimacy or relevance to time, place, pain, propriety, or law. Subtract the term "Imam" from any one of the sacred Infallibles and something cosmic is missing in the universe. Add it to Khomeini, or any other man, and you have extended your absolute obedience to the uppermost, deepest, level of your piety, humility, devotion. There stands the man. The Imam. But not just any man. The model of revolutionary righteousness. The abstraction of whatever is sacrosanct. Khomeini earns the thankful recognition of "Imam" from an ecstatic crowd which, in moments of its self-effacement, invests every ounce of its collectivity (and all its forgotten individualities) in the man who would deliver the earthly experience of the sublime. "Imam Khomeini," in defiance of all historical or doctrinal prohibitions that may dictate otherwise, demands, indeed exacts, obedience with the combined force of facts and fantasies. You utter it, "Imam Khomeini," obediently, and you are in. "In" is that fantastic realm of mythical operations where time stands still and place is irrelevant. "Imam Khomeini," thusly shaped and thusly termed, becomes the key instrument of deliverance, unlocking, as it does, the most irresistible treasure houses of the possibilities of personhood, of being, of being-significantly-in-the-world. Without that key, the magic of a mere utterance, the access to the jealously guarded realm of historical identity, you, as an individual, are left desparately characterless, nameless, faceless—a man (or woman) but not a person, a person without persona, a mask with no marks, a walking embodiment of contradictions, lacking all senses of unity, comprehension, direction, purpose. There you stand: Not a Shi'i, not an Iranian, not a revolutionary, not even "a participant observer." Merely a bundle of misdirected sentiments, your particular individuality atomized into particles of fragmented fears and anxieties, hopes and confusions. Standing united and wholesome before you is an army of public rage, mobilized myth, moving in floods of anger and conviction, an avalanche of demonstrations, meetings, gatherings, prayers, all in a row, bending and bowing to truth manifest. You either join them, "Imam Khomeini" loudly bursting in your voice, and you are, or else you hesitate, a moment of doubt, and then you are not. Physical or metaphysical, actual or figurative: In truth you are made or broken in your confession or denial of only one word, a mere word, just a word, of the "Imam" in "Imam Khomeini."

The End

There is the myth manifest. In just one word. The rest of the myth is now part and parcel of Iranian history. The history of the Revolution itself, the

sacred decade that Iran lived under Khomeini, very much like Geneva under Calvin, is yet to be told, narrated in one way or another. But the story of the man himself, and of his revolutionary ideas (put succinctly into action), holds its own fascination, from beginning to end. "The goblet of poison" Khomeini drank in August 1988,³¹⁴ by accepting United Nations resolution 536 and effectively paving the way for a peace treaty with Iraq, was so effective that, given his strong spiritual stamina, it killed the old revolutionary sage in less than a year. Khomeini knew no defeat, understood no compromise, forgave no enemy. He kicked his archenemy out of Iran and made him die in indignity and humiliation, the death of a dethroned and exiled king. He humiliated President Carter, who had dared to raise his champagne glass to the Great King, out of office. He ridiculed both superpowers and dared them to touch his regime. Then he turned his anger against a nobody: Saddam Hossein. Eight years of intense attacks, hundreds of thousands killed on both sides, billions of dollars in damages, and Rafsanjani convinced the old master they could not win the war, they could not oust and humiliate Saddam. The old man was not made of all misdirected nerves. He knew the limits of reason—defied them, but knew them. Failing to defy the limits of Rafsanjani's reason, failing to humiliate yet another enemy, Khomeini drank from the poisonous goblet in August 1988 and in less than a year, in June 1989, rested his case with history. Anger and wrath move through the thickest of all bloods, the hardest of all veins; but restful resignation, having no more battle to fight, no more enemies to humiliate, is a call for the angel of mercy. In peace or in discontent, we shall never know, Khomeini joined history, the collective imagination of his first and future followers, having shed, as he did, the very last drop of his anger.

Conclusion: Dimensions of "The Islamic Ideology"

We have come a long way, unpacking the revolutionary minds and sentiments of these chief ideologues of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Here, in conclusion, I wish to pick up some of the theoretical threads intentionally left loose at the end of my Introduction. I wish to pull these threads together tightly and bring them to the conclusion of a memorable knot.

Regular Intervals

"Thus there is something eternal in religion," concluded Durkheim after an exhaustive examination of one particular case. That "something," he believed, "is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successfully enveloped itself."¹ That which in a religious language corresponds to something eternal in man is the key operative mechanism of revolutionary revivals, seeking, as it does, to reach beyond the particular ephemerality of life. But religion, as Durkheim taught us, can only live a symbolic life. The ever-changing succession of symbolic forms in which a particular religion, let alone the religious *Geist* as such, manifests and registers itself has been the most compelling single thrust of human history. It is precisely that thrust that justifies Durkheim's sweeping generalization:

There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality.²

How often these "regular intervals" actually occur differs from society to society, from religion to religion, from one collective sentiment to another, depending on where each society and religion stands on that all-too-essen-