

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900-89):
The Uprising of Khurdad 15, 1979

Born Ruhollah Hendi, the Ayatollah (the word signifies religious leader) took the name in 1930. He taught in the major Shi'ite theological school at Qom, but was exiled for his opposition to the government of the Shah. Living in Paris after 1978 he orchestrated the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. He became the effective political and religious leader of the country until his death in 1989.

Those who are ignorant must be guided to a correct understanding. We must say to them: "You who imagine that something can be achieved in Iran by some means other than Islam, you who suppose that something other than Islam overthrew the Shah's regime, you who believe non-Islamic elements played a role--study the matter carefully. Look at the tombstones of those who gave their lives in the movement of Khurdad 15. If you can find a single tombstone belonging to one of the non-Islamic elements, it will mean they played a role. And if, among the tombstones of the Islamic elements, you can find a single tombstone belonging to someone from the upper echelons of society, it will mean that they too played a role. But you will not find a single tombstone belonging to either of those groups. All the tombstones belong to Muslims from the lower echelons of society: peasants, workers, tradesmen, committed religious scholars. Those who imagine that some force other than Islam could shatter the great barrier of tyranny are mistaken. As for those who oppose us because of their opposition to Islam, we must cure them by means of guidance, if it is at all possible; otherwise, we will destroy these agents of foreign powers with the same fist that destroyed the Shah's regime.

Your opponents, oppressed people, have never suffered. In the time of the *taghut*, they never suffered because either they were in agreement with the regime and loyal to it, or they kept silent. Now you have spread the banquet of freedom in front of them and they have sat down to eat. Xenomaniacs, people infatuated with the West, empty people, people with no content! Come to your senses; do not try to westernize everything you have! Look at the West, and see who the people are in the West that present themselves as champions of human rights and what their aims are. Is it human rights they really care about, or the rights of the superpowers? What they really want to secure are the rights of the superpowers. Our jurists should not follow or imitate them. You should implement human rights as the working classes of our society understand them. Yes, they are the real Society for the Defense of Human Rights. They are the ones who secure the well-being of humanity; they work while you talk; for they are Muslims and Islam cares about humanity. You who have chosen a course other than Islam--you do nothing for humanity. All you do is write and speak in an effort to divert our movement from its course.

But as for those who want to divert our movement from its course, who have in mind treachery against Islam and the nation, who consider Islam incapable of running the affairs of our country despite its record of 1400 years---they have nothing at all to do with our people, and this must be made clear. How much you talk about the West, claiming that we must measure Islam in accordance with Western criteria! What an error! It was the mosques that created this Revolution, the mosques that brought this movement into being. The *mihrab* was a place not only for preaching, but also for war--war against both the devil within and the tyrannical powers

without. So preserve your mosques, O people. Intellectuals, do not be Western-style intellectuals, imported intellectuals; do your share to preserve the mosques!