From the Translator

For the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Dr. Jalal Matini published a series of quotes from various speeches of Imam Ayatollah Khomeini and his collaborators in the early years of the revolution. His article, “The Most Truthful Individual in Recent History,” appeared in the scholarly journal *Iranshenasi* (Vol. XIV, No. 4, Winter 2003).

Ayatollah Khomeini’s quotations underscore Iran’s recent history and serve as reminders for future generations. Dr. Matini’s objective is to remind his readers of Iran’s recent history. Clearly, we are a forgetful nation, and Dr. Matini forces us to remember. Excerpts from Dr. Matini’s article are translated below.

Dr. Jalal Matini (1928–), an Iranian scholar, literary critic, academic, and researcher, was the President of Ferdowsi University in Mashhad before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. After the revolution, he came to the United States and was a visiting professor at the University of Utah and at the University of California, Berkeley. In the United States, Dr. Matini launched *Iran Nameh*, a quarterly journal devoted to Iranian politics, culture, and literature, and he served as its Editor-in-Chief for almost seven years. He later launched the journal *Iranshenasi*¹ (published in Maryland). He has published and edited many books and articles on Iranian literature, history, and culture, and he now serves as Editor of *Iranshenasi*.

Note: Ayatollah Khomeini’s original quotations in Farsi are often awkwardly worded, poorly structured, and grammatically incorrect. Therefore, they are difficult to translate faithfully. All Translator’s comments are included either in brackets [ ] or in footnotes.

Quotes from “Imam” Khomeini BEFORE the Victory of the Revolution

“Personal desire, age, and my health do not allow me to personally have a role in running the country after the fall of the current system.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with the Associated Press, Paris, November 7, 1978)

“I have repeatedly said that neither my desire nor my age nor my position allows me to govern.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with the United Press, Paris, November 8, 1978)

“I don’t want to have the power or the government in my hand; I am not interested in personal power.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with *The Guardian* newspaper, Paris, November 16, 1978)

“I don’t want to be the leader of the Islamic Republic; I don’t want to have the government or the power in my hands. I only guide the people in selecting the system.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with an Austrian TV reporter, Paris, November 16, 1978)

“It is the Iranian people who have to select their own capable and trustworthy individuals and give them the responsibilities. However, personally, I can’t accept any special role or

¹ P.O. Box 1038, Rockville, Maryland 20849-1038. Telephone: 301-279-2564.
“After the Shah’s departure from Iran, I will not become a president nor accept any other leadership role. Just like before, I limit my activities only to guiding and directing the people.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with Le Monde newspaper, Paris, January 9, 1979)

“The Islamic regime does not have oppression.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with France Press news agency, Paris, October 25, 1978)

“The foundation of our Islamic government is based on freedom of dialogue and will fight against any kind of censorship.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with Reuters news agency, Paris, October 26, 1978)

“In the Islamic Republic the rights of the religious minorities are respectfully regarded.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with an Austrian TV reporter, Paris, November 6, 1978)

“In Iran’s Islamic government the media has the freedom to express all Iran’s realities and events, and people have the freedom to form any form of political parties and gatherings that they like.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with the Italian newspaper Paese Sera, Paris, November 2, 1978)

“Our future society will be a free society, and all the elements of oppression, cruelty, and force will be destroyed.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel, Paris, November 7, 1978)

“In Iran’s future Islamic system everyone can express their opinion, and the Islamic government will respond to logic with logic.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with international reporters, Paris, November 9, 1978)

“We would like to run the Islamic government like Islam at its beginning, so that people know how different the Islamic democracy is from other democracies. If the people of the world know the benefits of Islam, my hope is that they all become Moslems.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with a group of young French people in Paris, November 9, 1978)

“In the Islamic government all people have complete freedom to have any kind of opinion.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with Human Rights Watch, Paris, November 10, 1978)

“My proposal for establishing an Islamic government does not mean a return to the past. I am strongly for civilization and progress.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with international reporters, Paris, January 11, 1979; also quoted in Eslaat newspaper in Iran)

“These words that you have heard regarding women in the future Islamic government are all hostile propaganda. In the Islamic Republic women have complete freedom, in their education, in everything that they do, just as men are free in everything.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with German reporters, Paris, November 12, 1978)

“Women are free in the Islamic Republic in the selection of their activities and their future and their clothing.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with The Guardian newspaper, Paris, November 6, 1978)


“In Islamic Iran the clergy themselves will not govern but only observe and support the government’s leaders. The government of the country at all levels will be observed, evaluated, and publicly criticized.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in an interview with Reuters news agency, Paris, October 26, 1978)
Quotes from “Imam” AFTER the Victory of the Revolution

“This nation exists and clerics exist too. You all must know that in every place in this country only clerics can get the job done. Don’t show so much prejudice that you want to put the clerics aside. What have you done for your country in all these years that now you’re saying clerics should not be in charge? Appreciate these clerics. You do not understand correctly! If you put this group aside, no name or sign of Islam will remain. Imagine one cleric has done something wrong somewhere. Why can you do something wrong and some cleric cannot do anything wrong?” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Islamic Parliament, Jamaran,2 Teheran, May 27, 1981)

“Don’t listen to those who speak of democracy. They all are against Islam. They want to take the nation away from its mission. We will break all the poison pens of those who speak of nationalism, democracy, and such things.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with Iranian students and educators, Qom,3 March 13, 1979)

“That group that due to its opposition to Islam is opposing us, with the same fist that we destroyed the regime we will destroy that group as well. Pay attention to your statements. Repent from your writings. I am warning you that you still have time to repent.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk at the Fayzieah School, Qom, June 5, 1979)

“The intellectuals, the writers, those who have information and thoughts, you see some of them take their pens and in the name of democracy they write whatever they want and they cause disagreements. This group of so-called intellectuals has to correct themselves. Whatever we are suffering is from this group of intellectuals and judges. What we are suffering is because of them. —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk in Qom, July 23, 1979)

“We have to warn these intellectuals that if they don’t stop their meddling, they will be crushed. We have treated you gently so that maybe you would stop your evilness, and if you don’t stop, we will have the last word. These American sympathizers and others must know that in just a few hours we can throw them in the trashcan of annihilation any day that we wish to do so.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk to the Iranian people, August 8, 1979)

“Those who create political fronts must stop their activities. If from the beginning, as in other revolutions in the world, several thousand of these corrupt individuals had been burned and beheaded till the issues were finished, problems would have been solved. We will allow one or more parties to operate if they operate correctly. But we announce that the rest are forbidden. We will no longer allow the same freedom that we used to give, and we cannot allow these parties to continue their activities. According to religious law, we can’t give them a grace period. Canonically, it is not correct to give a grace period. We made mistakes when we gave freedom; we can’t treat these wild animals gently. We will no longer allow any of their writings to be distributed in the country. We will destroy all their writings. We have to deal with them harshly, and we will deal with them harshly. —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with selected Members of Congress, Qom, August 18, 1979)

“After the revolution the borders were left open. Pens were free, expression was free, political parties were free. Even if these people are not Moslems, it was assumed that at least they are human. But it is clear now that they are foreign puppets. For us the identity of these writers, the identity of these political parties, the identity of these nice and meaningless phrases are now very clear. We will no longer give freedom. These people are not the type who will stop their activities just from advice. We have to deal with them harshly. —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk at the Fayzieah School, Qom, August 19, 1979)

“Those who are trying to bring corruption and destruction to our country in the name of democracy will be oppressed. They are worse than Bani-Ghorizeh4 Jews, and they must be hanged. We will oppress them by God’s order and God’s call to prayer.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk at the Fayzieah School, Qom, August 30, 1979)

3 Qom: A city south of Tehran, Qom is sacred for Shi’ite Moslems. Its ninth-century golden-domed shrine is built around the tomb of Fatima, Imam Reza’s sister. Qom is home to a major Iranian Shi’ite Moslem theological institution.
4 Bani-Ghorizeh: A Jewish tribe that continuously fought against Mohammad.
“Those who have not voted for the Islamic Republic, it means that they want the previous system. Those who boycott the election so no one votes for the Islamic Republic are seditious. We will treat them like enemies, and we will oppress them. You are enemies that you want to cause trouble. You are enemies that you are conspiring against Islam and against the country. Your comings and goings are controlled. We have been informed that you are in contact with those who want to bring our country back to its previous system. Now that your conspiracy has been proven, we will destroy you all. If you don’t stop your evilness, we will mobilize an even higher mobilization, and we will clean out all of you. We will not allow you groups of corrupt people to remain and continue your activities.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a message at the end of the month-long Islamic fasting celebration, September 3, 1979)

“These rotten roots that are now at work will be oppressed, and the country will be cleaned up. After he encountered the Moavieh army, which were even worse than the infidels, and he encountered the khavareg, his Excellency the Imam Ali, the Chief of the Faithful, acted very harshly and destroyed them to the extent that only a few were able to escape.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a speech to the families of Iranian Air Force pilots, Qom, September 2, 1979)

“The day of the khavareg ["outsiders"] is the day that his Excellency the Imam Ali, the Chief of the Faithful, pulled out his sword and cut all these corrupt people just like cancer tumors and killed them all. That day was “Yom-ol lah,” the day that God punishes nations by bringing earthquakes on them, bringing floods, bringing storms, and slashing people till they become human. These all are God’s day [sic], and these things are related to God.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in memory of the martyrs of the 17th of Shahrivar [September 8th], Qom, September 8, 1979)

“Do not interrupt the activities. You all have to obey the Islamic Republic. And if you don’t, you all will vanish.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a speech to Iranian Air Force officers, Isfahan, September 19, 1979)

“Those who are against us are like cancer tumors that need to be removed surgically; otherwise they will corrupt everything.”

“These writings, these speeches, these wrong activities, these democratic programs are separations from Islam. All these voices are blasphemy and are atheistic.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a talk to the Representatives from Tabriz, Qom, September 19, 1979)

“We have to identify those who are not in line with Islam and the Islamic movement by their articles, speeches, and activities. You the clergy, thank God, who have control over the Islamic nation [referring to the Iranian people] have to warn people of the devils who arrange gatherings and lectures. They are all afraid of one thing, which is Islam. They might criticize many things, but the key point is that they are attacking Islam itself. Their pens are the same old bayonets that have become like pens … [sic]. They all have to understand that as long as there is a pulpit and an altar, and as long as these homily readers [that is, Mullahs] exist, they cannot do anything. To all of you who oppose us, I recommend that you don’t gather so much, don’t send so many fliers, don’t publish so much; have you now become brave enough to stick out your neck? I will slap you on your mouth. You think that you have power? Stop all these words and all this gibberish.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (to a group of clergymen, Qom, October 22, 1979)

“In the revolution that was achieved in Iran, people were screaming that they wanted Islam; these people did not rise up so their country could have democracy.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Islamic Republic Television and Radio Committee, Qom, December 10, 1979)

“These criminals that have been arrested are not accused, but their crimes have been proven. We only have to prove their identity and then kill them all. There is absolutely no need for a trial. No compassion for them will be allowed. We believe that the guilty party does not need a trial and must be killed.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a message to the Iranian people, June 30, 1980)

Khavareg: “Outsiders” (that is, those who did not adhere to Imam Ali’s leadership).
“People have to learn from the mother who brought her own son to court and then her son was hanged. This is one of the paradigms of Islam, that everyone has to be the same. Children, brothers, kids—if they do not accept advice, introduce them to government officials so that they can receive their punishment … this is their Islamic responsibility and their faith responsibility. This must be done.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with Islamic Republic police officers, July 24, 1981)

“This job that you have accomplished, Oh you, woman, that you brought and gave away your son for punishment has become a paradigm in Islam. This is something that everyone must do. It is the responsibility of all Moslems to do the same.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the mother of Mahmoud Tarighot-Islam to announce her as an exemplary mother, Jamaran, August 26, 1981)

“Iran is following a program, and that program is Islam. The same Islam that says if somebody has an association with left or right, that individual is fighting God. He has the intention of fighting God, and his punishment is the punishment that people fighting God will receive. —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with coaches and educators, Jamaran, September 19, 1982)

“Dear students, you must watch the behavior and the activities of your teachers and professors so that if, God forbid, they say something wrong, you see them deviating, right away you must report them to the responsible officials. Teachers and professors, you must be alert to watch your own colleagues to see if some of them are trying to teach deviating thoughts during their lessons to the children of our Islamic nation so that they can be stopped. If this does not work, directly communicate with officials. My dear children, you too take care of one another in the best possible way, and if you observe that some enemies in the appearance of friends or schoolmates are trying to attract your friends, introduce them to the responsible officials, and try to do all these things very secretly. Committed mothers and fathers, watch the comings and goings of your children and observe their activities.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a message on the first day of the school year, Qom, September 23, 1982)

Selected “Imam” Khomeini Aphorisms

“When human rights came, they saw our jails, they left, and they said: ‘Jails are good. Civilized, in accordance with democratic [sic], because the logic is Islamic logic.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (Qom, August 19, 1979)

“In the world there is no democracy better than our democracy. Such a thing has never before been seen.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a statement to the Minister of Finance, Qom, June 23, 1979)

“Our nation has become a model for all countries.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the families of Iranian Air Force martyrs, Qom, December 29, 1980)

“We would like to have a university in the service of our own nation, not a university whose slogan is that we want a civilized and modern Iran, that wants to move toward a great civilization. These things will make our universities dependent on outsiders. We are against those universities from the foundation. We want university professors who are not facing left or right. They should not be Atatürk or Taghizadeh.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with Members of the Islamic Society and Jahad Daneshgahi, University of Science and Industry, Qom, August 26, 1981)

“In history, revolutions similar to Iran’s revolution are achieved only with the help of messengers of God.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Rajai and Bahonar families, Jamaran, Tehran, September 2, 1981)

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6 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), the founder of the Turkish Republic and its first President, stands as a towering figure of the 20th century. As President for 15 years, until his death in 1938, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk introduced a broad range of swift and sweeping reforms—in political, social, religious, legal, economic, and cultural spheres—and established a secular democratic system with the help of the Turkish Army.

7 Taghizadeh: The former head of the Iranian Senate and a supporter of the Constitutional Monarchy.
“A monopoly by itself is not a corrupt thing. God’s messengers had a monopoly; the blessed and supreme God also had a monopoly. The monopoly of this [sic] is correct. The monopoly of Mr. Beheshti and these seventy innocent martyrs is very much correct.”

“The Iranian people have created calmness in the entire country now.”
“I recommend that you continue your good treatment of the prisoners.”
—Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Rajai and Bahonar families, Jamaran, Tehran, September 2, 1981)

“In the last two years, so much has been accomplished in our country that it cannot be believed.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (Jamaran, Teheran, February 16, 1982)

“Whatever problems we have are from the past regime. Thank God, the current regime has not caused you any problem. Those who travel outside, wherever they go, when they return they say that all nations are in love with Iran.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with coaches and educators, September 19, 1982)

“Today our women are so immersed in God’s blessings that there is no limit. Maybe they are not recognizing the great blessings of God.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a New Year’s message, March 21, 1983)

“Those who give their entire attention to animal husbandry cannot become human, and those who give their entire attention to horticulture cannot become human.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with Islamic officials during the New Year’s ceremony, Jamaran, Tehran, March 21, 1983)

“We don’t have the power to statistically measure what has happened in our country in the last few years. The nation has to be thankful to the government for this.”
“If these superpowers want to attack us, we won’t allow them to land their airplanes! We will kill their paratroopers in midair, and we will destroy them. Do you think they can attack here?” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with members of the Islamic Revolution Central Committees during the New Year’s ceremony, Jamaran, Tehran, April 10, 1983)

“The Great God has given His gifts to you, and if you are not thankful of your current conditions, I am afraid of Almighty God’s wrath toward you, and then, God forbid, everyone will burn, both dry and wet [that is, both the innocent and the guilty], and there will no path to escape for any of you. —Ayatollah Khomeini (message on the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Islamic Republic, April 1, 1983)

“They keep saying there is inflation. There is shortage. We put ourselves, our principles, and our Islam in danger because meat is expensive, fruit is expensive, and people are unhappy, and God forbid, our unity will be destroyed, and all of our principles and hard work that the prophets have done for Islam will disappear. Become human a little bit.”
—Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Minister of the Interior and his staff, April 10, 1983)

Imam Zaman in Service to the Islamic Republic of Iran

“When we compare our country with all the countries in the world, which one is more stable than our country? It is complete in every aspect. It is good in all aspects. Currently, it is the most stable country. These explosions and these things are reasons for its stability. Is there anything wrong with its government? Thank God, everything is abundantly available. Of course, prices are high. But why should we worry? The owner of this country is the Imam Zaman.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with Members of Congress of the Islamic government, September 7, 1981)

Imam Zaman: “The Lord of Time.” According to Shi’ite Moslems, Imam Zaman, the twelfth Imam, is supposed to return to earth and lead a worldwide insurrection against tyranny and corruption.
"You are now under the protection of God and the Imam Zaman. They protect you personally; a letter listing all your activities is being sent to Imam Zaman on a regular basis.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a meeting with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, January 24, 1982)

"There is a difference between those who fight with the confidence that Imam Zaman is their leader and those who have the retarded Saddam as their leader.” —Ayatollah Khomeini (in a message on Islamic Republic Army Day, April 18, 1982)

“Someone who has recently returned from the front lines … told me that Saddam’s army was shooting its most modern missiles toward Khark, but as if a hand were throwing these missiles in the water or in the desert, the missiles were brought down to the desert ground, and even when a missile would hit a gas tank, it would come out from the other side with no explosion, and this is the time that humans realize and touch the existence of the merciful and blessed Lord of Time.” —Nategh-e Nouri, Minister of the Islamic government, and Presidential candidate (during the Friday prayer, November 5, 1982)

“All the other soldiers in their foxholes had been killed by the enemy’s bullets. So I prepared myself to become a martyr, but suddenly at that time I saw a young man with a green scarf jump into my foxhole and hold his hand in front of all the bullets until the shooting was over. I tried to ask him who he was, but suddenly he left and said only, ‘Once you visit Imam Khomeini, send him my regards.’ When I returned to Teheran to give a report to Imam Khomeini regarding my activities on the frontline, I forgot the event in my foxhole. When I asked for permission to leave his presence, Imam Khomeini asked me, ‘Don’t you have a message for me?’ Curious, I said, ‘No.’ Imam Khomeini asked me, ‘How about from the man in your foxhole the other day?’ Still curious, I replied, ‘Who was he?’ Imam Khomeini said, ‘How did you not understand? He was the Lord of Time, Imam Zaman.’” —Saaf magazine, September 16, 1982

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