

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

The mad scramble in Iran

Is British intelligence now beginning to play its Ghotbzadeh card to preserve the revolution?

With the Khomeini regime fast disintegrating as a result of the growing disaffection with mullah rule, former Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, a long-time political whore, is taking steps to coopt the anti-Khomeini sentiment and to transform it into support for himself and President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr. Ghotbzadeh, who has publicly declared that the Khomeini regime will not last, is out to become prime minister under Bani-Sadr, and he is using every trick in the book to do so, including the formation of a political party.

The engineers of Ghotbzadeh's political comeback include the Heritage Foundation in Washington, which views him as a useful tool to further Khomeini's Dark Ages perspective in Iran, and Prof. Richard Cottam at the University of Pittsburgh.

It was Cottam who, as a CIA operative in Iran, "discovered" Ghotbzadeh 25 years ago and groomed him for his present role. Cottam is currently a card-carrying member of the New York-based Freedom House, an operation set up 38 years ago by a group of Anglo-Jesuits also involved in the International Rescue Committee. Under the guise of performing refugee and relief work, Freedom House centralizes a major intelligence network devoted to destabilization and insurrection in the East bloc and the Third World. Current operations include backing the

KOR dissidents in Poland, in collaboration with the Arts Council of Great Britain, a front for British intelligence.

According to reports from Iran, Ghotbzadeh, who masquerades as a "moderate" Islamic fundamentalist, has been spotted in the holy cities of Mashad and Qom trying to drum up support for himself and Bani-Sadr from disgruntled factions in the clergy. Leaders whose political support he has solicited include the Grand Ayatollah Qomi of Mashad, who several weeks ago denounced the Khomeini regime, including Bani-Sadr, as "un-Islamic."

Ghotbzadeh is also out to win over the ranks of disaffected middle- and upper-class Iranian conservatives both inside and outside the country. To dupe these factions into supporting him and Bani-Sadr, both supporters of a "softer" version of Khomeini's Dark Ages outlook. Ghotbzadeh is playing upon the rabid anticommunism that lies so close to the surface in Iran, and raising the spectre of a possible communist takeover.

Last week, in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *Siyasah*, Ghotbzadeh issued a shrill warning about "communist infiltrators" in the Islamic Republican Party and accused them of planning to seize the reins of power. In Teheran alone, Ghotbzadeh charged hysterically, the IRP "communists" are spending \$27 million a week to car-

ry out their "detailed plan."

Ghotbzadeh did not simply come up with the red-scare threat on his own. It is the same line re-tailed by the Heritage Foundation, a branch of the Thatcher government's official think tank, the Center for Policy Studies. Operating as "conservative" Republican ideologues, the Heritage Foundation has muscled its way into the Reagan administration decision-making processes.

In point of fact, Heritage has little interest in "stemming the tide of communism." Rather, it is involved in a nasty operation to plant British intelligence-linked KGB moles inside the ranks of the Reagan administration to undermine U.S. economic and foreign policy.

In regard to Iran, Heritage, like Ghotbzadeh, has absolutely no intention of breaking with the deindustrialization policies of the Khomeini regime, and is in fact promoting them.

The Heritage Foundation gave itself away in the spring 1981 issue of *Policy Review*, its quarterly journal. In an article entitled "How the Shah De-Stabilized Himself," anthropologist Grace Goodell argues that the Shah's vigorous industrial programs and his commitment to wrenching his country out of rural backwardness are what ultimately destroyed him. The Shah, says Goodell, ignored the fact that small is beautiful and growth is bad, and therefore deserved his fate.

The Heritage Foundation's vision for Iran as posited by Goodell is identical to Khomeini's: a decentralized country composed of locally autonomous tribal entities committed to a feudal village life. This is what Goodell chooses to label "conservatism."