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Roosevelt grandson recounts struggle to sway Iran

By Sen. Mark Hatfield

President Theodore Roosevelt would be justly proud to read "Counter Coup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran," (McGraw-Hill, \$12.95) by his grandson, Kermit Roosevelt.

Grandfather's genes and a proclivity for adventure run strong in the Roosevelt progeny, as has been proven by Kermit's roles in OSS and as former head of the Middle East department of the CIA. The former British agent turned Russian spy, Kim Philby, called the author "the quiet American ... the last person you would expect to be up to his neck in dirty tricks."

The book recounts the American and British scheme in 1953 to overthrow Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh, who was permitting his country to become increasingly influenced by the Soviet Union, and to restore the shah to the peacock throne.

ROOSEVELT meticulously constructs the historical contest for the counter coup by tracking the political and economic events following World War II. The Allies, including the Russians, had troops stationed in Iran during the war, but only America and Britain removed their armies after V-E Day; the Russians refused to budge. In fact, the Russians armed the Tudeh Party, an independent Communist party in Azerbaijan in northeast Iran. The party in turn organized a puppet state and revolted from the shah.

In 1946, Tudeh proclaimed Azerbaijan an autonomous republic and began a reign of terror. The Russians in March 1946 launched their troops toward Tehran, the Iraqi frontier and the Turkish frontier. The quest to control Iran's oil was foremost in each political and military maneuver.

THE UNITED NATIONS heard Iran's plea for assistance, and Secretary Dean Acheson and the British government communicated support to the shah, who boldly ordered his troops to put down the rebellion. Confronted with the organized political opposition, the Russians abandoned their puppets and withdrew their troops, and the shah "triumphantly entered Tabriz on Dec. 15, 1946."

The elections that followed brought into office a group of right-wing politicians, including Mossadegh, a political megalomaniac. Eventually, Mossadegh gained power as prime minister, expelled the British oil companies, and, in coalition with a revived Tudeh party, turned against the shah.

The stage was set for Operation AJAX, the code word for counter coup adopted by the Americans and the British. After consultations with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, President Dwight Eisenhower, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles, Kermit Roosevelt was selected to direct the operation. Two British agents were appointed to assist Roosevelt, and he was authorized to add such others as would be helpful.

ROOSEVELT'S peregrinations throughout the Middle East with eloquent descriptions of people, culture, and countryside add marvelous flavor to this spy-thriller. In addition, the reader is offered intermittent political analysis on the intriguing and shifting scene of personalities and forces:

"I could see four essential elements in the Iranian political set-up. There were, first and foremost, the young shah himself; secondly, the army; thirdly, the civilian politicians; and fourthly, the tribes. The political dance was marked by frequent changes of partners, but no music had yet been written that was able to bring the army and the tribes together. Few tunes appealed to the taste of both the shah and the civilian politicians, but H.I.M. had found that the army could follow his steps very well."

By early 1953, the British had failed to reach agreement on the oil question, Mossadegh had failed to oust the shah, and Roosevelt had escalated the propaganda campaign for overthrow of Mossadegh. The ultimate catalyst was the shah himself, who had consolidated his support throughout the countryside based on his efforts to modernize the nation and the growing perception that Mossadegh was increasingly dependent upon the Tudeh Party.

Clandestine meetings were arranged between Roosevelt and the shah to orchestrate the quick succession of Gen. Fazollan Zahedi to replace Mossadegh as prime minister. The crowds of protesters appeared in the

streets to counter Mossadegh supporters, and finally, Gen. Zahedi, who was already a hero, led the march to the home of the prime minister. The wily Mossadegh slipped out of the net, but a new regime was installed by the acclaim of the demonstrators. The counter coup was victorious, and Roosevelt assesses the formulae that proved so successful:

"We were successful in the venture because our assessment of the situation in Iran was correct ... with some help from us, but mostly because Mossadegh, the Tudeh and eventually the U.S.S.R. itself forced the choice upon them, the populace made a choice. The people and the army came, overwhelmingly, to the support of the shah ... If we, the CIA, are ever going to try something like this again, we must be absolutely sure that the people and the army want what we want. If not, you had better give the job to the Marines."

The admonition was ignored, according to Roosevelt, and he refused the offer to take command of the Guatemalan undertaking. He resigned from the CIA before the Bay of Pigs disaster, which he ascribed to the failure to heed his warning. In spite of Roosevelt's guidelines for coups and counter coups, the reader may well share my own reflection: this is risky business, with no guaranteed formula for success, and is there really an authentic ethical base for this kind of operation?

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