

THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT PROGRAM

January 24, 1951

Description: In the opening segment, ER responds to a listener's question about the effectiveness of US foreign aid, if the aid is just as likely to be used for corrupt purposes. In the interview segment, ER interviews Igor Gorin, a baritone singer.

Participants: ER, Elliott Roosevelt, Igor Gorin

[ER:] What have we in our letters this morning?

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, Mother, we have eh a question that I think is eh one that you should be able to answer very well. This question asks: "Why do we continually send aid to foreign countries, seemingly anyone who asks for it, when it is very probable that-that the very aid we send will be used against our country and our people."

[ER:] Well, I don't know that the aid we send, for instance, in food and um in uh supplies that can be used for um normal living purposes to relieve eh distress, can be turned against our people. I do realize that in trade, where we are helping them start up uh factories or to um start uh sending--as we did to Japan for the last war--scrap iron or anything of that sort, we might very well find it uh returned and used against us at unfortunate moments. But I think there is a very deep question uh that a great many of us uh think about very seriously. A--today we find ourselves in much the position that we have been in before. Uh we are drifting into um arming-arming wherever we can two divided parts of the world, each of them arming at top speed. The only difference that I can see between pre-war times before and the present is that at the same time so far, we have kept in mind that there is a weapon that might be used uh which is not just military, and that is aid to those nations that need: number one, to be rehabilitated for the last war; number two, to begin their own development. And um if we really use that, it just maybe that this is one of those rare occasions where instead of arming and inevitably finding ourselves engaged in a war, we may find that we can hold enough peoples in the world through their interest in a better life, so that we do not have to go to war and it finally permeates to the people lined up against us in the world today, that we are really interested in a peaceful world, that we really are interested in better life for all people. That's the real reason, from my point of view, of not lessening, no matter how much it costs us, no matter how hard it is, it costs a lot less than going to war will cost us. And it seems to me that that's our one hope that we won't find ourselves exactly in the position that we've been in every time before when we went ahead and armed. (3:53)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] May I make a uh an example of uh how this type of aid really can prove to be the greatest weapon that we have? I believe that the best case in point is the little country of Yugoslavia, which is a communist-run country. Uh there they have been threatened with a famine because they lost all of their crops uh during this past summer. Uh we have been shipping uh grains and food stuffs to Yugoslavia in very large quantities. And uh-uh in actuality uh the Kremlin and the gentlemen who run the communist campaign to undermine the free nations of the world felt that they were going to be able to bring t-the downfall of Tito without ever going in there on an invasion because the people would begin to starve, and then they would be able to just walk in and depose him and put in their type of communism and bring Yugoslavia back into the fold. Well, uh Tito feels that his government is stronger today than it has ever been because the people are obtaining food. They realize that his government is supported, and that it is receiving support from the other UN Nations, exclusive of the Kremlin-dominated soviet countries. Now that information about how his government is remaining in power and how strong his uh

hold is on his people is getting back into all of the other eastern European countries, and the information that that country was not left to be overrun by the Kremlin, and to be taken over and to depose Tito, is going to have a very big effect, maybe not on leaders, but on people themselves in surrounding countries. And it will awaken a desire that maybe sooner or later they may be able to reestablish their independence and to receive support from the outside, and it is through moves of this kind that we eventually may be able to bring a realization even, to the Kremlin that they can't just willy-nilly walk all over any country that they want. (6:45)

[ER:] Well, I think that's-I think that's a very good example and, of course, I think it's um enormously important that we um [Elliott Roosevelt coughs] get the peoples of Eastern Europe as well as uh Western Europe beginning to think of the uh actual difference between what happened when the USSR um promised them to liberate them, and uh then let them go ahead along these new lines that they were told promised a great deal, and what has actually happened as a result of that liberation, as it is always called, to the people. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Now if we can prove that with what help we give does not go slavery, I think we will have gone a long ways toward helping people to free themselves. [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] Now there are a great many countries where there are a few well-educated and technically expert people, but where the great mass of the people don't even know that they want things [Elliott Roosevelt: That's right]. All that they want is a different kind of life. They've just accepted the kind of-of life they've had because they didn't know anything else. For instance, I was enormously struck when in the United Nations in the discussion on the children's fund they um told uh--one of the representatives of a certain Near Eastern country said to me, "Well-well we would like to continue with emergency supplies because in our country the death rate among children is very high and people have come to feel that um when a child lives it's the grace of God, and when a child dies it's the will of God ah and there is nothing to be done about it." We would like them to see that if a child eats the child lives, and, therefore, we feel that after a few years having seen children live, they will begin to demand of their government the possibility to eat. And whether the emergency supplies then go or not, the things that must be done by the government will have to be done because the people will no longer be content. Well now, I think it will take much longer, where a people has always been underfed and always has become apathetic, uh than two or three years, and I don't think this can be done by emergency supplies. [Elliott Roosevelt: No.] But nevertheless, I thought it was an expression of what a really concerned leader in a country [Elliott Roosevelt: Mhm.] a--had to turn to [Elliott Roosevelt: Yes.] as the only possibility for making the people want something better. (10:02)

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well now, of course to get back to this question, I have a feeling that the question was sent in with regard to military aid, and uh I think we should just take one minute to deal with that uh because I think that they feel that it -- uh the same thing will happen in Europe and in other countries where we are sending military aid uh that happened when we sent it to Chang Kai-shek, and it ended up being used [ER: By the communists.] by the communists because [ER: Well--] all of the troop trained by Chang disserted and went over to the Chinese communists.

[ER:] Well, of course there is no use in my going in here to my own personal feeling against the rearming to a great extent in Germany. I happen to be opposed to that, but that is my own—

[Elliott Roosevelt:] I'd like to deal with that as a special question and uh answer [ER: Yes] sometime.

[ER:] Uh but it seems to me that in the other eastern Atlantic um states um that uh is not have to happen because they are well trained, they will know that uh if before they are really prepared to defend themselves they are attacked there is nothing they can do but destroy whatever they have.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, my feeling is this: if General Eisenhower is given sufficient time to weld together the fifty or fifty-five divisions and to build a proper air force, I believe that he will be able to get

a-a good fighting force that will not be overrun by the Soviet, and they will not desert to uh or lay down their arms to the Soviet -- the threat of Soviet invasions.

[ER:] And I- I agree with you entirely. If the time is available to General Eisenhower, but I think that you have to also of what might happen if uh no time was available. Uh that is what is in this person's mind.

[Elliott Roosevelt:] Well, they haven't had uh too much aid arrive over there yet.

[ER:] Um, no that's true, there isn't so much there so that uh perhaps we-we don't have to worry about it this minute, but I do think that there is enough training now so that uh it would be destroyed.

(Break 12:19 - 12:32)

[ER:] Today my guest is a young man whose brilliant baritone voice is familiar to thousands of radio listeners. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you Mr. Igor Gorin.

[Igor Gorin:] Thank you and it is a great pleasure to be here, Mrs. Roosevelt.

[ER:] Mr. Gorin, I have read that you like to be known as the opera star who likes cowboy songs. What is the reason for [Igor Gorin laughs] your preference for cowboy songs? [ER and Igor Gorin laugh]

[Igor Gorin:] Well, there is a long story behind it. Eh when I was a young boy in Vienna, eh where I studied by the way, I used to go to the American movies and there I was acquainted with cowboy pictures, and naturally I was fascinated with the idea of Indians and cowboys, uh so that I never missed a one. And—

[ER:] I'm perfectly sure that you had the feeling that uh Indians were in every New York City street.

[Igor Gorin:] Exactly. As a matter of fact, when I arrived in New York I was looking for those Indians and I was [ER: I'm sure of it] [ER and Igor Gorin laugh] I was so disappointed I couldn't find any of them that I just said to myself, "I have to find one as soon as possible."

[ER:] Well that, of course, is the idea that so many people used to have, and naturally a boy who had seen the movies would expect to find them in the first street he came to.

[Igor Gorin:] That's exactly right.

[ER:] Cowboys would be on every corner of New York City.

[Igor Gorin:] That's right, and I must say this: reading all about America, as I was so interested in it when I was a young boy, it kind of uh made me feel so wonderful. My first uh view, not only of, shall we say, of-of the United States of America but to see these wonderful great high buildings. I looked at one of these buildings, I said to myself, "In these things people live and are happy and are doing such wonderful things." Because it just looked to me so sur--insurmountable, so tremendous, that I just couldn't---I just stood there with awe and just gazed in and-and with all the inspiration I said to myself, "This is why this country is called America the great."

[ER:] Well, I think as you come into the harbor, the skyline of New York is really, even to somebody who's lived here all their lives, it's something quite impressive. [Igor Gorin: That's exactly right.] I feel like every time I come in or every time I fly in over um New York I always have the feeling of what this

great tremendous mass of buildings [Igor Gorin: Yes.] means and in-in uh industry and in people and in vast variety of interests. (15:15)

[Igor Gorin:] That's - that's so right. Even today uh -- [ER: Even today you've got-- it gives you an impression.] yes, yes when I come back from Hollywood the first thing I have to do is walk on Broadway [ER laughs] and walk on Fifth Avenue. I just -- it just does something to me, it's something you can't describe. It's so --

[ER:] No, I don't think you can describe that feeling. Well, I'm one of the few people who was born in New York, so I have a real feeling for [Igor Gorin laughs]for New York because I was born here [ER laughs]. But that doesn't still explain eh why you particularly like cowboy songs. Is it because they are songs usually like ballads that tell stories [Igor Gorin: That is exact--] of people?

[Igor Gorin:] That is exactly right. This is the second reason for my liking American cowboy songs. I feel that the American cowboy song, as far as I am concerned, expresses the feeling of shall we say, of the first pioneers in this country when they had so much to fight and they had so much to work for in-in those days they had so much to overcome. [ER: Opening the West.] That's right. And for instance, when I do a song called "The Colorado Trail," which I have gotten from a won--from a man who has made his hobby of collecting American cowboy songs. Now this song tells the story--it tells a story about those pioneers uh grinding through and-and hard labor, those mountains which they have you know and snow and- and still singing happily and hoping for the day when they will have their cattle and sheep grazing there and have their homes and protect their families. To me, this why the American cowboy song tells the story of the American people, and, therefore, I like it very much.

[ER:] Well, that's very interesting. Did you go out to Hollywood soon after you came to this country or what uh [Igor Gorin: Well, when I came--] what brought you here originally?

[Igor Gorin:] Originally it brought me one thing, democracy. I read about America. I saw some people who came from America in Vienna and they told me that you are allowed to uh--in the streets to say anything you want to against the president and no one will put you in jail for it. Well, I was just so uh amazed and I was--I said, "Well this must be a wonderful country," and so I tried with all my heart to come to America to see it for myself. And this is exactly what I saw. I used to go up here to Columbus Circle, and I would hear people talk and they would fight among each other and-and-and then everybody would shake hands and I said, "This is a wonderful country." And then I happened to be here when the first elections--uh and President Roosevelt was elected, and after this he received a telegram from his opponent congratulating him and wishing him luck and I said, this is really what we call American sportsmanship, American greatness, and this why America will always remain great b--because people -- when people think that way it will be always great. This the way and, therefore, uh it was one of the reasons also for me [ER: Well, I--] coming and liking it here.

[ER:] I can understand coming from uh Austria or Germany, that- that when you get that feeling, then you came probably just on a visit first and stayed a short time or a long time?

[Igor Gorin:] That's right. I came here as a visit, and then uh I wanted to come back here as an uh regular which we call an immigrant [ER: Mhm.] to become an um quota visa. [ER: Yes.] Well, I left this country and uh stayed for a while uh-uh in the other country and applied for my uh regular visa, and this how I happen to come to the United States. (19:00)

[ER:] How long ago did you come?

[Igor Gorin:] In--it was about fifteen years ago.

[ER:] Fifteen years ago. [Igor Gorin: Yes ma'am.] Oh, well now you're an old resident.
[ER laughs]

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, I uh I-I-I consider myself very lucky to be considered an old American here.

[ER:] Well, then you went to-to Hollywood soon or did you stay in the East a while?

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, I stayed in New York for a while as we all have to do auditioning, uh [ER: Mhm.] finding some work as which we call. I did about uh fifty auditions, and each time we'd get a different answer, and one would say, "Well eh you have a beautiful voice, but you can't speak English," the other would say, "Well eh could you sing some popular songs?" and I said, "No I'm an opera singer." So uh finally one day the opportunity came, I made this audition for a famous radio program and also auditioned for Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer, and I received both contracts, believe it or not, in one--the same day.

[ER:] Good gracious. [Igor Gorin: That's right.] Isn't it wonderful when luck just turns like that? You probably were beginning to be a little discouraged and—

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, it was and uh because after all when uh you have to buy--go into the cafeteria and buy your lunch and you only have one dollar left in your pocket it gets to be a little uncomfortable. You know? (20:14)

[ER:] Oh, of course, [Igor Gorin laughs] it tends to be very uncomfortable. Well now, I think you told me -- uh you just spoke about not knowing English very well. Uh what was your vocabulary when you began singing these songs?

[Igor Gorin:] Well, I could say uh "hi partner" or-or "that-a-way" or these thing which I picked up from the cowboy—

[ER:] That was your vocabulary?

[Igor Gorin:] Exactly. [ER and Igor Gorin laugh]

[ER:] And that was all you really knew-- just your cowboy songs that you listened to.

[Igor Gorin:] Exactly right. For instance, "Home on the Range" I was singing oh with a Viennese accent even before I came to this country.

[ER:] Oh, I've heard "Home on the Range" a great many times, sung by a great many different singers, but I don't think I've ever heard it sung with a Viennese accent. [Igor Gorin laughs] I wish you were going to sing it for me! [ER and Igor Gorin laugh] Oh so that's something new my husband would have liked that. But—

[Igor Gorin:] Oh I-I-I-I knew that Mr. Roosevelt would like that song very much, [ER: Yes.] and uh it was one of my great wishes and desires to have--have had the opportunity to sing it for the the—

[ER:] He always liked that [Igor Gorin: The president.] and he liked "The Yellow Rose of Texas." Those were the two songs he would always asked people to sing for him, and most people had never heard of "The Yellow Rose of Texas" [ER and Igor Gorin laugh]. So when--when once, um uh during the war, I went over and I found myself in a large group of Texas soldiers in a uh canteen in England and uh they were all singing. It was Sunday afternoon, so I said I wonder if you boys know "The Yellow Rose of

Texas?" "Sure!" and they all sang. So I wished so that they had been able to sing to my husband [ER laughs] because he would have loved it. But they all seemed to know it, but most people don't know it

[Igor Gorin:] I don't know it.

[Igor Gorin and ER overlap]

[ER:] You don't know it?

[Igor Gorin:] I know a great many probably so—

[ER:] Well, you look up "The Yellow Rose of Texas."

[Igor Gorin:] Well, I'm simply going—

[ER:] Because it's a very nice song!

[Igor Gorin:] I'm going to look at it. (22:05)

[ER:] Well, um now that uh I shall remember that your first American vocabulary was purely cowboy vocabulary [ER laughs] and didn't have--[Igor Gorin: That's exactly right.] and then uh I imagine you gradually, because singers have such a good ear, you gradually acquired English uh fairly quickly and were able to sing.

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, and I studied very hard. I had a teacher and uh I shall never forget it. Uh the first book she wanted me to read was, believe it or not, *Dante's Inferno* [ER: Oh!] and uh how I got through it -- through with it, I shall never know, but we somehow did it and it helped me a great deal.

[ER:] Of course it would, and now we have to stop for a minute then we'll be right back.

(Break 22:53-23:00)

[ER:] Well now, Mr. Gorin, I'd like to ask you uh something because I understand that during the war um and perhaps more often than that you have sung in hospitals and in camps.

[Igor Gorin:] That's right, Mrs. Roosevelt, I have --

[ER:] And—

[Igor Gorin:] Yes?

[ER:] Particularly in psychopathic wards. Would you tell me a little about that?

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, uh about uh three months ago I was in Dayton, Ohio, I gave a concert there with the Philharmonic, and afterwards the uh Army called me and they said wouldn't I come and sing for them. Well I went down and I sang for about seven different wards, and uh and all sorts of you know uh amputations and so on. And finally uh the captain said to me, "Mr. Gorin, we would like to try something. Could you please come in and sing in one ward where the boys are really very unfortunate? I mean, don't be afraid because we have uh men there, they take care of them very nicely and they won't harm you." And I said, "I'm not afraid of these things. Uh I'd be more than happy to go in and sing for them." Well, I did and actually there was no reaction from these poor boys whatsoever. And uh I sang about three different numbers and none whatsoever. Finally I said, "Maybe you would like to hear 'The Lord's

Prayer?" And so one man, who was lying flat on his belly got up, and he said, "Yes! 'The Lord's Prayer.' 'The Lord's Prayer'" and he kept on repeating and I sang it and afterward he said, "Thank you." And the captain, I don't know uh, he was so uh -- he was just choked uh with tears, and he told me, "This man hasn't spoken in a long, long time, and those were the first words he uttered." So uh I-I can tell you that it made me feel kind of humble and little to be able to do something to make at least one man respond to "The Lord's Prayer."

[ER:] Well, you know it's--that's very interesting because now they are trying to use um--I used to go to Saint Elizabeth's in Washington, which is the one federal hospital, you know? [Igor Gorin: Yes.] And um uh they're trying to use music uh in--with mental patients and very often they will respond to music where they will not respond to anything else. And I happen to have done--I happen to have been to a great many mental wards both uh out in the Pacific during the war [Igor Gorin: Yes.] and uh and in Washington both in World War I and in World War II. And it is, sometimes, very difficult to get any kind of response you see [Igor Gorin: That's--exactly.] particularly when they're bad.

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, yes and it makes you feel, you just feel so helpless, you know?

[ER:] There are two things now that um -- one is music. They sometimes play music in the wards, regular organ music, [Igor Gorin: Uh-huh.] and then they also um have started trying to-to make them use clay and make something with their hands [Igor Gorin: Oh is that so? Yes.] and both those things, um last time I was--course it was quite a long while because I don't go now that I go back-- but last time that I went to Saint Elizabeth's in Washington, um we had an exhibition of what the mental patients have made, [Igor Gorin: Is-is that so?] and it was most interesting because they let out so much of what they have bottled up inside of them [Igor Gorin: Uh-huh.] in the things they make [Igor Gorin: Yes.] And it's-it's really-it's really a most interesting experiment [Igor Gorin: I-I--]. And I'm sure that your singing to them, it might be a little bit harder because the voice is not quite as impersonal a thing as just hearing the music played in some way, but um-- and it must have been very hard for you to do.

[Igor Gorin:] It was because uh you just stood there and yeah it just like blank, you know? Nobody paid any attention to you. [ER: No.] Eh I was introduced by a very charming nurse and uh this uh this captain and he said uh, "Mr. Gorin, the famous singer, is going to sing for you," and all you got was just a stare [ER: Yes I know.] And uh I said, "Well I'm going to try," and I sang the "Song of the Open Road" or "Without a Song," things they know, and-and-and no reaction whatsoever until I-I-I told them "I'm going to do 'The Lord's Prayer'" and this one man he just kind of jumped up and he said, "'The Lord's Prayer,' this what we need 'The Lord's Prayer'" and he repeated and repeated it. (27:48)

[ER:] Well, that's--that's very interesting. Well, many of our listeners have heard you sing "The Pledge of Allegiance." And I would like to have you tell your audience the story behind this song.

[Igor Gorin:] I shall be more than happy. Uh when I became a citizen of this country, uh which was uh in nineteen-hundred-and-thirty-nine, uh in Los Angeles by the way, well my friend the composer Albert Hay Malotte happened to be at the courtroom where we had to swear allegiance to the un--flag of the United States of America. Well, the procedure which he has never--as being an American naturally -- [ER: Mhm.] has never witnessed, uh has made such an impression upon him that uh at two AM that morning he called me and he said, "May I come up to see you? I want you to hear something." And there he played for me the "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America." And I think he did a wonderful job in setting the music to these wonderful words and so I started singing this song during the war everywhere and even today.

[ER:] That is most interesting, and now here is Mr. Gorin singing "The Pledge of Allegiance," as recorded by RCA Victor Records.

(Break 29:06-29:16)

[ER:] That was very lovely, Mr. Gorin. I think that in these troubled times many of us may lose sight of the real significance and beauty of that pledge. And I'm very glad that we could hear you [Igor Gorin: Thank you.] singing it. [Igor Gorin: Thank you very much.] Now there's something that I want to know. I want to know if you still ever go see a cowboy picture, [Igor Gorin: ye-] whether you know Hopalong Cassidy as all the children do, [ER and Igor Gorin laugh] or whether you've given that up now that you've grown up.

[Igor Gorin:] Mrs. Roosevelt, I still enjoy to see a cowboy picture, and I must tell you, I don't know if I should, but I am still a fan of Hopalong Cassidy.

[ER:] Well, I think that's wonderful.

[Igor Gorin:] I-I saw him about uh eight days ago walking on Fifth Avenue and a lot of kids stopped to stare at him and believe it or not me too. [ER and Igor Gorin laugh]

[ER:] Well, I think that's perfectly wonderful. Well, now we've asked you so many questions, but I wonder if um I could ask you to tell me a little bit about your plans for the future.

[Igor Gorin:] Well, my plans for the future are very simple. Uh, I am going to be on television a great deal in New York. And uh then I'm starting my nationwide council tour again, and then coming back to New York for more television. And then hoping uh that God may help us all that this world is--[ER: May be at peace] may be at peace and that we shall have nothing else to worry about but just about my own little routine.

[ER:] Well, I hope that with--very strongly too, but um do you like television?

[Igor Gorin:] Yes, I-I love it. as a matter of fact, I was on about a week ago for the first time on a commercial television program, and I was naturally scared not knowing what it would come through [ER: Mhm.] And I was so happy to know that it worked out all right, and actually now I'm loving it. [ER:] Now you're loving it?

[Igor Gorin:] Yes I'm loving it [ER: Oh well I think--] very much.

[ER:] I think that's uh--I like television too because I think it gives you uh a sense that people get closer to you [Igor Gorin: That's right.] then-then they do on the radio, though I enjoy the radio also, but I think television adds that's opportunity for people to see and really feel they know you.

[Igor Gorin:] That's right. You know uh-uh I must confess to you also that I listen to your program a great deal.

[ER:] Oh do you? [Igor Gorin: Yes.] Well, that's interesting.

[Igor Gorin:] When I am on tour in the afternoon before a concert for relaxation, I turn my radio on and it helps a great deal, and I listen to your very interesting program, and-and then also when I have the time that's my time to see a cowboy picture. [ER and Igor Gorin laugh]

[ER:] Of course that would be the time. Well, I can't thank you enough for coming here to be with us today. I've enjoyed so much seeing you again, and I hope I'm going to hear you sing again very soon.

[Igor Gorin:] Thank you so much, and it was a great pleasure being here.

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