



IF I HAD A HAMMER SONGS OF HOPE & STRUGGLE

PETE SEEGER



Smithsonian Folkways

PETE SEEGER IF I HAD A HAMMER: SONGS OF HOPE & STRUGGLE

For over 50 years Pete Seeger's music has included songs on labor, civil rights, peace, and the hope for a better world. This CD contains 24 tracks selected from hundreds released on Folkways Records in the late 1950s and 1960s and 2 new songs recorded especially for this collection. Pete plays the 5-string banjo and the 12-string guitar, and appears on some tracks with the Almanac Singers and his grandson Tao Rodriguez. Booklet contains detailed notes by Mark Greenberg and a complete discography of Pete Seeger on Folkways.

71 minutes

I'D HAMMER IN THE MORNING (INTRODUCTION)

1. IF I HAD A HAMMER 1:52
- SOLIDARITY FOREVER (UNIONS AND LABOR)
2. BANKS OF MARBLE 3:12
3. WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? 2:06
4. CASEY JONES (THE UNION SCAB) 1:54
5. TALKING UNION 3:04
6. JOE HILL 2:29
7. UNION MAID 2:12
8. STEP BY STEP 4:33
9. SOLIDARITY FOREVER 2:51

STUDY WAR NO MORE (PEACE)

10. WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE 2:01
11. TALKING ATOM 2:25
12. CROW ON THE CRADLE 4:21
13. LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM 2:27
14. STUDY WAR NO MORE 3:09

WE SHALL OVERCOME (CIVIL RIGHTS)

15. BOURGEOIS BLUES 2:03
16. RIVER OF MY PEOPLE 3:03
17. HOLD ON (HAND ON THE PLOW) 3:16
18. WE SHALL OVERCOME 4:38

I'D HAMMER IN THE EVENING (HOPE)

19. HE LIES IN THE AMERICAN LAND 1:57
20. WELL MAY THE WORLD GO 2:38
21. TURN, TURN, TURN 2:43
22. TOMORROW IS A HIGHWAY 3:28
23. OH, HAD I A GOLDEN THREAD 3:26
24. WE'LL ALL BE A-DOUBLING 1:53
25. ARRANGE AND REARRANGE 4:48
26. IF I HAD A HAMMER 2:10



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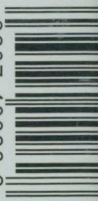
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PETE SEEGER IF I HAD A HAMMER: SONGS OF HOPE & STRUGGLE

I'D HAMMER IN THE MORNING (INTRODUCTION)

1. **IF I HAD A HAMMER** 1:52
(L.Hays-P.Seeger/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)

SOLIDARITY FOREVER (UNIONS AND LABOR)

2. **BANKS OF MARBLE** 3:12
(Les Rice/Stormking Music, BMI)
3. **WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?** 2:06
(Florence Reece/Stormking Music, BMI)
4. **CASEY JONES (THE UNION SCAB)** 1:54
(Joe Hill-E.W.Newton)
5. **TALKING UNION** 3:01
(Lampell-Hays-Seeger/Stormking Music, BMI)
6. **JOE HILL** 2:29
(Robinson-Hays/MCA Music, ASCAP)
7. **UNION MAID** 2:12
(Woody Guthrie/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)
8. **STEP BY STEP** 1:33
(arr. W.Hille-P.Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)
9. **SOLIDARITY FOREVER** 2:51
(R.Chaplin-D.Welsh-P.Seeger)

STUDY WAR NO MORE (PEACE)

10. **WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE** 2:01
(P.Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)
11. **TALKING ATOM** 2:25
(V.Partlow)
12. **CROW ON THE CRADLE** 2:21
(Sidney Carter)
13. **LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM** 2:21
(Ed McCurdy/TRO-Almanac Music, ASCAP)
14. **STUDY WAR NO MORE (DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE)** 3:09

WE SHALL OVERCOME (CIVIL RIGHTS)

15. **BOURGEOIS BLUES** 2:03
(H.Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways, BMI)
16. **RIVER OF MY PEOPLE** 3:03
(P.Seeger/Stormking Music, BMI)
17. **HOLD ON (HAND ON THE PLOW)** 3:16
18. **WE SHALL OVERCOME** 4:38
(Horton-Hamilton-Carawan-Seeger/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)

I'D HAMMER IN THE EVENING (HOPE)

19. **HE LIES IN THE AMERICAN LAND** 1:57
(English trans. P.Seeger/Fall River Music, BMI)
20. **WELL MAY THE WORLD GO** 2:38
(P.Seeger/Stormking Music, BMI)
21. **TURN, TURN, TURN** 2:43
(Words Ecclesiastes-Words & Music Pete Seeger/TRO-Melody Trails, BMI)
22. **TOMORROW IS A HIGHWAY** 3:28
(L.Hays-P.Seeger/TRO-Folkways Music, BMI)
23. **OH, HAD I A GOLDEN THREAD** 3:26
(P.Seeger/Stormking Music, BMI)
24. **WE'LL ALL BE A-DOUBLING** 1:53
(words P.Seeger/TRO-Melody Trails, BMI)
25. **ARRANGE AND REARRANGE** 4:48
(P.Seeger)
26. **IF I HAD A HAMMER** 2:10
(L.Hays-P.Seeger/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)

INTRODUCTION

Sing and fight!—The Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.)

Pete is one of the greatest of American patriots. I think he's one of the main reasons the Civil Rights and peace movements attained the heights they did. He inspired us, or inspired the people who inspired us. He was America's conscience in an unhopeful time. There is no way we can thank him enough.
—Michael Cooney, *Sing Out! Magazine*, 1975

Some may find [my songs] merely diverting melodies. Others may find them incitements to Red revolution. And who will say if either or both is wrong? Not I.
—Pete Seeger in *Rolling Stone*, April 13, 1972

"Throughout history," Irwin Silber wrote in the introduction to *Lift Every Voice*, the second *People's Song Book*, "songs have been used by the people as tools of inspiration and unity in the struggle for human progress." Even such apparently innocuous ditties as some nursery rhymes often began as thinly-veiled satirical commentaries on politics and politicians, and during the 18th and 19th centuries topical ballads—disseminated both orally and on inexpensive, printed sheets ("broad-sides")—helped keep people informed about current events and issues. And anthems and hymns, of course, have long-served as group expressions of communally held values, hopes, and ideals.

For over half a century, Pete Seeger has been one of the best-known wielders of those musical tools of hope and struggle. Without Pete, this century's Labor, Peace, and Civil Rights Movements would not have sung as loudly, as diversely, or with as much conviction. For Pete, music making has always been a political activity. "I'm convinced," he told a group of reporters in 1978, "we're relearning an old lesson: that music and other forms of art can be, not as they say 'mere entertainment,' but they can participate in the living, breathing issues which everybody's thinking and talking about" (Greenberg 1978).

That has been Pete's active belief since the mid-1930s, when he dropped out of Harvard to pursue the traditional American music he had first heard on a song-collecting trip to North Carolina with his musicologist father. Soon he was assisting folksong collector Alan Lomax in the Archives of American Folk Music at the Library of Congress, enlarging his awareness of the people's music he has been learning and passing around to his brothers and sisters ever since. In the process Pete became, in his own phrase, a "Johnny Appleseed Jr.," using folk music instead of apples to "plant the seeds of a better tomorrow in the homes across our land" (Seeger 1972).

Through Lomax, Pete met grassroots singers who, while preserving traditional songs and regional styles, were making up new songs to address social conditions they had experienced

themselves—singers like Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter, Aunt Molly Jackson, Sara Ogan Gunning, and especially Woody Guthrie. From Woody, Pete learned “a standard technique of putting new words to old tunes” (Seeger 1993)—of using what is musically familiar to help deliver a new message. (Pete has also reversed this process, setting old words to new tunes, as with “Turn, Turn, Turn.”) He began performing with Woody and in 1941 with Lee Hays and Millard Lampell as the Almanac Singers. At rallies and on picket lines, the group revived the singing labor movement tradition of Joe Hill and the Wobblies (I.W.W.). In the early 1940s, the Almanacs turned their attention to World War II (see *That’s Why We’re Marching*, SFW CD 40021 and see also *Songs for Political Action: Folk Music, Topical Songs, and the American Left*, 1926–1953, Bear Family 15720). Later in that decade, Pete used his voice and banjo to sing for peace, to rally support for Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party, and to oppose the rising tide of anti-communist witch-hunting that would soon place him before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and on the entertainment industry’s notorious blacklist.

“The Hammer Song” (“If I Had a Hammer”) was one of the songs that landed Pete before the Committee. Written in 1949 with fellow-Almanac Singer and People’s Songs founder Lee Hays, the song was also the first recorded by Pete, Lee, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred

Hellerman. Calling themselves the Weavers, this quartet of earnest folksingers was suddenly catapulted from fragile beginnings in New York’s Greenwich Village to a contract with a major record company, Decca. But while Decca was delighted with the Weavers’ four-part harmonies on such seemingly wholesome folksongs as Lead Belly’s “Irene, Goodnight” and the Israeli “Tzena, Tzena,” which topped the Hit Parade in 1951, it was not willing to release “The Hammer Song.” In 1956, Pete finally recorded it for Folkways in the first version heard on this collection, but it was not until Peter, Paul, and Mary recorded the song in 1962 that it began to spread all over this—and many other—lands.

Meanwhile, despite the blacklist, Pete continued to record for Folkways (and Folkways, to support Pete). On *Love Songs for Friends and Foes*, *Gazette I & II*, *The Rainbow Quest*, and other albums, Pete carried on the topical song tradition. Some songs commented on specific events, as 18th and 19th-century broadsides did. (See the upcoming Smithsonian Folkways collection, SF 40111) Others, including most of the songs in this collection, addressed more general issues: labor, peace, justice, and equality—the themes so succinctly summarized by Lee Hays in “The Hammer Song.” Many of these songs, like “Hammer,” would later be altered by the folk process, including an expanding political awareness (turning, for example, “all of my brothers” into “my brothers and my sisters”), as they

became anthems of the Peace and Civil Rights Movements. Pete has always supported this process as long as it strengthens the song’s message and maintains its musical integrity. (He was not happy with the transformation of the South African “Wimoweh” into the pop-song “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”)

Today, in 1998, years of singing out (Pete refers to it as “shouting”) have taken their toll on Pete’s voice. But though Pete sings more softly, his audiences sing as loudly as ever. Pete has never needed a bouncing ball to get an audience singing (although he did for a short time experiment with an electronic display and does sometimes use banners for non-English songs). Pete still has, in Robert Cantwell’s phrase, “the power to arouse the need to speak” through singing. He can still unify audiences by sharing honest music about critical issues that affect us all.

Pete recorded most of the songs in this collection in the 1940s and 50s for Folkways Records. But Pete has never stopped writing songs that address social and political issues, and he wanted to include some of his more recent songs on this CD. We, of course, were delighted to have the opportunity to present new recordings by Pete along with “classic” material. So Pete set up a DAT recorder in his kitchen and recorded a bunch of new songs. His grandson Tao Rodriguez sang with him, as he has been doing at concerts for the past decade. We

include two of these new songs here and plan to put a few more on the second release of Pete’s topical material, SF 40111.

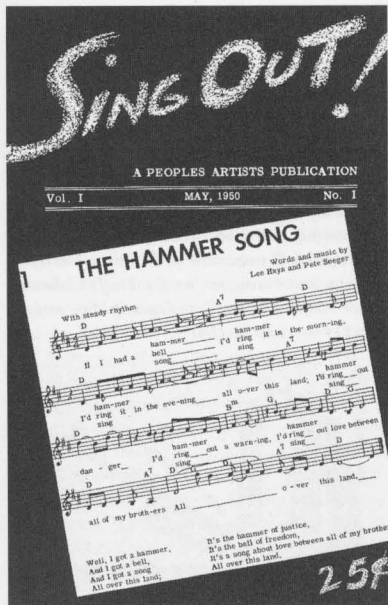
—Mark Greenberg, January, 1998

Mark Greenberg currently teaches Humanities and Cultural Studies at Goddard College in Plainfield, VT. He is also a musician, writer, and the president of Upstreet Productions, specializing in radio, video, and audio projects involving traditional folk music and oral history. He was the text editor and a writer for *The JVC-Smithsonian Folkways Video Anthologies of Music and Dance of the Americas, Europe, and Africa*.



Pete Seeger at Carnegie

In a new program of Folk Music Around the World
guest artist: Sonny Terry
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 Tickets \$1.50, 1.80, 2.00, 2.40, 3.00 (tax incl.) on sale



THE SONGS

The texts and musical transcriptions of most of these songs have appeared in Pete's "musical autobiography," *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* (Seeger 1993). All text quoted from the book is used by permission, and all rights are reserved by the publisher. See the bibliography below for ordering address and phone number.

I'D HAMMER IN THE MORNING (INTRODUCTION)

1. IF I HAD A HAMMER (THE HAMMER SONG)

(Words by Lee Hays, music by Pete Seeger/TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI)

Source: *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, track 8, F 2453 (1956)

According to Lee Hays, he and Pete wrote "The Hammer Song" "in the course of a long executive committee meeting of People's Songs[.] Pete and I passed manuscript notes back and forth until I finally nodded at him and we agreed we had the thing down" (Willens 1993). Pete, however, insists that "the first I ever saw the words, Lee sent me all four verses complete and asked if I could make up a tune. This was in January 1949. Lee was not on the executive board of People's Songs after 1946."

In any case, in the summer of 1949, "Hammer" was the first song recorded by the Weavers, but it was not released. It appeared in 1950 on the first cover of *Sing Out! Magazine*,

the successor to *The People's Songs Bulletin*. In 1952, at the insistence of Libby Frank, the song was made more inclusive by changing the phrase "all of my brothers" to "my brothers and my sisters" (Seeger 1993). Pete recorded the solo version that opens this collection in 1956, five years before Peter, Paul & Mary re-wrote the melody slightly and made the song a hit. Pete accepted their changes and began singing a "composite version," like the one that closes this collection. He also found that all the versions harmonize with each other and observes, "there's a good moral here, for the world" (Seeger 1993). As of 1995, "Hammer" had been recorded at least 161 times worldwide (Lieberman 1995).

Pete's accompaniment here illustrates the rhythmic, "whamming" banjo style he often uses when leading group singing, and which he finds "far more pleasant to the ears than a straight 'bang, bang, bang'" (See *How to Play the 5-string Banjo* SFV NH 1991).

The cover photograph on this recording shows author/composers Lee Hays and Pete Seeger singing together at a rally in the 1940s. Pete's banjo has a "People's Songs" sticker across its head. The song arose from the sentiments about public events such as the one depicted here (turn your CD booklet around and open it up to see the full power of Lee Hays' arm flung out across the sky and the banner on the far left).

SOLIDARITY FOREVER (UNIONS AND LABOR)

2. BANKS OF MARBLE

(Les Rice/Stormking Music, Inc, BMI)

Source: *Gazette*, Vol I, track 2, F 2501 (1958)

Les Rice, a New York state apple farmer, wrote this song in 1948, when millions of working people felt the impact of the first of America's post-War depressions. Pete introduced the song at a New York hootenanny and recorded it with the Weavers (prior to their commercial Decca releases). He describes the melody as "fairly conventional," but urges other singers not to even out its rhythmic irregularities (Seeger 1993). Pete accompanies the song with 12-string guitar, which he was introduced to by Huddie Ledbetter (Lead Belly).

3. WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

(Florence Reece/Stormking Music, Inc., BMI)

Source: *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*, track 6, side 2 F 5285 (1955)

In 1932 during the bitter and violent struggles of the miners in "Bloody" Harlan County, Kentucky, deputies employed by the mine owners came to the home of Sam Reece, one of the rank-and-file leaders of the National Miners' Union (NMU). Reece had been warned in time and escaped, but the deputies searched his home and terrorized his young daughters. After they left, Florence Reece, Sam's wife, tore an old calendar from the wall and wrote the verses of this

famous labor song on the back, setting them to the tune of an old Baptist hymn she had known from childhood. After the Almanac Singers recorded it in 1941, the two young Reece girls sang the song at the Union hall, and it quickly spread throughout the entire labor movement. Here, the Almanacs join Pete on the chorus.

The Almanac Singers changed Mrs. Reece's "my daddy was a miner/ he's now in the air and sun/ he'll be with you, fellow workers/ until this battle's won" to "my daddy was a miner/ and I'm a miner's son/ and I'll stick with the union/ until the battle's won." "He's now in the air and sun" referred to the fact that Sam Reece had been blacklisted and could no longer work underground in the mines.

In the 1960s, the song was adapted by James Farmer and others for the Civil Rights Movement:

*Come all you freedom lovers and listen while I tell
Of how the freedom riders came to Jackson [MS]
to dwell* (Carawan 1990).

Folksinger/activist Len Chandler also gave it a new twist:

*Come all you all you bourgeois Black men, with
all your excess fat
A few days in the county jail will sure take care
of that* (Carawan 1990).

Pete's banjo playing here features the technique he labeled "double thumbing."

4. CASEY JONES (THE UNION SCAB)

(Joe Hill-Eddie Walter Newton [1912])

Source: *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*, track 3, side 1 F 5285 (1955)

Joe Hill (Joseph Hillstrom) was the best-known of the Wobbly (I.W.W.) songwriters. While Hill advocated the use of hymn melodies for labor songs, he also, as here, used popular tunes. Hill based "Casey Jones" on the original railroad ballad, but transformed Jones from a tragic hero into a scab. Hill may have written his "Casey Jones" during a Southern Pacific strike in 1910, but it is most likely that it was written for the Southern Pacific strike of 1911. The song quickly became popular among workers as a denunciation of the hated figure of the strike-breaker, or scab, and it remains one of Hill's best-known parodies. A chorus joins Pete on pieces of the choruses and provide a rather pop-flavored vocal background on the verses.

5. TALKING UNION

(Words by Millard Lampell, Lee Hays, and Pete Seeger/Stormking Music, Inc.)

Source: *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*, track 4, side 2 F 5285 (1955)

Long before Rap, both Black and White Americans were talking to music. The Almanacs learned the talking blues form from Woody Guthrie, who had probably heard it on recordings by Chris Bouchillon or other country artists in the 1920s or early 1930s. In 1941, the

Almanac Singers were singing for meetings and rallies of the C.I.O. in Detroit, where Ford workers had just been organized. Almanacs Millard Lampell and Lee Hays wrote "Talking Union" with some help from Pete but were unable to complete it. Finally, Pete thought of the last ten lines. "In the 1980s," he writes, "I cleaned up this song....It's less sexist than it used to be" (Seeger 1993). The original version is heard here. Pete plays the guitar in the highly-influential, country style popularized by Mother Maybelle Carter of Virginia's Carter Family.

6. JOE HILL

(Robinson-Hayes 1938/MCA Music, ASCAP)

Source: *Songs of Struggle & Protest, 1930-1950*, track 4, side 2 F 5233 (1959)

Nineteen year-old Joseph Hillstrom arrived in the U.S. from Sweden in 1900 and spent the next 11 years harvesting wheat, working on freighters, and doing other miscellaneous jobs. He wrote his first and probably best-known union song in 1912—"The Preacher and the Slave," a parody of the hymn, "In the Sweet By and By"—while involved in a longshoremen's strike in San Pedro, California. The song made the phrase "pie in the sky" a common expression for false promises. Soon Hill's songs—based on popular songs of the day, hymns, and folk tunes—helped sell thousands of copies of the *Little Red Song Book* for the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). In

1914, Hill was convicted of murder in Salt Lake City, eliciting charges of a frame-up and protests from around the world. Despite attempts to intervene by President Woodrow Wilson and the Swedish Government, Hill was executed by a Utah firing squad on November 19, 1915. His famous last words were, "Don't mourn for me. Organize." (see *Don't Mourn—Organize! Songs of Labor Songwriter Joe Hill* SF 40026) Alfred Hayes wrote the words to this song and Earl Robinson the melody. Pete employs several banjo accompaniment styles here, reflecting the shifting moods of his interpretation.

7. UNION MAID

(Woody Guthrie 1961/TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI)

Source: *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*, track 2, side 2 F 5285 (1955)

In May, 1940, while Pete was working for Alan Lomax in the Archive of American Folk Music at the Library of Congress, Woody Guthrie invited him to go West. Woody and Pete "hitchhik[ed] on credit" in an unpaid-for car. In Oklahoma City at the request of Communist Party organizer Bob Wood, they sang for a small meeting of striking oil workers. Along with the strikers, the meeting included women, children, and some tough-looking men who Woody feared might try to bust up the meeting. Pete recalls that "they intended to but perhaps changed their mind because of the singing.

Ina Wood, Bob's wife, said "Woody, can't you write a song for the union women?" The next morning Pete "saw Woody composing new words to [the traditional song] 'Red Wing' on the office typewriter" (Interview with author 6 February 1998). Later, Mill Lampell, fellow Almanac Singer, added the third verse (Seeger 1972).

According to Woody, the inspiration for "Union Maid" also came from a newspaper article that he read during that stay with the Woods: "I read an article there about how a gang of thugs had carried a tenant farmer union girl out and hung her up in an old log shack where they tore off her clothes and whipped her with straps and things" (Guthrie 1965).

In recent years, many new third verses have been written. Pete sings this one:

*You women who want to be free
Take a little tip from me
Break out of that mold we've all been sold,
You've got a fighting history
The fight for women's rights, with workers must unite
Like Mother Jones, move those bones to the
front of every fight*
(Blood-Patterson 1988).

On the version of "Union Maid" heard here, the Almanac Singers join Pete on the chorus.

8. STEP BY STEP

(Music arranged and adapted by Waldemar Hille and Pete Seeger from the traditional Irish song "The Praties They Grow Small"/Sanga Music, Inc.)

Source: *The Rainbow Quest*, track 3 F 2454 (1960)

The words to this song are based on the preamble to the 1863 constitution of the American Mineworkers' Association (Seeger 1993). The tune was adapted by Pete and Waldemar Hille from "The Praties They Grow Small," an Irish song about the 1840s famine that led to the great wave of Irish emigration to the U.S. Pete's banjo accompaniment here employs the "lullaby lick" and is an excellent example of his ability to subtly support a song through his choice of simple counter-melodies, rhythmic accents, and chord voicings.

9. SOLIDARITY FOREVER

(Words by Ralph Chaplin, tune "Battle Hymn of the Republic," new music and additional words by David Welsh, choral arrangement by Pete Seeger)

Source: *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*, track 5, side 1 F5285 (1955)

The unofficial anthem of American labor, "Solidarity Forever" was written by I.W.W. leader Ralph Chaplin to the stirring tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"/"John Brown's Body." Chaplin worked closely for a

number of years with Wobbly leader, William D. ("Big Bill") Haywood. After serving time in prison in the early 1920s for his "radical" activities, Chaplin became deeply religious and very conservative in some ways. But "Solidarity Forever" continued to rally hundreds of thousands to the union cause, particularly during the rise of the C.I.O. in the 1930s. In recent years, new verses have been added, including this one by Marcia Taylor, Faith Petric, and others:

*It is we who wash the dishes, scrub the floors,
and clean the dirt
Feed the kids and send them off to school,
and then we go to work
Where we work for half wages for a boss who
likes to flirt
But the union makes us strong.*
(Blood-Patterson 1988)

Here, the Almanacs sing with Pete on the chorus and hum behind the verses.

STUDY WAR NO MORE (PEACE)

10. WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE

(Words and music by Pete Seeger/Sanga Music, Inc.)

Source: *The Rainbow Quest*, track 3 F 2454 (1960)

Pete wrote this 1960s anthem in 1955, on his way to perform at Oberlin College. On a scrap of paper in his pocket, he found three lines from a Russian song ("Koloda Duda") quoted in Mikhail Sholokov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*. Twenty minutes later, "Flowers" was finished. Pete sang it that night, and Joe Hickerson, one of the Oberlin students, added the soldier and graveyard verses and gave it a regular rhythm. The tune is based on an Irish-American lumberjack song. Pete recorded it in the version heard here for Folkways on *The Rainbow Quest* in 1956 and then forgot about it, even neglecting to copyright it. But others—including the Kingston Trio, Peter, Paul & Mary, and Marlene Dietrich—spread it to millions. During the Vietnam War, "Flowers" spread, "from soldier to soldier" according to Pete (Seeger 1993). Pete provides a rippling, arpeggiated banjo accompaniment to support the song's slow, legato melody.

11. TALKING ATOM

(Vern Partlow, People's Songs)

Source: *Gazette*, Vol. 1, track 4, side 2 F 2501 (1958)

(See notes on Track 5 "Talking Union"). The atomic bombs dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945, ended the war with Japan and began the atomic age. To many, the threat of nuclear holocaust and of radioactive fallout far outweighed the potential benefits of this new source of energy. Like Vern Partlow, who wrote "Talking Atom," many people felt the world had come to a cross-roads where Hamlet's age-old question was asked of all humanity. Pete's banjo interludes feature one of his characteristic blues licks.

12. THE CROW ON THE CRADLE

(Sidney Carter)

Source: *Gazette*, Vol. 2, track 3, side 2 F 2502 (1961)

Pete met songwriter/singer Sidney Carter in London in the late 50s. Carter, who was also involved in the Episcopal church, soon mailed him this song. According to Pete, Carter's best known song is "Lord of the Dance" (Interview with author 6 February 1998). In keeping with the song's title, Pete's singing and banjo accompaniment suggest a lullaby, thereby emphasizing the ominous quality of the lyrics.

13. LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM

(Ed McCurdy/Almanac Music, ASCAP)

Source: *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, track 5, side 2 F 2453 (1956)

Pete writes: "What makes this song great? From one angle, it's a mystic song; from another, a sarcastic, ironic song; and from another, a very warm and loving song. Sometimes a singer will want to emphasize one facet and polish it more brilliantly than the rest. But if he is not careful, he throws off the balance of the jewel, and this destroys some of its effectiveness as a work of art" (Seeger 1972). According to Pete, Canadian folksinger Ed McCurdy, who wrote this song, was particularly sensitive to attempts to change it: "Someone, in a songbook, once wrote it, 'Last Night I Had the Greatest Dream.' McCurdy was livid with rage" (Seeger 1972).

14. STUDY WAR NO MORE (DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE)

(Traditional African American Spiritual)

Source: *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, track 9, side 1 F 2453 (1956)

Perhaps the most widely-sung Peace Movement song, "Study War" is based on a 19th-century African American spiritual that offered solace in the afterworld from this life's struggles and burdens. It has long been a staple of Pete's concerts. Bluesman Big Bill Broonzy sings the more explicitly religious verses on *Sing Out!* with Pete (FW-2455).

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WE SHALL OVERCOME (CIVIL RIGHTS)

15. BOURGEOIS BLUES

(Written and arranged by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music, Inc., BMI)
Source: *Gazette II*, track 3 side 1 F 2502 (1961)

Huddie Ledbetter (Lead Belly) wrote several topical songs about events ("The Titanic," "The Hindenberg," "The Scottsboro Boys"), but this one, written in 1938, is based on his direct experience with racism. According to Alan Lomax: "One rainy night in Washington, he (Lead Belly) and [his wife] Martha were unable to find a room in any of the inexpensive Negro hotels and were finally forced to spend the night in the apartment of a White friend. The next morning the White landlord made a scene about the fact that a Negro spent the night in his house. Leadbelly overheard the discussion and on his return to New York composed this blues-narrative" (*Gazette*, Vol. 2 F-2502). Pete's 12-string guitar playing here is based on Lead Belly's. For a detailed analysis of, and instruction in, Lead Belly's style, see Pete's *The 12-String Guitar as Played by Leadbelly* (FW 8371). For Lead Belly's performances, see *The Lead Belly Legacy Series Vols. 1-3*, SF 40044, SF 40045, SF 40105).

16. RIVER OF MY PEOPLE

(Words by Pete Seeger, music traditional Russian "Stenka Razin"/Stormking Music, Inc.)

Source: *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, track 9, side 2 F 2453 (1956)

Pete based the melody of this song on an old Russian folksong, "Stenka Razin," about a legendary Cossak chief who proves his masculinity to his warriors by drowning his bride in the Volga. The words, which anticipate the Civil Rights Movement, came to Pete while he was "chopping trees along the banks of the Hudson" in 1950 (Seeger 1993).

17. HOLD ON (KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE PLOW)

(from traditional—Gospel Plow)

Source: *Pete Seeger at the Village Gate*, Vol. 2, track 1 F 2451 (1962)

This 19th-century African American spiritual has been adapted for a variety of struggles. Like many pre-Emancipation spirituals, it finds hope for liberation in the Old Testament stories of Moses and the Hebrews' flight from Egypt. The song was also known in the Civil Rights Movement as "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."

18. WE SHALL OVERCOME

(Musical and lyrical adaptation by Zilphia Horton, Frank Hamilton, Guy Carawan, and Pete Seeger. Inspired by African American gospel singing, members of the Food & Tobacco Workers Union, Charleston, SC, and the southern Civil Rights Movement/TRO—Ludlow Music, Inc. BMI) *Royalties derived from this composition are being contributed to the We Shall Overcome Fund and the Freedom Movement under the trusteeship of the writers.*

Source: *Broadsides: Songs and Ballads Sung by Pete Seeger*, track 4, side 2 F 2456 (1964)

According to Pete, the history of this world-famous song is "another beautiful example of the constant interchange between Negro and White musicians in creating American music" (Seeger 1972).

The song was probably adapted from the 19th century hymn, "I'll Be All Right," although Rev. Charles Tindley's 1903 composition, "I'll Overcome Some Day," is also a possible source. The Tindley song may itself have been adapted from the older hymn. In any case, Zilphia Horton of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee heard Black tobacco workers singing it on a picket line in 1946. According to Pete, one of those workers, Lucille Simmons, changed the "I" to "we." Pete considers this the most important word in the song. He is less sure about who changed "will" to "shall" but acknowledges that "it could have been me

with my Harvard education" (Seeger 1993).

Zilphia Horton added some verses and taught it to Pete in 1947, and Pete added other, less union-specific verses. In April, 1960, folksinger Guy Carawan sang it to the founding convention of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Raleigh, NC, and it quickly spread throughout the developing Civil Rights movement.

According to Pete, "This song undoubtedly has many meanings to many people....The very best verse was made up in Montgomery, Alabama, the city of the 1956 bus boycott: 'We are not afraid—today!'...Without this verse, none of the other verses could come true" (Seeger 1972).

Pete also acknowledges that, despite its status as an anthem, the song has been criticized for the passivity implied by "someday."

In the early 60s, Pete, Guy Carawan, and Frank Hamilton copyrighted the song to protect it from being turned into an insipid pop song (as happened to "Wimoweh"). All its royalties are paid to the nonprofit We Shall Overcome Fund, which provides grants to assist African American musicians in the South.

I'D HAMMER IN THE EVENING (HOPE)

19. HE LIES IN THE AMERICAN LAND

(Original Slovak words and music by Andrew Kovaly, transcribed by Jacob Evanson, English lyrics by Pete Seeger/Fall River Music, Inc.)
Source: *American Industrial Ballads*, track 10 FW 40058 (1956/1992)

Written in the early 20th century in Pittsburgh by Slovakian steel worker Andrew Kovaly, this song expresses the hopes and disappointments of many immigrants. According to Kovaly, the song commemorates a fellow worker who saved enough money to bring his family from Slovakia but was killed in an industrial accident before they arrived. "My friend," Kovaly says, "was very proud of America, and it was with pride and happiness that he looked forward to raising his children as Americans" (*American Industrial Ballads* sFW 40058). Pete's use of a tremolo technique on the banjo helps emphasize the song's eastern European-inflected melody.

20. WELL MAY THE WORLD GO

(Words and music by Pete Seeger/Stormking Music, Inc.)

Source: *Banks of Marble and Other Songs*, track 7 F 31040 (1974)

Pete set these verses to the tune of the traditional Scottish song "Weel May the Keel Row" (i.e., "well may the boat row") but changed the

rhythm from the original 6/8 to 2/4. This recording features the unusual use of two 5-string banjos, with some instrumental breaks based on the 3-finger picking style of bluegrass innovator Earl Scruggs and with ringing harmonics ("chimes") at the end. Fred Hellerman accompanies Pete on this track.

21. **TURN, TURN, TURN**

(Words from the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes, music and additional words by Pete Seeger/Melody Trails, Inc.)
Source: unreleased tape in the Folkways Collection, Smithsonian Institution)

Pete wrote this song, based on a passage from the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes, after his publisher asked him for another "Goodnight, Irene" instead of more protest songs. The publisher was happy, as was Pete, with the 1960's version by the Byrds with "all those electric guitars. Like clanging bells." He also realized the tune was similar to "Bells of Rhymney" and that both "owed more than a little to that ancient mother-of-tunes, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'" (Seeger 1993).

22. **TOMORROW IS A HIGHWAY**

(Words by Lee Hays, music by Pete Seeger/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
Source: *Gazette*, Vol. 2, track 1 F 2502 (1961)

In 1949 an outdoor concert by Paul Robeson in Peekskill, NY, produced by People's

Artists was broken up by local vigilantes. People's Artists rescheduled the concert for a week later, on Labor Day. The concert took place without incident, but a mob organized by the Ku Klux Klan and recruited from veterans' groups stoned departing cars and buses. The police did nothing to stop the mob, and 150 people were injured. "No one was hurt in our car, but every window was smashed," says Pete. "Two rocks came through and I cemented them into a chimney I was building." Despite this ominous indication of a rising right-wing tide, Lee Hays wrote these hopeful lyrics, and Pete provided the music. Lee, Pete says, "was looking far ahead" (Interview with the author 6 February 1998); see also Lieberman 1995; Wilens 1993; Dunway 1981; and Cantwell 1996. Pete uses his "basic strum" on the banjo.

23. **OH, HAD I A GOLDEN THREAD**

(Words and music by Pete Seeger/Stormking Music, Inc.)

Source: *The Rainbow Quest*, track 1, side 2 F 2454 (1960)

Pete "found" the words to this song while "fooling around on a guitar" during a visit with friends in Denver. "I thought I'd made up a good tune," he writes. "Years later realized I'd swiped the idea from 'Nearer My God To Thee'" (Seeger 1993). This is another good example of Pete's use of double-time banjo playing to accompany a slow song.

24. **WE'LL ALL BE A-DOUBLING**

Pete Seeger, banjo and vocals; Tao Rodriguez, vocals; David Amram, dombek
Source: previously unreleased, recorded in Beacon, NY, March 1998

Pete says: "I wrote this song over 30 years ago after reading the *Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich. But I didn't sing it much—too teachy preachy! Low and behold in April 1997 I thought of a good last verse and I found a good way to get kids singing the chorus enthusiastically with me. I point out that we all have 2 parents, 4 grandparents, 8 great grandparents, and if you go back far enough you'll see that we must all be distant cousins to each other. And then I point out that you can go into the future the same way. I also point out that the world's population is doubling every 42 years. (30 years ago it was doubling every 32 years. Progress!)" (Seeger, 1998, telephone conversation)

25. **ARRANGE AND REARRANGE**

Pete Seeger, banjo and vocals, Tao Rodriguez, vocals; David Amram, dombek
Source: previously unreleased, recorded in Beacon, NY, March 1998

Pete says: "This song starts innocently but ends scandalously. But of course it has a very serious theme. The world should learn to laugh at our different words rather than groan or get angry at these differences. If we do learn to laugh, we'll learn to survive and survive our 'linguo-

centric predicament.'

Last February I was getting some wood for the fire. We heat our house with wood because I'm fortunate to live on the side of a mountain. And I looked up, and there was the sun poking its head up over the mountain. And all of a sudden I had a little verse made up. If I'd sat down to try and think it up, I never would have thought of it.

I don't sing this in the schools, because I don't want to get the teacher in trouble. But I do sing it everywhere else and sometimes there are kids present. I say 'kids, I didn't hear you singing so well. I know you have been told "you will NOT say that word in this house" but you're not in that house any more. We've got to save the world! And you know, it's not the words we say that are so bad, it's the things we do, and it's grownups doing most of them, right? So sing it!'" (Seeger 1998: broadcast).

Multi-talented David Amram is a neighbor of Pete's and came over to help record these two songs. He is a composer and plays both the flute and the dombek.

Tao Rodriguez spent the maleable years of his childhood in Nicaragua where he learned that not all folk music comes from East Virginia. Havng learned Spanish, he moved back to the U.S. in 1989 and began to help his grandfather sing Spanish songs. Neither of them knew where it would go but they've been play-

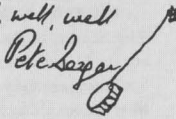
ing together ever since and still smile at each other in the morning.

26. **IF I HAD A HAMMER (THE HAMMER SONG)**
(Words by Lee Hays, music by Pete Seeger/
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI)
Source: *Live at the Sanders Theater*, track 21 SFW
40027 (1992)

On this live version, Pete shows off his technique of "lining out" the song by shouting out the words to the audience a moment before they sing the line back to him. Rural preachers developed "lining out" to teach psalms and hymns to non-reading congregations (or where books were not available); it is similar to the call-and-response practice brought to America by enslaved West Africans. This performance reveals the tension, the enthusiastic audience participation, and the high tenor harmonies that made Pete Seeger's live performances so memorable. Events like the one at Sanders Theatre and the rally photographed on the cover introduced generations of people to the excitement of making music together and the satisfaction of doing it well.

At age 79 I listen to these 26 tracks with very mixed feelings. Surprise! I did once have a voice of sorts. But I'll have to apologize to women for that 3rd verse of "Union Maid" and other things as well. However, let it stand as a document; let the chips fall where they may. I took the liberty of asking Smithsonian Folkways to add a few more recent tracks.... I've also taken the liberty of asking Smithsonian Folkways to print in this brochure how the words of some songs have been changed in more recent times.

Well, well, well
Pete Seeger
Beacon NY
1998



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PETE SEEGER SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS DISCOGRAPHY

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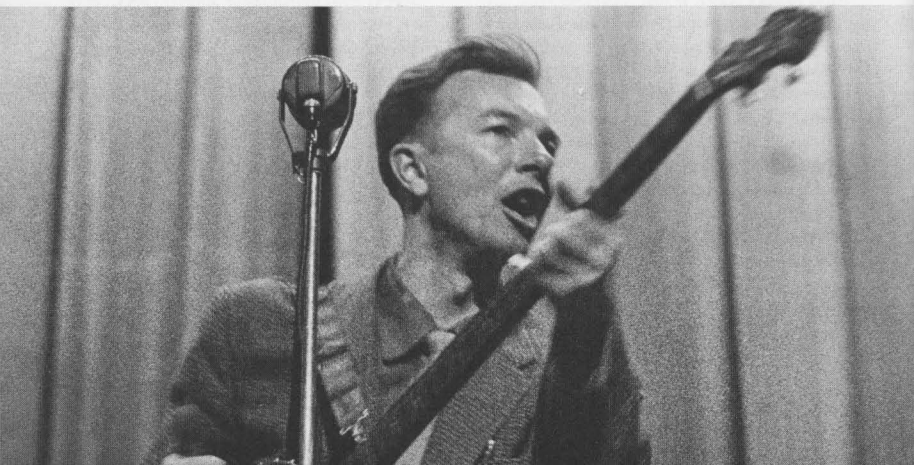
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