

Interview with Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber of Paredon Records, December 1991
Tape 1, Side A

Jeff: Okay, It's the ninth of December, 1991 Oakland CA. Interviewing Irwin Dane and Barbara Silber about Paredon records and the transfer of Paredon to the Smithsonian office of Folklife Programs Archive. First we're going to talk about the history of label and philosophy behind it what started what was the rationale for starting it in the first place and so on. Barbara?

BARBARA: Okay Jeff, talking to Jeff Place, right? In my place.

JEFF:...

BARBARA: Right. The genesis for doing this label, was really, well in advance of it's actually getting into the planning stages because I was, really since 1947 when I went to the Prague World Youth Festival, which was the first world youth festival that ever happened and then subsequently those became a major world events which are very little known in U.S. because of our penchant for ignoring what happens behind our imaginary iron curtain.

That '47 festival was my introduction to a whole world of music and musicians and a reason for singing, you know, that I had never imagined was out there. Well I guess I had, by the time I went to it I had begun to get a clue. It was a very shaping event in my life because it was a chance mingle with people who had lived basically all through World War II. This was happening in '47, the war still very real. Some people, I mean a whole group of Greek partisans came from a war situation which was going on in Greece at the time. Dressed in their, you know those little white skirts and long stockings that the Greek soldiers wore then dressed like that. Some people came from Spain which was very very heavily under fascist Franco domination, and I think went to jail for going to it.

Anyway, met a great variety of singers and got the sense that what I was trying to do in my little old way in Detroit was connected to a world wide impulse of putting your musical abilities at the service of a world wide movement toward peace and understanding, and you know just the linking up the good guys in the world through their songs. And so quite a few years of my life were spent doing that kind of traveling around and singing.

I have also been a jazz singer. It's like two separate lives though because in the jazz turf I couldn't really mix in all this commitment. You know you're supposed to be hanging loose and be sort of existential and not have a brain your head whatever, or a thought for tomorrow is how I should put it. So I had to basically create two different personas in a sense and live two different musical lives. I went back and forth from one to the other as my personal economics allowed and

JEFF: What kind of material were you singing for this festival in Prague?

BARBARA: In Prague I was singing Detroit labor songs. I was born and raised in Detroit, and no idea why I wanted to be a singer but I wanted to be a singer all my life. And I took a little training when I was 12 or 13 and learned how to breathe, so I could belt out the song pretty good. All they knew to teach me were the usual things for girls and for. They thought I was a soprano - which I'm clearly not and never have been - but they had me singing "Ave Maria" and you know little light sopranoish songs and I really had no idea what you could do with song except that I began to see that as a female it was a road to some kind of respect. You know, if you could stand up and sing a song well people would take you seriously to some extent.

But there was a real clash in the fact that as soon as I began to get good at it, you know, then you get into all the girly stuff and that wasn't for me. I wasn't about to become someone's pretty little object on the stage and all that. And I started singing pop songs and all that stuff and going and I tried and get up and sing whenever there was a band at the school dance or whatever it was. And I liked to sing "Embraceable You" or whatever it was and tried out for some contests. I found out that that was one way in those days you could, it was a route to breaking into work, you know, situation. They'd have all kinds of contests, just crazy things like, oh they had something called Miss Doll Face in Detroit which was tied to a movie that came out called *Doll Face*. And so I said, "Oh I'll go ahead and try out because then I'll be heard by some of people who were looking for singers." I guess. I didn't know any other way do that.

So I did and I won and I got called down to the booker's office. In the booker's office the first thing they say is, "Take off your coat and turn around." And I said, "I think I'm in the wrong place," you know. And I found out what a basically demeaning situation it was to be a female singer in the commercial world. Nothing in my experience since then has disproven that first hit, you know.

But right about that time I started to be drawn to the social movements that were sweeping Detroit. And Detroit, you know, has always been a volatile place. It was always the center for a lot of racial strife and all the labor organizing and struggle that was going on there had it's impact out. I lived way out in the northwest section which was basically, one part we lived in was known as a Arky or hillbilly ghetto, you know. It was poor white trash basically, you know. And then the neighborhood next to us was really kind of a step up and a really nice neighborhood. And my dad had a drug store in the poor neighborhood, but he had us go to school in the nice neighborhood because he thought we should grow up to be examples of, you know, somehow for the less privilege which is where he came from, the Arkansas farm boy.

So I right away saw sort of the difference in that sense. Difference between what life was like right around us during the depression this is, we're talking I'm born in 1927. So we're talking all through the depression. I worked in my dad's store an awful lot since I was about 5 years old. I used sell candy when I was five and then as I got older took on different jobs. So I, you know growing up in the store I could see how people came in there with very very, you know strained, even spending a nickel was a big deal in those days, you know, very tense about how they're going to spend their money and all that.

All that up until World War II and then economics started to boom around Detroit and things really changed radically. But I meant I saw all that, you know. So I was aware of the pressures and the tensions and all even though as a child you don't know what's making it happen.

But there were WPA road gangs working right outside the drugstore and I saw that my father didn't want the, that was a very marking effect on me was that one time a guy came in and asked for a coke and asked me to, I mean he didn't, you know it's just a very humble request. He wanted to buy a coke. He's thirsty. It's very hot out. He's working on this road gang. And so I opened it and set it on the counter and poured it in a glass the same way my dad taught me to do it for everybody. And my dad came rushing out of the back room absolutely horrified and screaming at me. Smacked me and told the man to get out of there and then he berated me for a long time and berated the man on his way out. And I didn't see anything but later looking back on it but fear on my dad's part because he had come up to Detroit, you know, in a very very well it was, he was touch and go every day, you know, every day of his life. And he was working in the store from 8 in the morning til midnight every day literally. I know he came home for dinner for about half an hour and the rest of the time he was in the store. So the man was under tremendous tension, and economic tension, and this represented a threat to, you know, he explained to me. He says, "well you know it, we might lose customers if people know that we would serve a black man in the store."

I didn't even realize up until then that there was a different in skin colors. It didn't dawn on me, you know. But I realized that ever since that minute I in some way began to identify psychologically with this black man and against the way my father had looked at the situation. And I have basically spent my life singing black people's music. And that psychological aspect of it just dawned on me very recently 'cause I, something happened that sort of set it off and I was moved so deeply that I realized this goes way deeper than I realized you know. It's not just an intellectual conclusion. This is, but I mean Detroit was rife with really racist stuff. Our Sunday school teacher was a Gerald L.K. Smith America Firster, you know. And I felt really uncomfortable and in fact I would as a child, was really in conflict with that you know was resisting and feeling. I'd sit there and listen to her talk and feel sick in the stomach. And didn't know why but I just was, you know. And I don't know so I, and Father Cogwin, don't forget was a big deal on the radio all the time. This home grown, I don't where he came from, but I mean this was a real, through the medium of this fascist catholic priest, you know. The whole city was being indoctrinated by this radio broadcast, came on every Sunday afternoon. People would turn it on. Every home in Detroit practically would be listening to this guy. Henry Ford, you know, and his whole system of training people to think in separate compartments so that they wouldn't unite and form a trade union. Think of themselves as I'm, you know, I'm catholic or I'm Polish or I'm. It's us and them. Yeah. That whole thing. So that was the atmosphere. You know. So that when I went to this youth festival, which was as a result of I was already trying to form a people's songs chapter in Detroit and I was doing a lot of, well I had discovered by connection with the Left organizations that I'd been encouraged to go and sing at different demonstrations and we had, see what

had happened, I found this out much later. I mean don't know if you wanted to get off on all this biographical stuff but its

JEFF: No it's worthwhile.

BARBARA: the, why there was all this connection between the songs that people brought with them from Kentucky and Arkansas and Missouri and all those places when they came up to work in the autoplants well they brought this culture with them. Then like in my case my father was trying to get away from it all and be trying to be a nice little bourgeois gentleman, you know, if he could but. So he didn't want us, he repressed the culture in our house. And my mother and father thought we shouldn't, they just didn't want us to having anything, we didn't have any knowledge of our own culture so I felt like a complete cultural vacuum. Which is why soon as I hit anybody else's culture, it just went right in, you know.

JEFF: Soaked it right in.

BARBARA: Yeah. So but with this, what was going on around the unions and everything it was like you know all of a sudden you're what is it the point I was going to make (I have to stop and think about it) well in any case there was a really great organizing came to Detroit who was part of the communist party's organizing efforts in Detroit and part of their, they had a youth organization then called American Youth for Democracy which was a, it was an all communist but it generated from that source and they were pretty influential. Anyway the guy who came to town his name was Phyllis Yats. Somehow he saw the possibilities in what I could do. And he was the one that made arrangements for me to go to somebody's house and who had a all there was in the way of a record collection there were maybe 30 or 40 records maximum out with any kind of folk music, labor music, political song or whatever and he made arrangements for me to go over and spend all day in these people's apartment for months at a time. They teachers and they were away all day. Went to their place and used their record collection and tried to teach myself to play the guitar and started to

JEFF: Where was the source of the record labels and people who were doing that?

BARBARA: Yeah well let's see. Oh god. I could probably figure that out if I had some time to think about it but. Well actually now I've got some those things on 78 records in a basement in New York but I've recently been through them.

JEFF: It's not a big deal.

BARBARA: But I actually out of that whole experience though the one that absolutely bit me was the first time I heard Leadbelly. That I think that was my first, as a singer, my first real strong influence. Anyway through all that I found that there was a reason to sing that was, you know, besides being an ornament. All the stuff that what we used to call bourgeois culture you know. What was expected of you there was just to be some sort of object and an ornament and on the other hand in this other world you actually

were someone who could be seen as an agent for change. An element of impact on what was going on in the world. And that was very very very important to me. So I basically threw over all the singing style that I had been taught by the singing teacher and used the techniques but not the sound at all. And created my own sound as I went along out of bits and pieces and. Anyway so I had been teaching myself, and I started being sent out to all kinds of different places. This guy Phillis Yats actually arranged eventually for a concert to launch my notoriety in Detroit. He brought Pete Seeger and a couple other singers from New York and made a concert just basically just for the purpose of stimulating a working class cultural life in Detroit and for presenting this young singer that he hoping to making an impact. For, you know, nothing to do with, it's not a career. It was a way of life. It was, you know, an extension of your feeling about what life was all about. And I guess in that work of going around and singing to different, I got very quickly in demand and I got called here, there, call there and lot of the different groups were different national groups and so I'd learn a couple songs in this language or that just to have a way of bridging between me and that group and that group and that group. And so I was kind of very eclectic in terms of what I, things I was learning.

Yeah I started to mention about why I know this is the thing that's been nagging at me to get back to. Was I found out why the connection between the music that people brought with them from the south and labor organizing songs took place in Detroit. And that was because well I finally met one of the old local six hundred Ford UAW guys who had been an organizer during the sit down strikes. And he talked about how the it all started with the fact that teenage kids of the people who were occupying the buildings would come around. I mean the women are outside, you know, throwing marbles under cops horses so they couldn't conveniently beat the strikers or reat the pickets or whatever. But the kids began to sing songs and began to make songs about what was going on. And so then that began to get to be a big deal. I mean they started encourage it consciously. And bringing the kids and sort of foster all that and then the

JEFF: What did the kids use as models for these songs?

BARBARA: Well the songs they knew, what they brought with them. Their own. Whatever the popular hillbilly culture was of the moment. You know. So it would probably country western. Whatever. You know what the songs are so you know what the tunes are. So the tunes are standard American tunes and they just, you know, knew them from their background back home. So I fit right in the mold in a sense because I, you know, but I came along in a later period. Those sit in strikes from the 30's when I was a child and then now I'm in the mid to late 40's. I'm being brought along by the people who were aware of that tradition and lived through it and wanted to have me replicate it and be their new generation of that, see. So they, that's why I was getting so much encouragement I guess so I.

But, you know, quickly realized that I'd much prefer to go and sing in front of a shop gate for 3000 people with the idea that I might be able to fire them up so they could go on with their whatever they had to do then to go and stand on a bandstand and shake the maracas, you know. So I started getting offers like that. I got a couple of really good

ones. I got an offer to go on the road with Alvino Rey's band which was later the King Sisters and. I don't know. Anyway it was a big thing. It was like a, from that you could go on to be Doris Day or anybody. You know what I mean. You could make a real commercial career off of that kind of a tour. I just at the moment was so caught up in the other thing. I said well I'm not going to do it. Goodbye.

JEFF: I was looking at the archives of folk culture and some background stuff before I came out here. Saw a little booklet with some pictures of you and Louis Armstrong and few other people. Was that later on?

BARBARA: Well that all developed, you know, as I went along with this political song life I began to also acquire some responsibilities and things. I had to make a living. I had children. I had, so I started to try and sing in public places where I could get paid for it. And as I say tried out for these different things. I came, I had to move out to California. I found myself here. I went out to a couple other contests. Horis Heidts Musical Nights. That was a radio show. I got, I won that. I got put on the air, but then they wanted me to sing some different song from, I had in mind something a little more, with some more content, and they wanted me to sing some fake folk song. Fact it was "Ragtime Cowboy Joe" which is kind of a cute song but at the time I was very, you know, snobbish about that. I said no I'm not going, so I didn't do it. I got right in the habit right then of turning things down that violated my sense of integrity. Because I also got onto the feeling or the idea that you maybe poor, you maybe out of job, you may have children to feed, you may this that or the other, but if you can actually have the power to determine what you're going to do in (other words you have these standards and you're going to choose your route anyway) then you're not poor. Well. You're not poor. You're in charge of your life. And so I, it set a tone for me. And I really started, you know then, and I all the way through my life did that. And some of the, you know now I look back and I say gee there are some dumb choices I made in that respect 'cause I was a little too hardnosed about some of it but to the extent I find myself completely marginalized. Even in the folksong field and in the, around those, you know, sort of the folk establishment that had developed later on in the states. I became quite marginalized from that.

JEFF: The whole 60's big boom revival of folk.

BARBARA: Yeah. Because the closer that got to being like real show business was the more alienating it was for me, and I was always trying to sort of insert my own sense of integrity about that. And sometimes I was a little bit over purist or overly what would you call it. I don't know. Some people probably saw me as sometimes as holier than thou. I never saw it that way myself. I didn't feel superior to anybody because I made certain decisions, but it was just a case of I had to do it for me, you know.

JEFF: I remember reading the story about the whole "Hoot-N-Anny" television show and not letting certain people on and you're whole stance on that, which I thought that was perfectly logical.

BARBARA: I don't know where you saw the story. I wonder.

JEFF: Somewhere I was reading something. It was during the last couple weeks.

BARBARA: That's interesting. I don't know, didn't know that was documented. I've got some probably some documentation if you want any of that stuff at some point.

JEFF: I think it was in a book by Chris Bagdaleer and somebody else. It was called **Folk Music**. It's like an encyclopedia form. It had everybody's names. It had a couple pages on different people.

BARBARA: Oh I see.

JEFF: And you had a couple pages in there....

BARBARA: Okay.

JEFF: Yeah, whatever.

BARBARA: Yeah. So, but I mean I managed to put myself in a situation where the folk boom people. Well I mean I could of slid right into there because like Al Grossman was starting to build his stable of people and he brought me to, essentially brought me to the first Newport festival for the purpose of, sort of, you know, let's see if it'll fly here. And after that he proposed that I sign up with him and he. But he laid the cards right out there. He says, look you know you got all this political stuff that you want to do, and you got your children, and you got your family life, and you got all this and you want a career besides. But he says you got to decide which it is you're really gonna do. And, you know, if you make, if you decide it's really gonna be the career, well, we can do business. And I knew right then and there that we were not gonna be a team. No way in hell. Just because of my previous. I mean had I come out of a little different background I might have found a sort of a compromise route to that, or as a lot of musicians, the old time jazz guys, you know, and I would say well I didn't do this or that I didn't go on. Louis Armstrong asked me to go to Europe and do a tour with him. It would have been dream for me to do that, I mean. Can you imagine anything more I'd want to do? And but I didn't want to just automatically sign the contract with this manager Joe Glazer. Who was a noted, started out as a car thief in Mexico and I knew his whole history. I mean he was a real mafia type.

JEFF: Joe Glazer became the same...

BARBARA: No, no. Joe Glazer was the guy who basically owned Louis Armstrong in a sense and Billie Holiday and a whole lot of other people in an agency called ABC Booking, I think it was. ABC. Might have been. I think so. Anyway Glazer was, you know, the guy was standing by Billie Holiday's bed as she's dying trying to get her to sign over her life's story. I mean he's been the one who's been getting her the dope all along. Keep her going. All this kind of stuff. I mean so I don't want to sign up with this guy without looking at the contract real good. So just the act of asking for the contract

and wanting a few days to read it, you know, then Glazer says oh I don't know who needs to deal with this doll, you know. She's going to be too. So he sort of backs off. And Louis, later when I asked Louis well what happened Louis. You know he says, well, guess that's what Mr. Glazer wanted. Because Louis' whole approach to the deal, the relationship, was let Glazer handle all the garbage and, you know, I'll just be pure music. Which was intelligent for a jazz musician from his background. It's very wise to separate it. Don't have to get involved with all this ethical decisions and things. Just let. 'cause nobody but slimeballs out there doing it in those days. Specially for black musicians. So you know you can't make a lot of judgments. Just gotta go with the thing. But I was of a different caste, you know. And I have this, I mean, I'm. First of all there are more choices for white people, you know, in this country. And I had been sort of raised to think that I had unlimited opportunities. Like all white people are here, you know, or most of them. My dad having left behind. I mean his outlook was: okay now we're in the big city, we leave all the lack of opportunity and all the bad days behind us, now the world is our oyster. And I was infused with that sense. So I just always thought there was gonna, if I could turn down somebody like Al Grossman or turn down this opportunity with Louis that another one would come along. But they don't. You know. They don't. These are lifetime decisions basically, and

JEFF: Forks in the road.

BARBARA: They're forks in the road and you take one or the other. I don't have any regrets because I'm alive and know a lot people who took some other choices who are dead from unnatural causes. You know, what have you. But, any how I think this thing in Detroit, you know, with it was a very tense, aware city, very international city with roots all over the world coming in one place. Certainly all those in the southern black roots and the southern white roots. All of that went into shaping me and my outlook, and wound up eventually in Paredon records as one of the outlets for all of that. You were asking about how I got started with the jazz career and that basically. I got better and better at doing the blues and all that. And then at a certain point when I needed work. I was, well I was. Actually I think I'm the first one in Detroit that had a little, I had a little folk music program on KPFA when they first started which was forty years ago now I guess. 42 years or something.

And out of that I think somebody got in touch with me who would opening a little practically like a hotdog stand ,but it was, it had a little stage, you know. And had me doing some live singing in there. And Berkley had peculiar laws then because of the campus. They had the whole city was had sort of a blue law. You couldn't have food and beverage and entertainment in the same place. And not talking about alcoholic beverage. Any of this. Couldn't have anything seductive so to speak in your, you know. You couldn't mix the two elements. And eventually course it all broke down and we have different situation here. But I started singing in this little place and the nearest other thing was going on way down the road over the Oakland line, which was traditional jazz band by the name of Bob Mielke and His Bearcats. And a man named Dick Oxtot came to where I was singing and. 'cause he's a great investigator. He's dug up more singers around the area here. Somehow he just goes out and hears everybody and he pulls them

into his little action. And so he asked me to come down to. He was playing banjo with the Bear Cats. Says come down the street, and he says you know you're really better at the blues and the gospel stuff and everything out of all the stuff you do. But, so you oughta be doing more of that, you know.

So I come down and I sit in with the band and I sing a couple blues that I know, and it was the first time I had a chance to sing in front of a live big jazz band like outside of sitting in with a small combo in cocktail lounge or someplace like this. So here I am on stage with this big band so I just started doing some of the blues I already knew, you know. And they seemed to like it and they encouraged me to come back. I used to go back and sing with them a whole lot and eventually I started going and hanging out on the waterfront here when, it was the heyday of when George Louis was sort of his career was resuscitated and he stopped being a stevedore and started being a clarinet player fulltime and started coming here a lot with his band. And Kid Ory was coming here regularly and Turk Murphy of course and the Revivalists were still around playing that great. I mean San Francisco was the seat of a great jazz revival in the prewar and during the war and just after the war. World War II I'm talking about. We've had a few since.

And so I started going and listening to all that stuff and soaking it up and offering to sing a tune here and there. And pretty soon I got to be a regular sitter inner, and pretty soon I got employed that way. And then for a while, in fact for about two years running I had a spot at place called Jack's Waterfront Hangout. I had to. It was, it had a long bar where people came in and out all night from the waterfront getting stuff, getting a drink and going on their way. And on the left it had a little show room area. And people would come there and spend the evening or a lot longer. So I could play to both but the drunks would fall down right in front of me. You what I mean. On their way in and out. But as a proving ground it was fantastic 'cause I could do all the folk material and do all the jazz material. And the other night I was looking at a scrap book here trying to dig up all the Paredon stuff and I came across the scrapbook. And it had like the little clippings from the ads that they put in. And I saw every single ad had a different secondary line. It had my name and then it had underneath it would say folk singer or folk and jazz. One says folk singer with a guitar and one says folk and jazz. And one says jazz and one says. You know. So as they were playing with what would draw the people in. I was doing everything there. And I had Oxtot playing the banjo sometimes and a piano player, who would also play the trumpet, Bill Erikson. Basically I didn't have every time to rehearse or plan everything. I would just go in and do whatever I felt like every night. It was a testing ground as I say. It was also a way of developing a very wide repertory and, you know. I got, then from there, I got asked to a record. The first record I ever did was a blues. You know a traditional blues album with Bob Mielke and some other people.

JEFF: Which one was that, was that San Francisco Record one?

BARBARA: It's called "Troubled in Mind." Yeah. "Troubled in Mind." And so from that, because of being, this is the revival place and the revival was just sort of petering out. Well actually it's still going on. A lot that music is still played. In fact Sacramento, the capital here, has the biggest festival in the world of that type of music, traditional

jazz. Every May, they call it the Dixie Land Jubilee. I despise the term dixie land applied to what I do because I don't do dixie land, and I always say dixie land is a state of mind and I don't live it, you know. But it's traditional jazz or early jazz or classic jazz. Or whatever you want to call it. Now I do that stuff with a band with Bob Mielke in it, same guy. Back again. 'cause he's still here and he's still playing greater than ever and. But I have a started in the last three or four years to experiment with integrating content into it that, you know, in subtle ways. But I'm well aware of how little it mixes even now because the traditionalist. The audience for the traditional are traditional minded they want the tradition. They want that's it, and that's all they want.

JEFF: You were saying that Peggy Seeger played me her new record that she's working on. She stayed at the house a couple weeks ago. And it was getting in the, musically it was sort of sounding a lot like a chanteuse, you know Edith Peoff kind of style of music as opposed to folk music.

BARBARA: Yes I would do a concert a couple years ago, she was playing the piano and singing a couple songs of that nature.

JEFF: ...more of an arrangement with a record more and more that direction?

BARBARA: Sure, why not? Yeah. Now she can experiment with whatever she wants, right. Sort of freed up stylewise. That's interesting.

JEFF: Anyways...

BARBARA: She sent me a song. I gotta. "You Don't Know How Lucky You Are" it's called. Yeah.

JEFF: I recorded her with her family doing that in Philadelphia Folk Festival. Anyway, go ahead.

BARBARA: Well that's really nice. I'm glad to hear that she's branching out and. But I. Anyway always had those two lives going and was it's been interesting. In the folk music scene I could do all the blues I wanted, you know. So the traditional jazz blues. The classic blues. The Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Ida Cox, Memphis Minnie. All that material was very well appreciated in folk circles, you know. But the reverse wasn't true. The political song certainly not acceptable in the traditional jazz circles. For the most part. Just because of a caution and a sort of conservatism that runs through the whole field. So anyhow getting back to Paredon and what how all this comes circles around into is. I was experiencing, by the time we went to Cuba in the mid sixties, already this sense of marginalization from the folk music people because after turning down Grossman must have been the word was out. Oh she's not real serious about her career or something. Because none of the other managers, entrepreneurs really seemed to want anything to do with what I was doing. And I think also in having, I don't know when that "Hoot-N-Anny" business was with turning down the "Hoot-N-Anny" show at the last minute. And I did it in a way that I forced them to have a lot of problems.

JEFF: ...were let in?

BARBARA: I think so. But I, you know once I knew that I wasn't going to do it I decided that I wouldn't just tell them right away. I would wait until the last minute and tell them so it would cause them a lot of trouble. Why not. If you can do it, do it big. So I think I got the word when out I was a trouble maker. And I was irresponsible or I was, I don't know what they would say but. So I was feeling further and further marginalized. I was never invited back to Newport except once. And I would like to before you leave I'll give you some documentation about that because it's kind of interesting. But it basically was a. I went to the festival because I loved the music and I loved the people who perform it. You know so I went several times and just soaked everything up and reconnected with a lot of old friends and all that but I (outside of being asked to get up and jam on somebody's set) was never invited back there to sing.

And till I got an invitation one day via Bernice Reagan to be on a workshop of which, she'd sort of taken note that the festival was getting further and further from its glory days when everyone stands on the stage and sings "We Shall Overcome." And now we're, you know, two three years down the line and we're, it's all sort of a sham. And so she decided to propose a political song workshop. And it was going to be a one hour workshop out on the edge of the, you know, in the tent during the day. Not on the main stage and all that kind of stuff. But anyway I got a letter inviting me to be on that. And I decided to turn that down because I decided that it was a mockery of the whole deal, you know. I decided that this was made to marginalize that, you know to a one hour workshop out of. At a moment when the world is in. I mean we're talking, you know, we're talking mid Sixties later Sixties and they were going to marginalize it out to that you know. Boil it all down and have a little token thing and then they can sit back and say well we did it. Now we did our thing. We had political singers here.

I decided I wasn't going to be a party to that. So I made a big to do about it. I wrote a big long letter explaining why I wasn't going to do it and sent it to the board. Which then included quite a lot of people in the folk music field. And kinda quite a lot of key people. And then I also sent it to the *Village Voice* and they printed it. And as a result I was never, for twenty years or more, well let's say dating from the first festival which was what '59, the first Newport festival? I was never invited to sing on a major folk song festival. Zero. You know. So I began to realize that this was happening. These things sneak up on you. Like this is not blacklisting in the sense of the McCarthy black list. This is, that's that only term I can think of, is marginalization. You know, you're just sort of pushed further out.

JEFF: Towards the You're Too Hot to Handle list?

BARBARA: Well, perhaps. You'd have to ask the people that were responsible for it. I don't know. I was told at one point that whenever my name came up around George Win he began to turn red and flustered and ready to curse out the you know the ground I walked on. He probably doesn't even remember my name anymore, so what. But he

became, as you know, the head of the folk music and jazz monopoly mafia, whatever, of the world. You know. He controlled.

JEFF: Is he the New Orleans one, is he, that's him, yeah?

BARBARA: There isn't a big one that he isn't. You know. Somehow. And this includes Europe because he was very transcontinental. I mean, you know, transatlantic minded and all that. Had some times with Air France and so forth. So well I began to realize that to carry on a profession, at that, it was gonna be impossible for me to do it. And to the jazz work, you know, was, had always done very well. But then with these other things happened with that. Where I didn't go out with Louis Armstrong. I didn't this and I didn't this. You know I think, I guess the general comprehension in that field was that. I have a feeling it's because of being a woman who has a mind of her own. You know in those days it wasn't the thing to do. Just wasn't acceptable. I think if I'd been a male I might have had an easier way of passing through that kind of situation. Not being seen as a, quote, brassy blond you know. And might have been able to go ahead and make a living at that.

But it was basically foreclosed and the one of the only places that I always was welcome, always, and still am good friends with the entrepreneur, and where we really have a like mindedness about a lot of these questions is with Ed Pearl and the Ash Grove. So that really became a kind of focal point, a home for me musically and. So I always had certain places that I could always sing in. It was the Ash Grove, was the Gate of Horn, Henri Beck then taking over from, you know, from Grossman. And then certain other coffeehouses spring up around in with, you know, out respect for those places other places opened in the country, some in Canada. So at certain places I could book myself and I could make a living. You know. Don't forget I'm still married to a guy who. I'm married to a guy then who is a basically, and this is before Irwin, a person who was essentially a World War II casualty. He was a prisoner of war for a couple years before I met him. And I had no understanding of how that affected him. But he was very affected by that. He was very dysfunctional a lot of the time. And I was carrying that load plus three children. And all of my own aspirations to try to change the world, right. So there were a few, you know, things that happened that were under those kind of pressures. And on the other hand.

Well anyway eventually I split up with that guy and I, at some point while we were still together I tried to start a club here in San Francisco. I did start a club called Sugar Hill Home with the Blues. Which some people here still carry on about as the best the jazz club that ever opened in the bay area and they still love it. I met somebody the other day, a singer named Margie Baker, who's up in her fifties and she remembers it very well. But I was done out of that too. I think again through, I mean it was basically ripped off after I got it started by another woman. But that's a, she had the backing and the banker husband and you know all the bucks and money talks with lawyers and all that stuff so. So anyhow that was my attempt to sort of be able to be here with the kids, run a normal life while I was pursuing my work. When that club came to a screeching halt for me, it went on but she, I had to walk away. I didn't even go back and get my clothes. I walked

away one day after one definitive meeting in a lawyer's office. And it was a big success. That's why she wanted it.

So I basically then set my sights on doing what I really wanted to do all along which I'd been, during that period it's like it's all the civil rights movement stuff is busting loose all over the place. And so I was always running out to sing at this demonstration or picket line in front of Woolworth's or whatever it was. You know I used to take my kids and we'd make signs and go picket here and there with whatever group. And right about that time I was, got the call about the, they were. It evolved like this. Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney had been kidnapped in Mississippi and missing. And some people put together something called Freedom Singers, or some such idea, to get a lot of singers together and go down and sing at the freedom schools in order to bring press down there so that people would be in less danger by having outside press be around. To offer some sort of moral support by virtue of the songs. And outsider singers coming, because they had plenty of, certainly their own singers. But the idea of outsider singers coming, you know, which show that support existed all around and soon as I heard about that I just dropped everything and went to Mississippi. That was a turning point too because it came right about the time that Irwin and I were getting together.

Anyway I wound up moving to New York and like that. And then this going to Cuba. Well I, we, I better tell that right. Yeah, it's not on the tape now.

So in 1966 Irwin and I by this time are together. I'm living in New York. It's on a kind of. He had a lot of difficulties because he was still married to somebody else and he had three kids. And I had three kids and my kids were. Well anyway it was I moved to New York because he was pretty, pretty tied down with all of that and running Sing Out and Oak Publications and all of the rest of it. And so I was the one who came to New York rather than he moving to out west and, oh that was in, I think that was another one of the things that further marginalized me because a lot of people thought when I came that I was sorta showing up to jump into the middle of something that they, some of the. It turns out, people around were hoping to step into certain situations, you know. They could see that the magazine was very central to the whole the scene and they wanted to be there to grab any, you know. I mean I hate to call them all a bunch of.

Tape 1, Side B

BARBARA: As the leader. Yeah so I found it a little difficult to work out of New York too because I was certainly not the kind of person to play into that. I was not there to be, tag onto Irwin's little fiefdom or whatever. I wasn't there to take over Sing Out. I wasn't there to push anybody else out of their sinecure. I was simply there because I wanted to live with Irwin, you know. We had known each other as colleagues for twenty years. And then suddenly the right things came together, in the right moment, whatever, and we realized that we wanted it to be much more of a partnership. Much more than. I mean up till that moment, which actually was in '64, I guess, we really hadn't any personal relationship. But it just happened to work out.

So anyhow I was in New York and I was living there and I had produced together with Irwin something called the Singing for Peace which was at Carnegie Hall. It was the first big, it was actually the first big anti-war demonstration because it was conceived of as a demonstration of singers and their public against the war. And nobody really had mounted a, you know, a big street demonstration or anything. So this, we, being the kind of plotters we are, we figured this thing out that. And it's funny. It was right at the time of the newspaper strikes. Lot of newspaper strikes were going on. Two or three papers. I don't know. It was very hard to get anything in the newspaper. And we had to do it all by quarter-sheets pasted on walls. Going to, I got some leaflets together and, you know, we got different organizations to leaflet their people and mail it out or whatever we did. But anyway very quickly we saw that. Well sixty some odd performers wanted to be on the thing groups or. I sent a letter to everybody. I coordinated the whole thing out of the Sing Out office basically (and home) and invited everybody, including a lot of traditional singers. And everybody because I thought there was a point of division too, see. Because, for example, John Cohen he thought it was just outrageous that I would send a letter inviting Rascoe Holkum to take part in this thing, or send a letter, or send a tape, or a message to it. To me it was very very logical because that it was where I came from. Was that background and I knew about how people feel. And I didn't think that those people should be left out of it and treated in some category as if they're not part of American society. You know. I figured a person like Rascoe Holkum can. You know I met John on the street one day and he says, oh you sent this letter and on the outside it says Singing for Peace and you know everybody in a small town like that reads the, you know the person in post office reads all that and everybody the word gets around and gets him in all kinds of arguments. And I said well good. That's good. He can defend himself. And John went, no. Protect the guy, don't have. But I still maintain that.

I mean it was, it worked out because one of the my good friends in this whole traditional side of it, you know, was Bessie Jones was really close. She lived at our house for a while and I was real I mean soul mate in a sense. I really loved Bessie like an older sister or mother or closest thing to, you know. And start talking about her I'm going to cry. Bessie's came. One time she was out here visiting and she. I was still living here and I my oldest kid was out demonstrating in front of the nuclear energy office or something. And I took her by there because I had to pick the kid up to go home to dinner, you know, or something. And she said I want to go sing a song for them and I said well good. We got out and she went over and sang "You're Gonna Reap Just What You Sow." You know. So that kind of thing. That's closing the circle. I mean that's what it's all about. You know. So course I had gotten in touch with Bessie to do something and she sent a tape. I'm not sure if I still, I might still even have it in all those tapes in the living room. But god she was a teacher in that respect too. You know that there wasn't a separation between your life, your music and the rest of the world. It's all one.

JEFF: Sure.

BARBARA: So part of what upsets me is I guess that I don't think anybody really fully understood that about her either. You know. And I just, it makes me think of the

stupidity of separating it the way the traditional singers have always been separated out, you know, and objectified. I hate that. I hate it.

JEFF: Yeah. You always see that happening.

BARBARA: They're not objects to be bought and sold and put on the shelf and put in a book and you know. Anyways so where are we? We need to get back to the founding of Paredon. This is a long discourse around it. Well as far as my personal life which I've now told you so much about there's no use back tracking see I'm not gonna. I had reached a certain point where I. Okay when I'm in New York, I'm with Irwin, I produced the Singing for Peace. I'd seen a lot more through doing that of the way other people divide their lives, compartmentalize their lives, you know, this I could then began to understand that some people see themselves as okay I'm a professional singer who occasionally does something for a good cause. That's what some singers look at themselves. And other people see themselves as my life is this, and once and while I sell a little piece of it to make a living. See and never the twain are gonna meet. They're never gonna understand each other. You know. Because the ones who are basically design and package themselves for sale can't understand the psychology of the people who find it difficult in a sense to put their life on sale by the pound. Okay. I begin to really grasp that.

So by the time '66 came, well a friend of Irwin's, a woman who was then living in Cuba. Estela Bravo is her name. She still lives in Cuba. Her husband. She had gone to the world youth festival, right. This is another interesting. She had been to the '56 or something one I don't know in Berlin or somewhere. And there she met a young Argentine revolutionary who was a doctor, and married him went back to Argentina. He got put in jail because of some other, you know, political rightist was in power, and they had to flee and they went to Cuba. And so she was living in Cuba. But she was from New York born and raised. And therefore under the spell, through her family and connections and her love of culture, under the spell of the, I guess you'd call it Pete Seeger and all of his generation of the sense of how, you know, what culture and music is. And all of the universal quality, the internationalism that he always projected and so she.

Anyway she came to New York from time to time during those days she was working for Radio Havana. Which is a short wave broadcast from Cuba to the world. And she wanted to, she was producing some things in English and she wanted to get some folk music stuff and put it on her show. So she came to New York and first she thing she came up to Irwin and asked him well do you know any gets some records. And I think got some records from Irwin. But she said, do you any singer who wanted to go to Cuba. And would come to Cuba and do some singing. Because what she was coming was the Cubans wanted. There was a need of the moment to clarify, on the part of the Cuban government, they wanted to clarify for the Cuban populace that there was no quarrel between the Cuban people and the American people. That the only difficulties were between the two governments, or you know, the two systems if you will, but not between the people to people level. You know.

And so they somehow got the idea that it would be, or maybe through Estela, that you know a singer or some singers could help to depict that. So she said she'd approach different people and nobody was willing to do it or interested in doing it or whatever. And Irwin said well I know somebody who'd go in a minute. And that was me of course because I had been on my one big commercial tour that I did. I was the whole time I was on the tour was a very difficult tour and I won't get into the whole story about that because that would take another day and a half. But as a, all that tour I was a reading the **Yankee Go Home** or the **Cuba See** or whatever that first book that came out about. And I'd been fascinated by it, you know, and I was following it loosely as I could and the kind of life I was leading, but I was planning and scheming how I was gonna go to Cuba. So when that invitation came I just said yes I will go with or without State Department permission, doesn't matter to me. I want to go because I'm an American guaranteed the right to travel and investigate and think about things. Long as I go anywhere in the world with no malice in my heart, no, you know, whatever, I think entitled to go. So, and Irwin so he said well he wanted to go too. So we went without State Department permission. We asked for permission. We pled for permission. We did all the steps you're supposed to do to get permission. We weren't given permission. We said well goodbye we're going anyway because we're free Americans. Right.

So we go and we're met there with newsreel cameras and everything. And it seems what they had in mind. We thought we'd just gonna be a few, he was gonna lecture about folk music or whatever. But turned out they had in mind a big tour and I went all over the island singing. Put me on national TV and everything. The world opened up in that direction. So okay now there are some people who can get what I'm trying to do. And I wound up bringing my son down there to study for a year. And he stayed there living there and he still lives there today. He's been there for 26 years. Or more now. And so that I have my roots there. My grandson is there. That's the family there. And my daughter is there now coming back tomorrow night. But in those days it all new to me and neither Irwin or I spoke any Spanish. It was very exciting just seeing what accomplishments there.

Anyhow to get back to Paredon. As Estela Bravo's idea of developing this folk music connection in, you know, I think she put it in their mind maybe but it seemed to fall on very very fertile ground the idea of having a world wide meeting of political singers. Or people committed singers, some people. They call it *confirmativo* in Spanish, committed singers. Committed to an idea. And then as the reggae artists call it this conscious music. You know. That's what we were. But recognizing from the vantage point of Cuba, you know Cuba actually has a much more open view or of three hundred and sixty degree view of the world than we do. We kind look in this direction or that. But they're sitting out there. They gotta look all the way around. And the music that comes in there the cultural input has always been quite amazingly broad and vast. And I guess that maybe accounts for maybe their own music being as good as it is, but I don't know.

But anyway Estela got the idea of they should have this *Cancion Protesta Encuentro*. That was an encounter, not a festival. *Encuentro* means encounter or gathering. The idea

was that they would bring in singers from all over who would be able to meet each other and form sort of a network of like-minded artists. And then would also be able to perform for the Cubans, which would help the Cuban youth be exposed to the artists from all these countries and the solidarity for Cuba that was coming from all these people too. The, I mean the US government was working every way it could to isolate Cuba. So the Cubans on the other hand were taking advantage of this moment when everyone in the world was looking to see what this little island was gonna do, you know, and how. And people were excited all over from all parts of the globe excited about the effort that was going into making a new way of living there. So these singers came from everywhere including the trenches in Vietnam. They were behind the lines of Vietnam a whole artist ensemble came. People from Argentina and Ecuador and Mexico, and people from, well Ewan MacColl and Peggie Seeger came England. Some wonderful singers came from Italy and lots of different places. All over. And I truly think that this is the only time it's ever happened in world history. I don't know any other place that took on such an awesome task. 'cause to bring, you know, as broad a variety of people together. Put them all in an atmosphere where we could work together, study together, sing together, debate. We had all the hospitality in the world. We were, they paid everybody's airfare to get there. They paid all the accommodations. They took everybody to Varadero and let us go to the beach for a few days. After they let us have our several days of conferencing and everything and we had several days of relaxation and playing together, getting to know each other. It was very well designed to help us all make solid ties and friendships.

And then we broke up into smaller groups and went around the country and did some performing. And our particular group went to, I think the whole, yeah most of the people there went out to the Isle of Youth to help. It used to be called the Isle of Pines and before that it's Treasure Island in Robert Lewis Stevenson's book. It's where the pirates used to hide from everybody during those, during the 1600's or 1700's. And was then known as the Isle of Pines and was a very unpopulated area, underused area. And they decided if the youth would go out there and build it up and do work they work they would have the first communist society in the world, right. The real pure communist, you know, that was their idea. But we'll change, if the youth will do it, we'll change it to the Isle of Youth.

And so the naming of it is the Isle of youth. We all went out to celebrate this, and Fidel Castro came in a helicopter and landed. Did a speech and later that evening we all were out and in kind of an encampment where we're gonna be staying. And like one of the set-ups was there for the youth to work because they, the youth. My son was part of the work brigades when he was at the Isle, the music and arts school as a 14, 15, 16 year old he. Every summer the kids would go out and plant citrus groves, and that's actually the basis of the economy there now is huge citrus groves all over well developed. Now they have citrus plants, citrus processing plants, and anywhere in the world (except the US) you can see Cuban citrus products in a can and it comes right out from seeds planted by those kids.

And so anyway they made one of the camps available to us to stay in that night. About 11:30 or so a jeep rolled up, and who jumps out but Fidel Castro. And it turns out someone in his little group knew it was his birthday. That was the way he was celebrating

his birthday from his own point of view was just to go out and see what we were doing and talk to us and get to know these singers who had come all this way to see the Cuban revolution. So on first the record, on the Paredon 1001 is the voice of Fidel saying something to us in that little gathering in that encampment.

And actually in there too is little bit of tape from We were gathered around in Paradero beach at the hotel. Out on the beautiful beach we were gathered with Carlos Pueblo, the great Cuban singer, who had been a political song singer in Cuban well before the revolution. And Carlos Pueblo was singing his song to commemorate the fact that Che Guevara had just gone to Bolivia. It was called "Hasta Siempre Con Mandante" which became (after Che was killed) throughout the symbolic or the emblematic song of Che's life and death. Of course it was written before his death so it doesn't mention a death; it just mentions missing him and that's he's left, you know. And so all of that's in that P1001. Okay. That moment with Carlos Pueblo singing to us and we're all, you can hear. It's a very. I think might have been made on a machine like this. That went over there. Oh no. I think it was a Nagra that was loaned to me by.

Well anyway at the meetings we all talked about the fact that we had this problem of communication. That most a lot of us were having a hard time being heard or reaching a wide audience, as wide an audience as we wanted to considering the importance of the messages we felt ourselves to be carrying. We were not able to do that so easily. In some countries it was repressed. In some countries to the extent of a brutal war that was going on - in the case of Vietnam. It was at a moment when the input of media culture, electronic media was, the bombardment of culture from outside of us was being felt intensely just on the cultural level as an intense attack on people's indigenous cultures and homegrown music and so on. It was like people were talking then about how - oh mysterious little radios only tune to one station would be dropped in the jungles of Brazil or someplace and that station would just be playing. Well of course they all thought it was the CIA thing that was being done. It might have been for all I know. But just pouring in all this foreign culture that would eventually, in a lot of places, it was severely altering if not killing the local culture just by it's. You know if you, these cultural questions are very delicate. If you.

You know I'll give you just one example and then I'll try to stick more just to just Paredon. This song "Guantanamera" which we know very well here. Every child knows it in school what have you. But the song was extremely well known in Cuba many years before. It was written by a man named Joseito Fernandez who incidentally was on my big TV concert that I did in Cuba. They dragged him out of wherever he was to play and Carlos Pueblo was too. It was a wonderful night. But anyway Joseito Fernandez had done a radio show for years as sort of this country guy, you know, singing *decimas*, which is sort of the blues or something of Cuba. It's a much more difficult rhyme scheme. Won't go into all the musicology of it. But anyway the *decima* he was singing these verses with the chorus which was this *guantanamera guajira guantanamera* etcetera and everybody knew that and fit in anyway kind of words. Just make up what you want and throw it in there. 'cause the *decima* form has engendered a whole country of improvisers, poetic improvisers in Cuba.

And so making it into the song we know happened because Pete Seeger happened to go a summer camp to sing where a young Cuban guy was also there as a camp counselor who had, that guy had thought of putting some Jose Marti verses (which are also *decimas*) into the format of Joseito Fernandez. So that song becomes now not just improvised. Joseito Fernandez' radio broadcast used that song as sort of the format to give you the news of the day. So he always used it improvisationally. It was never a fixed song. To his dying day he still did that. He improvise it everytime he would sing it. He'd sing totally new materials and then the favorites get stuck back in, just like the blues, you know. So but the fixed version that we know, it was Jose Marti verses that this guy Hector Angulo composer was a kid who was teaching music at this camp where Pete picked it up.

Now why doesn't it spread from it's original? It's still, it's a great, in fact even greater song in it's original form. Why didn't that spread everywhere? Well because it didn't have Columbia records behind it. You know. Which was then, the time that Pete picked it up and put it onto a record, one of the dominant, you know, ways of getting music in the world. You get it from Columbia Records. Okay. One way or another, right.

Now Pete learns it. In what he would certainly be the first to say was sort of pigeon Spanish reproduces it on a record. And it's done with just fairly simple accompaniment. Not with a big with a tropical orchestra like Joseito Fernandez would do it. Simple way, it gets recorded. And from that it goes it takes off and goes through the world and becomes world famous and becomes the song that everybody thinks of in terms of Cuba and you know. Now why is that? You know. I'm just giving you that because that's an illustration of the power of the media itself. It's not the song. It's not the performance. It's not the, you know, 'cause we're certainly not going to debate which who would sing it the best would be. As great as Pete Seeger is he's not going to sing better than Joseito Fernandez. But the Pete Seeger version is the one that got distributed all through the world. Got known all through the world. And there's another additional reason why and why it becomes, as it even gets back to Cuba, that it becomes oh ,oh, oh now it's an important song. Well because there is something called the cultural colonization, you know. People don't believe it's real until it comes back. Just like when I went to sing for GI's and, you know, whatever base in Georgia or someplace. And they'd say oh gee you're really good do you have any records out?

JEFF: That legitimizes...

BARBARA: That legitimizes. You know. Oh well gee you're not Peter, Paul and Mary but you're good and so if. Oh you don't have any records out of this? Oh. Well then oh maybe you're not as good as I thought you were. You know. Sort of like that. And then the ability to produce it produce in terms of the technology. The gloss that's put on it by the best studio available and all of the, you know, the things you do to modulate and mediate the sound until it comes out. Now it's like the difference between me looking at you right now and me taking a picture of you and looking at you up on a movie screen.

See. Once you're up on a movie screen now oh, oh god, he must be somebody actually someone made a movie of him.

JEFF: ...should listen to what ...saying...

BARBARA: Right. So. All these things add to this thing of the cultural penetration and the cultural. So this kind of atmosphere, this is the background, this is the setting for something to come into being like Paredon. Paredon Records, you know, basically came out of the fact that we saw the need, we saw the fact all these singers existed and nobody knew about each other. And boy wouldn't it be, I got home and I couldn't wait. I was trying to sing all these songs. I was trying learn them all. I was trying to learn all the languages. I was just in a absolute flurry of activity, but I realized very quickly that you can't do that. Actually the people in their own voices telling their own stories would be much more valid. So I got the idea we gotta have a record label. And I talked to Irwin about it, and Irwin had had a lot of experience with Folkways which I guess he'll tell you about. And we were actually perfectly suited team of people - probably the only two people who coulda done this given. And now the question was get some money to do it. I felt it as a mandate from this *Cancion Protesta Encuentro*. And that's the way I put it in the booklet for that record. That we sort of mandated each other to get out there and diffuse, diffuse is a Spanish word, to disperse the music of each other's, you know, work.

So then the question is how do you get the money to do it. So I was just bending everybody's ear. You know by now that I can bend an ear. And I'm bending ears, bending ears, bending ears. A couple years go by. I'm telling everybody this great vision I have. Oh wouldn't it be great if we could have a record label which would, you know, capture all this stuff and put a. And finally a friend of ours, who was also someone who had lived in Cuba for a while and was very sympathetic to the politics of it and everything, brought a millionaire friend of hers over to meet us. And he wants to be anonymous so we're still not gonna give out his name. But he thought this was a great idea and decided he would give us, you know, one stock dividend to play around with. And so he gave us actually, it was supposed to be an interest free loan but he never came around to formalize any agreement or collect anything on the loan. And he said don't contact me; I'll contact you. And he never contacted us again. And so that's the end of that.

So we were actually capitalized. I'll tell you what we were capitalized at. He gave us 17,000 dollars. Which is about enough to put out half of one record, you know, really. And so we just socked it in the bank and started doing it. And the concept we had was that we won't take any salaries or any overhead. We did it out of the living room or the backroom. I had an extra bedroom just then. I did it out of that room or the kitchen table and Irwin did it out of his little home office and everything, you know, you go rent studios. Nobody buys a studio. Record labels don't own studios. That's a different business. And all the other services could be contracted out, you know, that needed to be done to manufacture something. So we didn't have any overhead. It was no overhead involved except maybe some telephone calls and stationary and, you know, the cost of renting a studio or whatever. And all of the things that were involved with producing it, I

got to be very good at convincing people to write me an essay that, you know, okay you're expert on this, you know, on what's going on Ecuador. So write me brief little history of Ecuador today, and getting things like that out of people on a volunteer basis, and when we had to pay we paid. But the thing is the object was to not pay out anymore of this budget so then whatever income came in and whatever the budget had to use some combination you go ahead and make more. So you keep reinvesting it. Each record pays for the next one. Basically that's the way it is.

JEFF: How about the photographs you used on covers booklets. Where did they come from?

BARBARA: Well, I used to comb the files of the *Guardian* newspaper and the *Liberation News Service* that existed at the time in the New York and different artists. Hank Avery, I think her name is Avril gave me some things, and another woman named Mimi Rosenberg did a couple of covers. Different people would do original artwork and then some of it was just found stuff. I would comb through publications I had from other countries. Sometimes the Cuban things. Since the Cubans basically, whoever I talked to down there at any point where I needed something from them was just a question of well we can't, you know, we're not allowed to sell you anything and we can't get any of our materials there to, you know, be known there so whatever you want to take and do, it's okay with us. Go ahead and do it. So it was basically a handshake overall agreement just.

And I would go, when I was there, to they had something called the OSPAL. It was Organization of Solidarity with the Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And they published in a magazine called *Tri Continental* which had great artwork. Sometimes I'd snatch a piece something out of there. Or as time went on, I used it, I'd be in touch with the artist in different countries. I'd ask them to send me sides of recorded materials. I'd ask them to send me graphic materials. I need photos for the booklet. I need cover art. I need this; I need that, you know. And you'll see as it unfolds that artists began to supply that largely.

But it was always a last minute scramble to find something decent to put on the cover, something interesting, something just right, you know. I happen to really like a good photograph for that purpose 'cause it reproduces. We were only able to do two color covers. So reproducing a photo in black and white, you know, or a good line drawing is fine, is great. Problem is we were living in a world of color movies and color magazines and everything. It's not as easy to market it on a, you know, in a bin as it is of all full color things. Especially at the psychedelic age of the Sixties brought on a huge amount of color. So we just tried to make it as dramatic as we could do, you know, without spending money. We'd have to spend for full colors stuff. And then we had this whole system of printing the slicks, as they're called. They weren't, in our case we didn't use slick paper, but they're called slicks because most people used slick paper. Print the slicks in certain quantities. Those can be stored and then they can be later pasted on with jacket as needed.

JEFF: 'Cause you haven't done a run of the records.

BARBARA: Yeah. And the printing costs once you're up with the art, you know, and everything you're home free as far as the replication of it. So it was the most economical by far way to do that rather than send (the way things are done now, you know) send it to Gannet wherever they do and have a full color such and such made where it's all assembled and stuck together. Then you'd be, in that case we would of been stuck with stack and stacks of with empty, you know, things to store. We didn't have warehouse space. We weren't about to start having warehouse space. So it was designed, the packages it was, was designed to accommodate the finances and.

The only thing that I didn't really like to stint on was the booklet itself and, of course, the sound quality. I was really striving all along to get the best sound quality possible. But since a lot of it was from sources that were very, you know, sketchy at best where they could get recorded well we had to sometimes just sort of. Well, sometimes with a little extra judicious equalization and things you could make it sound more like what people were accustomed to hear. But it turned out really that the audience for this was really far more interested in the content than they were concerned about the fidelity. And we just, I just strove for the best possible. But it wasn't going to keep me from putting it out if it was important to put it out and it didn't have very good fidelity. You know.

JEFF: Did you ever think about the fact that, as I noticed, see before I knew the distinction between Paredon and Folkways instead as a casual observer in a store was that covers were so similar and they. The two labels stood out compared to all the other record covers as being, that I almost had this feeling that they were associated or somehow that they were the same or the connection. You know, when you say a casual listener would associate who was a Folkways buyer might, you know, see a Paredon record and say oh this is you know, respect the booklet. He may be pro or con. Did it ever, you know, cross your mind? The fact that

BARBARA: No not really. I mean we knew the similarity of look but I always had associated that look way way way early on when I first started buying Folkways records with a sense of some sort of integrity, artistic integrity to the contents inside. There was, well I think MoeAsch was one the first one that started using really important, I mean like didn't he use David Stone Martin and all that? Wasn't that Mo's idea

JEFF: And Ben Shawn.

BARBARA: And Ben Shawn and important artists on the cover. Well we couldn't afford to do that. We didn't find, didn't luck onto any geniuses who were dying to get their work out and would give it to us except for a couple of them I guess but

JEFF: The fact that the covers did remind me of that way, somebody was. I think a lot of the Folkways audience might have been some of the same people that might of bought Paredon, and they might have seen that and gone gave it a little more legitimacy. And they say, oh that's sorta, you know, there'd be expectations if you saw, you know, Paredon Record. Their experience with Folkways would be positive expectations. At least I would think. I mean I

BARBARA: Yeah well good. I hope so. I hope it didn't detract from Folkways image when somebody opened it up and said oh there's all these raving revolutionaries in there. But I don't know, I don't think so. I think most of our stuff, by and large, I think it sold to people who knew what they were getting who were pretty zeroed in on that, coming in for that specific thing or buying it by mail from us directly. And most of it, I think an awful lot of it was sold as a result of the fact that there was some movement going on in a specific case. You know. In fact this was a consideration a lot of the times when thinking about what can we put out, what can we get a hold of, what can we. It was always trying to, I mean I was always wanting to be right on the cutting edge as far as trying to figure out what are the developments in the world that are needing expression of this sort. Who's going to need a tool, you know, next year to try and make this happen in the world.

JEFF: If a situations fueled your decisions on, you know, what to put out, how much of a role did you took in going out and saying okay this political scenario is happening here? And like you say people, you know, in going out and seeking out the people, you know, actively get the tapes to put out the record?

BARBARA: Yeah, well, it of course was very dependent on (in the beginning) on my role as a political singer 'cause I was always being invited to situations which were pretty cutting edge situations. And there I would meet the other singers, you know, because I'd be invited to as a symbol of the American. They, in Italy, called me the voice of the other America. Okay, so the voice of the other America means I'm the opposition voice coming from this country. So therefore I would be invited as soon as there was something breaking, really, put me out on the headlines so I'd always meet on that festival the leading artist of that cause or that revolution or that whatever uprising or whatever it was. I'd meet somebody who could get me to some music involved with that. And I would also have a through that, well you know one of the reasons I don't really do this, that kind of singing anymore is because it really takes all of your time to be totally clued into what's going on with all these events and be both. Not only that you're prepared sense that people know where to find you and you know where to find them so that you can be called to do this and that, but you have to be prepared with material. And the material has to be reflecting of the most cutting edge ideas. And well for one thing it's not so clear, issues are not so clear now. It's very difficult for me to know what I want to say about this or that. You know I have to wait as events unfold and try, how you going to get ahead of events right now because they're unfolding.

JEFF: They change daily.

BARBARA: That's right they're unfolding so fast that

JEFF: I'm putting together a new Folkways catalogue which I was showing Irwin. It's just trying to set out certain things distinctions in certain geographical locations and you know you put a section for the Soviet Union and the week after that all of sudden it's, you know, Lithuania or something. It's no longer, it's just changing so quickly.

BARBARA: Yeah. Right. Or as the paper, what does the paper say: Soviet Union Dead. Soviet Union declared dead. *San Francisco Chronicle*, Monday, December 9th 1991. So yeah, so how, there's no way you can, a singer can keep ahead of the events and be. And when events start to move in that way in that with that rapidity that's when the cultural end of it takes, recedes and takes. The cultural has a transcendent role when things are at a certain stage and then the cultural steps back and events role on ahead of it. It's just that's the way it works in every movement, every situation that comes up. There's a moment and then there's not a moment so we're at a particularly hard time for somebody like me to know what you want to say and when you want to say it, be prepared.

JEFF: But as you said before the idea of the media making your message stronger to people. The fact that media now is that, you know, something happens across the world and, you know, it gets in your living room the next day, you know. The Berlin Wall, the change coming down. Like all of a suddenly everybody knew exactly what was going on there that if you have these sort of these tools that, you say if you have a radio programs that are able to be broadcast there and you have this some music

BARBARA: Sure.

JEFF: timely then you can get it to people quickly and

BARBARA: Yeah that's right. That's right, you can. And you can move faster. But it's also a, we're now in an age when the media defines and even intercedes in events. Because certainly the events in Tiananmen Square in China or the events in red square in Moscow were interwoven with, I mean, there's a ping pong effect. The event happens. Then it starts to be televised and the televising of it back to the place where the event's happening intercedes and things are defined by the media. Defined. I mean not just transmitted. But often the CNN person sitting there telling what's happening becomes the thing of record: this is what is happening. While the person who is actually living there maybe thought it was something else until they saw themselves on TV being defined by the CNN guy. Dig?

So yeah it's a whole new era for communication and for culture and so at 64 I don't feel quite adapted to it yet, you know. And I don't know if I'll catch up. So I've sort of put away my tools and just decided to look from the sidelines, but I, that may not, I don't know, may change. Things may change. Who knows? But right now I feel that way so that's why I'm not doing much.

But in those days I was very tuned into everything, and I was always being, you know, in. That was one of the great frustrations for me. I'd come back from these situations and I'm talking to people, my close friends, even my political friends and people who are working on the same issues with me or whatever. Now they haven't shared the experience of going and being, you know, in this place where the struggle is going on and felt this tremendous shaking dynamic thing that you've felt. And you come back home and you try to express it. Well your tools are just, I mean I don't care how great you are

at singing or playing your tools are just not big enough to bring the soul of that to people. So I was getting more and more frustrated along those lines. And so the idea of a record label seemed a worthwhile way to spend part of my time.

Now as it developed of course there's more and more time going to be taken by it, and if it's going to mean something to other people it's gonna, there's gonna be, there's just exponentially, it starts to explode in different directions. And I mean you may have whatever 10 titles in your catalogue and all you gotta worry about is 10 titles being having running out of booklets or running out of pressing or. I used to do all this going to post office myself. I'd carry all the mail back and forth. Well after a while I couldn't do that. Couldn't lift it all. You know. And just taking, I mean Irwin would pack it and he would stick it in a place. And I would take it out to the car and take and drive it over to the post office and mail the stuff. I couldn't do it after a while.

It became something that would, if it was going to exist and expand you'd have to eventually have a real business. You'd have to really start to hire a couple people to help you. You'd have to have space. You'd have to rent. You'd have to, you know, all that kind of stuff.

Well so okay, we were talking about the problems of the label expanding, becoming more in demand, and you know our whole idea was to zero in on a specific audience. I mean Irwin, from his experiences from distributing Folkways, knew that the only way we had a chance in hell, you know we couldn't spend an advertising budget or take any big risks just shipping stuff to stores on consignments, can't do that 'cause every penny counted. So it was a case of targeting, you know, really figuring out who is your audience and how do you get to them. And more and more of our efforts toward distributing it was that way - trying to find more direct routes to direct mail and then through the organizations. That was the other consideration as time went on. I'd get, as record projects began to be brought to me, I would have to decide, well, this is a great thing to do, this is another great thing to do, this is another great thing to do. However this one has some kind of support movement going here in the States now which could conceivably help with the distribution and sales, and would be able to use it as a tool in their work. Whereas this other thing, there is no corresponding social movement in the United States. Now that was actually, in certain ways, a reality check for us because I mean the fundamental objective is to bring all this stuff to an American person who is sitting here in all this splendid isolation of, you know, people in the. Well, without going far a field to get a definition of American culture, but we are, in a sense, more. We're isolated in the welter of material that is produced in this sort of self-generating way that we were talking

Tape 2, Side A

BARBARA: Yeah, you can see through the movies now that our culture's started to consume itself. That's really, a lot of the raw material for it is itself. So that's why you have, you know, Trekkie whatever Star Trek Six and Rocky Five and whatever. So that, well, in relation to what Paredon was trying to do it was like trying to bring something outside that closed circle, right. Break into the isolated, that's why I called it splendid

isolation because we really are, there's such an information glut that we think we know everything. But its like living in a room full of white bread and thinking you're nourished, you know, eating that all the time. Because you don't get the fullness, we really don't get the fullness culture of the world and a lot of it is for political reasons.

Just to give an example there's a, Paredon has the record that Mikis Theodorakis has made after he was able to come to the United States. There were years and years when he (who at the time was what the rest of the world thought of as one of the greatest living composers) was not allowed to come to the United States because he was very outspokenly antifascist during the Second World War. And went to jail for all of that but after that he remained a, you know, a democratic in a revolutionary sense all through his music and his life, and was very opposed to the Hunta that was running Greece at the time. And was under house arrest and in jail and in all kinds of repression in Greece and only got out of house arrest because of pressure from some French intellectuals who got him sprung and brought him to Paris, but he was not permitted to come here, you know. Some professors here tried to put together some major performance for a new work of symphonic work that wasn't even political, some his political stuff to come to Washington and New York and present the stuff. He wasn't given a visa. The whole thing was put together but at the last minute he couldn't come.

So I became a part of, I'll say more about it because it's a good example of how I got material. I became, you know, a part of the anti-Hunta movement here in the States by being invited to sing at their events. And its odd; it turned out the first time I was a, there was a major thing in New York. Melina Mecouri came and she was, you know, later the Minister of Culture under the Papandreou government. And she came and Papandreou came and she performed. Who else performed on that? Anyway I had written a whole section of sort of a three piece, three songs of Theodorakis, song cycle that I had made English lyrics for and had performed with him in Europe, and so I was invited to sing it at this event. And met Papandreou in the wings and he said, oh I used to be a fan of your's; when I was a professor at Cal, I used to come to your blues club Sugar Hill. So the world is so small in some ways.

But anyway, I was known in those circles so that when finally Theodorakis could come to the States, then he asked me to be in a performance with him for the Greek Democratic Movement in New York. And I just took the liberty of saying, well, would you like to make a record while you're here. Our humble resources with one of the really acknowledged great composers of our time, and knowing I could only thing offer him a piano in a studio. And he said, yes, he would be delighted because he had all these songs that he had written under house arrest.

He, for several years, could not go out of his house in Greece in the small, they kept him in a small village very far from everything, and his little boy going to school was strip searched everyday going in and out of the house. That's how tight this house arrest was. And he had one visitor the whole time. And in the lining of the coat of that one visitor was smuggled out some tapes of the songs that he had been composing. So that it became

known in sort of an underground way on these very bad home recorded performances, and that's what he recorded for us.

He went into the studio for a couple of evenings, and spent several hours just pouring out his, all this pent up feeling of house arrest using some of the best modern Greek poets as his text. So that, I mean, that was really fortuitous, you know, connection but it's something, it sprang naturally out of my work, too, to be in contact with folks like that.

But as I say, I mean I often would get up on a stage in New York or some where and say these people have been banned, you don't know about them, therefore you're not as culturally hip as you think you are, you know. And people would say, what are you talking about, you know. We live in the freest country on earth etcetera, etcetera. The concept that we were in fact being heavily censored in several directions was just not, you know, people didn't grasp it and to this day people have a hard time realizing about the manipulation of cultural materials, how it operates and it's not through some official censorship office like it would be in some monolithically run country. It's actually the free market itself that, in a way, you know, both tends to liberate and to censure the material. But this was actual government censorship. These people were not allowed visas.

JEFF: They were trying to make that stricter. You had to prove you were some sort of major important musician within your own country to be allowed to come in. And this new INS regulation, which would exclude all sorts of people, and you had to be a recording star commercially, you know. But if you were somebody who artistically was important that wasn't good enough, you'd be denied. They tabled that for now.

BARBARA: Yeah, they've tabled that for now, but they've had that in England for quite a while. England has had something similar to that as I understand it. But I mean Ewan MacColl and Peggie Seeger couldn't come here for a long time. Vanessa Redgrave couldn't come for different periods. I don't know. Quite a number of people, you could probably make quite a long list of artists and certainly Cuban artists, you know. When's the last you were able to go and see a Cuban band from Cuba or a Cuban actress or a Cuban film. And yet they're our closest neighbors.

JEFF: We brought some people in 1989 to the Smithsonian. It was meant to be for 2 weeks. We did finally get the State Department to allow us to bring them in, but they fooled around long enough so that they couldn't show up the first week. But we did get them in the second week.

BARBARA: Yeah, that's sometimes the way it's been done, is just sorta make it very difficult, and then almost not happen, and then maybe happen half way, or make it happen. I don't know. These are games that, see my relationship with all this travel to countries where you're not supposed to go and this and that has been on the basis that I make a distinction between the State Department, which is a temporal thing, which is attached to one particular, you know, these, this group is in power right now and yeah, an administration, and in fact it doesn't necessarily reflect what's written into the

constitution. So that's why, you know, people ask me well, how did you dare to go to Cuba for example without State Department permission. Well I didn't feel that I needed it. I had constitutional permission, and if they didn't want to let me go, tough luck, you know. They'd have to, I went anyway. Figure out how to relate to that.

I did have my passport taken away once. That was in coming back from the *Cancion Protesta Encuentro* in '67. Knock on my door. We want your passport. Guy's got a badge. I gave him my passport. The grounds were, well, we didn't, it never came to court or anything like that because some changes were made in. The Supreme Court had heard a decision about some professors that'd gone to Vietnam, North Vietnam. Staughton Lynd and some other people, and so that became a Supreme Court case because their passports were lifted after that. And the Supreme Court case was heard shortly after my passport was taken away from me, and the outcome of the Supreme Court at that time, I don't know what it would be now, but what it was then was that you do in fact have a constitutional right to use your passport. Or to go personally, to go wherever you want to go, but the passport is only a piece of paper from your government that says let the citizen pass, and where the government can't take responsibility, then you can't use your passport. You're going on your own responsibility basically. And so then the interpretation of that is take your passport along with you because you'll need it in other places, but stick it in your suitcase and just go to the places that will accept you without it and that you happen to want to go to or have been invited to.

So that's how I, you know, went to North Vietnam and I went to, I don't know. The first time I ever was faced with that kind of decision was the Youth Festival in 1947. Our passports weren't valid for Yugoslavia, and yet we were supposed to come on a Yugoslav boat. And the only the way the festival organizers could work it was to have a stay on our, we were taken by, it was very circuitous. We had to come, we had take, we were in Prague. Well then we had to take a train down to Vienna, and then on down to Venice. And we had to stay in Venice a few days until a little boat came and got us and took us down to the port in, I think it was called Viecca or something in Yugoslavia, and stay on the boat. The Canadians who were with us, they were going home to the same port in New York as we were. The Canadians could get off and run around, have a good time with the Yugoslavians for a day or so or however long we were there. And kept bringing us back all this good stuff. You know, slivovitz. We couldn't get off the boat; we had to go on a little gang plank onto other boat and came home.

But so you know, I started out really early in life that there were these things, and had I known then I probably would've gone ahead and got on. Except the festival you're under the discipline of a group. You know you don't want to mess up the festival committee's situation, but after that I just felt like in relation to the Cuba trips, I'll go on my own recognizance as it were.

But, okay, this is all far a field. Let's see, where were we headed? You asked a question about the, when did all the burden of running a record label get to be, well it, you have no idea. I started doing what I did, the division of labor: I was the producer and Irwin was the distributor. If you want to see it in simple terms. So all things having to do with

producing, which meant, you know, all the way from generating an idea, and finding the material, figuring out who's going to do it, down to the finished (what's ready to be shipped out) was up to me.

Now Irwin did play a part in some of that because he, I didn't know how to paste up the booklets when we first started. I had no idea how to do paste up, but since he'd been pasting up sing out himself for years, you know, he'd plenty of experience. He showed me how to do it. He did the first, he did about a dozen or so of the paste ups of the booklets, and you can tell when I started to do it because they looked pretty crude right around in the 10 or 12 numbers in there.

But when we started this thing, when we actually got the first records out it was '70. Now that is the height of the antiwar movement, and my life was then just. I was telling all this stuff earlier about how I, you know, was marginalized by both from the jazz work and from the folksong work as a way of making a living. What happened after I went Mississippi and then I came to New York and hooked up with Irwin and we produced the *Singing for Peace* and so on was the eventually then I started to be doing all these things that had no connection with making a living, and no way to make a living but both of us agreed they were important things to do. So essentially Irwin sponsored me doing it, you know. And he paid the household bills and things and I went off and did all these things with no overhead for the people who were bringing me for the most part.

So I was traveling a great deal and then the fact that I, it suddenly dawned on me that don't knock yourself out trying to sing for people in the U.S. right now because of all these different reasons they're not letting me do it. No one's going to organize you to do it. No one's bringing you here and there, you're being. It took a while to realize that all these, you know, the heyday of the Folk Festival was going by and I had never been invited to sing on any of them.

And but then what struck me was, well, in fact I think it was my son who pointed it out to me 'cause he used to, he was living and studying in Cuba. He was becoming really a first class musician. He was working with this experimental sound collective at the Film Institute in Cuba out of which came all of the important young musicians who were seminal to the whole new song movement. I mean Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés was in there and all the rest of them are in that picture. And Pablo was getting very good training and very good theoretical in terms of, you know, what is music about. The director of this group was Leo Brower who was a great, really great electronic s composer, a really great world class classical guitarist himself too – lot of separate lives. Now he's the conductor of the Cuban symphony. He's a real musical genius and, but he had a very strong understanding of what the role of music and culture is along the lines of what I had been expressing earlier. I mean he didn't see it as a commodity. He saw it as a part of your life. So he engendered in the young people in that group of strong idea of, you know, they have.

Well, if you read the booklet connected with *Cuba Va* you'll see. 'Cause Pablo spells it all out, kind of what were the principles the group worked on. But in any case, the thing

that he was missing, as I saw it, was experience, you know, and as a young musician and world experience because he's in Cuba and it's relatively, you know, limited experience with the world. Unfortunately. I mean fortunately it was such a rich experience with the limitations weren't, you know, the big problem. In any case I decided, at some point, that I would every time I was invited to sing at some festival abroad or had some project that I could bring him in on, I would say, well Pablo can you get free from, you know, well let's do it as school vacation or lets do it, whatever, when you get a break I want you to come and be my backup guitar player and my traveling companion. 'cause I, I tell you because I was doing more and more the really heavy duty political stuff, it was very hard to work alone, you know .

And then as, beginning in the late sixties, I was mainly traveling around in connection with the G.I. Movement, which you can read all about in FTA album I guess it is and think it's, I don't know, catalogued as number 3, ten O three or something. Anyway, the G.I. Movement was a clandestine movement essentially. I mean they had a open face in these coffeehouses, but in fact it was on the bases, the guys were put in the brig if they expressed their opinion too much about the war, you know. So it was very difficult movement to, and it was, so as I was traveling around I was always being, there were surveillance on me all the time. And a lot of the times I wasn't going in very difficult places to be in and wasn't getting any easier to carry this guitar around and all the things connected with performing and so on. So I really needed a traveling companion, and I thought as a perfect way to introduce my son to the world of all of this, and he's perfectly suited to. I couldn't find a better backup guitarist player and he can sing harmony part, he can play the harmonica, he can do anything I need as a musical partner, and it will give him a look at the world.

So in one of those early trips he pointed out. He says listen, he says if you're having trouble with people inviting you to sing places in the U.S., he says the problem is not existing in the rest of the world. They seem to find it very urgent that you go here and you go there. So why don't you just concentrate on that? Well that was hard for me, at first, because my whole training in a sense, and my own sense of who I was, was that I was an American trying to interact and operate in the American scene and be instrumental in the course of American life. The fact that I would have to go abroad to do most of my singing work, well, or to be, in another way, if I was singing in the U.S. to be singing only in these sort of little meetings of 20 GIs here and 50 here and a rally for a thousand over there. You know. It was hard to quite figure, but I saw that, but anyway I started to do more and more of it, I started to. Especially after the *Cancion Protesta Encuentro* because then I had the connections. Everybody said, oh she's the one from the U.S. who can go, and you know that's when I got this sort of nickname of the voice of the other America in those circles and mainly was going abroad.

Well that gave me entrée to a lot of different other performers and a lot interaction with them, and a whole lot of first projects on the label came from contacts made at the *Cancion Protesta Encuentro*. We can start going eventually, you know, album by album you'll see the influence. But it's not totally obvious 'cause it wasn't as if I was just, you know, was able to say, okay all of you send me material, we'll put out your stuff.

Because of, it always had to, sort of, again feed back to the American situation. Now who in the US is going to want this? Who's going to, who am I making this for? What am I doing this for? I'm not doing it to just float it out in the breeze or stick it in a library somewhere. You know.

JEFF: Sell like ten copies.

BARBARA: Yeah, because in this case the market would indicate a need or not a need. You know if someone will, if there's a need for it, someone will buy a few and that subsidize making the next record. If there's no need for it, if not enough people in this country can see the reason for being out that they'll buy, then I probably made a mistake. I made a bad decision here. There are a couple records that fall in that category, that didn't sell very many because they were not timed in. Well, I'll use the Thailand one for example. I mean there's never been any exposure to the American left even really of the situation in Thailand. And they know people aren't aware of, you know, dictatorship there and repression and democratic movement and all this kind of stuff going on in Thailand. Maybe we know about the Philippines but not Thailand. Alright so

JEFF: Cambodia...

BARBARA: Yeah, so it comes as a surprise to people. So there was no base here to buy the record, so the record really, outside of a few exiled Cambodians I mean Thai people here, you know, didn't really sell. But by that time we're way into the situation where we had enough product out there feeding back cash flows so that if we made it an error in terms of the ability to pay for itself, it could be supported by the cash flow from the rest of the things that were selling. So then we could make decisions: is it important enough to do this? Not can it. We always started from that: is it important enough? Is this an important, is this one of the most important things we could do right now with the limited resources we have? Can we do this? And

JEFF: Which are some of the most successful ones?

BARBARA: You'd have to ask Irwin cause, you know, he handled that end of it. I didn't really, I really didn't pay a lot of attention to that end of it because it was not my objective except in the sense of wanting to know what it is that people need. You know. And then you fill the needs, but since that was kind of after the fact in the sense, you know, the sales I had to go on my other instincts. And so, I don't know, maybe it's a good time to start going record by record. What do you think? Or was there anything you want to do know about?

JEFF: Well, I was thinking in terms of when you, you know, I heard this story that you obviously, at some point this collective people took over the label. How that came to be, and was it the fact that it was just too big, what you were alluding to - too big for you guys to handle the two of you. Is that the reason why? Or just you had wanted to move on to other things or?

BARBARA: Well okay there are two reasons.

JEFF: And when that happened, you know, what year and whatnot, yeah.

BARBARA: Well alright, toward, I started to say with all that, sorry I got sidetracked. 'cause you know as person's own life story is only, you only think about it when you're starting to tell it to somebody else. And then it becomes interesting not subjectively (oh it's my life story) but it's interesting because it's something I know something about, which now I'm looking at from a perspective of twenty years or something away from. So it's like reexamining something that you know pretty well but that you don't have to have all these feelings about at this moment.

But anyway, I started this label in the heat of the anti-war movement, and the civil rights movement, and all of that. And so that meant that I was away singing much more than I was at home in those days. As I said Irwin was subsidizing, and so basically he was the one who was going to work everyday and, you know, and it ultimately, not at the Sing Out but at the *Guardian* and so on. But I was away, and I would run back home and try and I would burn a whole lot of midnight oil 'cause I was doing this stuff. I mean those first few booklet, to learn a whole new thing, I didn't know how to produce records, you know. I knew something about being in the studio 'cause I had recorded as an artist, but I didn't know anything about the production end of it. How to put out the booklet, how to gather and edit a booklet, and research, and all this kind of stuff I had to learn it all.

But I learned it all the same time that I was doing all this running around, like driving all the way across the country to ten army bases, you know, with the army surveillance driving on my tail, or whatever, following me every place I'd stop on every airplane stop, or whatever. So it was very intense times, and I learned how to just to live with that, I suppose from before from raising family and being a professional singer at the same time or something. But I, I could do it as long as there was, you know X number of records and X number of records. But then it starts to really pyramid, because every record has to be looked after then and it's not. Now it's selling out, you got to get some more slicks. Now it's, you know, we're running out of this, we got to get that more. Oh, we have to think about doing a little, letting somebody know about this.

You know, we can't exactly call up PR because we had no budget but some how get some, and then there always was a huge pile of correspondence because people start wanting to tell you how much they love it or how much they want to make a record for you or sending you tapes and this and that.

JEFF: Or do you know such and such music?

BARBARA: Yeah, do you know this, can you find me that? And then, I mean it just became enormously involving and I was always dragging boxes of records with me when I went as a performer, by that time, because I wanted. Then I began to see the connection, as a performer, with selling it. Because if I were to go to sing at such and such at, you know, I'm going to Kent State, I used to go there every year. They'd invite me to various

commemorations of the events at Kent State, and I would take, you know, I'd take a few boxes of records because that audience is coming to that event - the natural outlet for all the stuff that I'm doing. They're the ones who are, you know, tuned in enough to want to know what's going on in the world and don't give a damn what the culture mavens of America are telling them they ought to be interested in, but they're more curious.

So okay, that phase went on for quite a while. Then there came a phase where it, you know, it starts to look to outsiders like oh, this is a real record label. And there are some opportunists who are hovering around who want to do something, thinking that it's work for them, or, you know, they can make album on this label that's starting to have an impact or something. And there are jealousies that crop up and there are, you know, all sorts of little things. And I began to see people coming toward me with that gleam in their eye like I'm a producer that they, not as a singer. They're not coming to me in the same old way of I'm sort of griot or culture giver, you know, a culture conveyor or whatever you want to call it. But I'm maybe the source of employment.

Well that was a whole new thing to me, you know, it shocked me, and I really was upset by, I realized that some people would take extra pains to go out of their way to come and talk to me or sit by me. You know, buy me lunch or something because they're trying to get next to me as a producer. And I was very antsy and uncomfortable with that role, and then a couple a things happened that, well I don't really want to go into them because they're just, they reflect on the. We live in precarious times, so if somebody's poor struggling whatever in the same way that I, I mean these other people are all having the same kind of struggles that I am if they're in the United States, you know, of trying to get their music out there. So if someone goes a little bit over the bounds of sanity or propriety and inflicts an injury on me as a producer in their struggle to make their thing happen or make a living or whatever as a, I guess one just has to look back and forgive is all I can say, you know. But, so I don't want to get into personalities and all that kind of stuff.

But there were some incidents that happened where you could, if you were looking at it from a distance, you would say these are some mighty ungrateful folk, you know. Because here you are knocking yourself out to, I'm taking time from my own work as a singer, to produce someone else's record, which probably will sell a tenth of what mine will sell, but I think their work is important, and should be recognized, and should be on a record and on and on. And then that person maybe turns around to be one of these problematic things, you know.

JEFF: We certainly have instances of that. We run into it constantly with these thousands of records on Folkways. Certain artists whose records may sell, you know, five a year and they get very upset, very ornery with us. And it's if we weren't doing it, probably it would be out of print and nobody would do it at all, you know.

BARBARA: Yeah that's rights.

JEFF: We spend money to put the catalogue out and their words can be heard they, you know...

BARBARA: Sure. Chris Strachwitz was here the other night. We were talking about early days of Art Hooligan. You know everybody thought he, because he had a actual physical records there in his store that he must have a lot of money and be making it off of their backs. And so a lot of the artists, you know, are going like well here I'm living in this one room country little shack, and here he's up there with his record store and his label and, you know, he better give me some money and that's it and all this kind of talk. Well it just, you know, you can't blame people for getting this attitude 'cause it looks different from the outside.

And nobody could ever imagine how much of mine and all my friends' labor went into making these records look like real respectable products. You know. And I'm very proud of the fact they do look, they look good, they look fine, they look. You know there's nothing shoddy about any of the booklets or the record or the quality of the recording or the covers, there's nothing shoddy about it. Everything's done as best as we could do it. Okay, but the fact that is that most of that was done just by, you know, burning the midnight oil. Exploiting all your friends. Getting everybody upset 'cause you didn't pay 'em whatever overtime or something or for the typesetting or the you didn't pay them this month and they would like to have had the money last month, and you know, all that kind of the stuff that goes into this, and then, right, some people are going, well you must be really making it, and well, any how this. I don't want to go all overboard in talking about that, you know what it's about. And anyone who's ever tried to do anything like that will know too, that it's just, in some ways, you know, if someone was thinking strictly in cash term and all that you'd say this is a thankless task, and this is ridiculous, and I'm just not going to do this anymore.

But we could see that the thing was growing and growing. There was more and more of need. It was clear if you wanted to you could, if you could dropping everything else you were doing and just do it, you know you could at least run and say like Arhoolies' run, something like that. You could be a marginal business that would exist on the fringes of the big time record business, and it would have an impact, and it would get. But I mean I don't even know how far Arhoolie gets now a days out in the rest of the country, probably doesn't get very far. But anyway you could run it like that, but you'd have to do like Chris. He eats and sleeps at the you call it place. At ten o'clock at night he's in his office. You know. I mean this is all the man does. He may travel around the world a little bit looking for material, so he's away, but he's doing Arhoolie all the time. And if I wanted to drop everything I was doing and do Paredon all the time, then I could've probably kept it going. If Irwin wanted to drop all that he was doing and do it all the time, we probably could've kept it going. But we were both feeling the strain.

Irwin particularly was very wrapped up in what he felt, he felt very convinced that what America needed was another, that the old American communist party had outlived its usefulness and that there was a need for a new party of that type, along those lines but with a new kind of politics. A new Left Marxist-based party. So he began to devote a lot a lot of time to that. And eventually there were some other people out here on the West Coast that wanted to start a newspaper and so on, and he decided he was going to move

out here to be part of that because he had a falling out with the *Guardian* over this issue. And meanwhile, so that was involving him more and more, and obviously something, if that's your belief, that's going to take precedence over anything. You're going to have to, and if you're mainly a writer, you're not going to be diddling around with distributing records - even if you think the records are really important. It's not, it doesn't transcend the other stuff.

So he was pulling back more and more from all of that, and I, on the other hand, was feeling both, hey I mean, I'm spending much more of my time as the late Seventies wore on, spending much more of my time as a record producer than I as am a singer. And I'm not getting any younger. Not going to be able to sing forever. If I'm ever going to do any more singing, I'd better do it now. So in terms of should we just fold it up, no we don't want to fold it up. This is important stuff, and its growing and its got the potential to grow much bigger, and, you know, it's not going anywhere but up, but we aren't going anymore be the ones who. I mean, I reckon it was like eleven years of my life that I really, you know, besides all that other stuff I was doing, and the most intense period of it, I was doing Paredon. And Irwin, I just told about what he was doing. So we figured we each gave it about eleven years. You know it's a pretty good shot.

So let's try and find some people who can carry it on, and we'll give them some instruction and what have you. So when we had, when we moved out here, we moved out for this newspaper, and the political organization, all that went before it and so forth. And well, right away, we found some people sort of in those circles that thought it was something they would like to try and do, on a voluntary basis. And since, you know, we could do it as two volunteers because of all of our previous experience and connections and what have you. But these people are coming in cold. They're going to volunteer, you know, maybe a night a week or two nights a week or something, and in between three or four people in a rotating group at that. They're going to have to try and learn all this and try and make it happen.

Well it just, they gave it a good try, but it wasn't feasible, because it just takes a lot more history, a lot more deep experience in both my end and his end (Irwin's end) of it to do something as tenuous, as under-funded, totally under-funded, always just barely, you know, keeping afloat. And putting in basically our fulltime other than our, I mean we were full time political activities with each of us with two roles to play. Right. One Paredon and our other. So

JEFF: Well I think you hit the nail on the head early that most labels I know that are their independent, that are doing music that's not your mainstream music, has to have somebody that works those hours like Chris, or like you folks did, or just lives for that and puts that full hundred and ten percent into it, or come up and show up that one, few nights a week at least one or two people being that committed to that

BARBARA: Exactly. Yeah, and I think these folks were, some of them had the will but not the way to do it because they had to make a living and they had to, you know, carry on with whatever life they had before Paredon came on the scene. So I think it just wasn't

in the cards. It was unfortunate because right at that time I think is when it could of really expanded. It could've really taken off, and so no one should go around with the impression that it died for lack of interest. I think it was absolutely the contrary to that. It died from success basically. You know, because no one knew how to take the success to its logical place.

JEFF: When I met these folks it was 1985. What was basically the time frame when this group had to evolve?

BARBARA: Well, let's see. When I first came out here it was '81 and it was sometime in the first year or so that I hooked up with the, it was as I say, a rotating group. The first two or three people and then, so I decided okay I'll stick with it a year, and I'll go to the meetings and I'll tell them everything I can tell them, and I'll try and. So that maybe would we take us to maybe to '83 or something like this, '83, I don't know. You know Irwin, when I got out of it and other people were?

IRWIN: Well, it took place over such a long period of time

BARBARA: Yeah it was a

IRWIN: I can't pin point the date. Plus the transitions took two or three years.

BARBARA: Yeah. And then there was never actually a cut off and a start. You know it was just like, because I was always available and Irwin too for if they wanted to know something or whatever. It kind of, but there was a certain point in which I was, I just kind like okay, that's it, I'm not gonna, I'm gone. You know I'm out of here and I'm off doing my things, and so there is a certain period that I can't actually take responsibility for I don't know, I was a party to, the last two or three records that came out were, there was the one from Nicaragua, I had gone through all the complex business to try to get it to happen but then they actually produced it. I worked on the booklet. I went to some meetings a part of the collective and tried to work with the folks in rewriting the material and translations and all that kind of stuff, but I actually only show up as a credit in a group of credits at the end thanks to these people and I'm one of the people way down.

And then the same thing with the Marcel Khalife - Lebanese singer singing Palestinian material. I had, well, we'll talk about it when we get to it, but actually those two I had a little bit to with. And the last one was Quatamay Camonas, it's a group from El Salvador. They found the group or rather the FMLN came to them. Then they put that record out and shortly after that I guess actually they.

So that would bring it to mid-Eighties and then there was a period they spent kinda trying to liquidate things, or helping us, we were trying, you know, like with the record stock and all that, they had a lot of bills by this time because they really, they did not have the slightest idea how to do distribution, and they didn't understand the importance of it. They sort of, they decided well to get money to put out the next record the best thing to do is to try and get the parties that want to put it out help get some funding or something.

They got into that funding kind of thing, whereas self-funding was really the only way to go with this thing. It's the only way you get to keep your independence and your, you know, sort of clarity of vision and all that. You can't start let's put this out because Joe Blow can get three thousands to put it out or something, you know. But they started kind of thinking in terms of well oh somehow each the new record is going to be, fund itself. See. Rather than the old concept of the past records will fund the next record.

And so they kind of, it just reached a point where it wasn't economically viable and there were, they started to sell out the stock. We, I don't know they, I just kind of turned my back on it. I think they made some kind of arrangement to put the stock on, give it to some school to raise money for a playground, and they sold it at a yard sale, and I don't know what. I noticed now that you can go to places like Amoeba Records, you know. I don't know if you have Amoeba back east but like a big

JEFF: I saw them in Berkley

BARBARA: Berkley, that's the Amoeba, right. So they will have, I see Paredon Records in there. They'll have a price of maybe three dollars on a new unopened record. So they must have bought up some these things for a buck a piece or something at some point. And then there was a point at which we thought well, you know, the artists, the American artists, who have made records, come in the studio and recorded something for Paredon, should really get their tapes back if they can do something with it or whatever. So they were offered their records, their tapes back. So some of them said yeah, we want them back, and they have gotten them back. And that's why I think in the future if Smithsonian decides to do something with that specific one they're going to have, or they should actually go through and contact all those folks and say this is what we propose to do and make new arrangements, you know, because a lot of these were handshake deals. A lot of these were people, you know, just because they trusted us and they did but now that it's going to some other hands, then the right thing to do is to contact them and say, well we want to do this, do you want to do it. And then either get the master tape back from them or just make. I've reproduced these off of my old def clean copies of the record and they actually sound better than the record 'cause of the modern engineering techniques so.

JEFF: We've had to do that with a number of Folkways files where the tapes are missing and master of the record.

BARBARA: Right, so you know the tricks, and you can make a darn good master that way if you can find clean copies. You may have to do that because even the artists may not be reachable or whatever, but I don't know. Did that clear up this transition thing? Irwin may have some things to say about it too but it's more or less

JEFF: But how did it work as a business per se? Was it actually set-up as a business?

BARBARA: No

JEFF: Just sort of record by record

BARBARA: We'd just get it done, get it done, that's all. No, we were not too, not too, I wasn't very good about, you know, making sure that I had a contract and all this. And I mean that in the sense it's a de facto contract if someone comes in the studio and records their stuff you know you're going to put it out you know what are they there for if they don't want to put out. So I didn't know I just didn't bother with in certain cases we went through the formality of a contract and

JEFF: I was thinking more in terms if say it were the end the folks, the group of people then had more debts, they had the money, they had to go through more formal, that kind of stuff.

BARBARA: Ah I see what you mean. Yeah I guess

JEFF: They paid out of their pocket or

BARBARA: I don't know what they did. I really don't see how did it all end. Actually think they were pretty successful at sort of liquidating it through the stock they had. I'll have to, I could call one of them and ask them how. I mean I should've played a more active role in it than, you know, but I just was, I think that's in this category of, remember I was saying these were like your children and all that. There's a certain heartache involved, then its sort of like well, they've walked out the door now. They're on their own

JEFF: You can't be getting caught in everything.

BARBARA: Yeah, there's nothing I can do about this and that and the other and it's gonna, I don't know, so I just didn't want to preside at the wake, so to speak, and I didn't know what was going to happen with it and I, I don't know. So it's at the point where it's all finally sitting in someone's garage or something, then I begin to say wait a minute, you know. Hold it, this can't die.

JEFF: Right.

BARBARA: This cannot die. It's too important. And it's, you know, far more important than me as an individual or Irwin or anybody individually involved. It's a, I mean this is part of a legacy of the world in my way of looking at it. This stuff is, you know, it's for real, it's not playing. You know.

JEFF: Yeah, well certainly my role in the picture of the Smithsonian is the one who, you know, there's obviously the commercial and distribution and that sort of thing and that's more Tony's thing. But I'm as the archivist running an archive that which has more than just Folkways and more as the documenter. So my concern is more that fifty years from now people have access to information. Where there will just be unreleased tapes sitting on a shelf they can listen to.

BARBARA: Mine too.

JEFF: Yeah, than it is to have a big spanking new record out there on a shelf in some record store.

BARBARA: But I tell you everybody among my contacts that I, when I happen to say, oh people will say to me, you know, especially around the holidays, or whatever. They say, well, what are you doing these days or what project? And I say, oh, you remember Paredon Records? Yeah, yeah! Well Smithsonian's going to take it over. Oh, no kidding, whoa! It will be available again, you know. So there's a need, there's a hunger out there. I mean I've gotten a lot of people saying that, you know.

JEFF: And it will be through that channel, through those channels that

Tape 2 Side B

BARBARA: Yeah, it's a, I was going to tell you about having idea of putting out a women's catalogue. And I, what made me think of doing it was because we had a put out (I think it was) Beverley Grant's record. And Beverley, if there ever was a women's record this particular record, you know Beverley wrote all the songs, played the guitar, organized the group, kept the group alive over many years of struggle and everything, but the group was not all female. It was, had some male players in it. We recorded the record in the studio, for some reason it's in my mind that there was a woman involved. Oh yeah, I guess a woman in their group had learned to do, anyway there was something to do with a woman in the studio. This is back, you know, a little ways back when there weren't any woman engineers around, and then the thing went to the pressing plant. The pressing plant, I didn't realize this myself until one day when I had to go out to Jersey to the pressing plant to pick up something on my way to some gig, that the pressing plant was run by women, and all the pressing was done by women, but had no way of knowing that from just talking to the front office.

IRWIN: Well the woman who owned it, actually she was the widow of the guy who started it. When he died she took it over and she ran it for twenty odd years...

BARBARA: And she just hired women. The place was all women when I went in there.

IRWIN: Yeah. Even the assembly line was women.

BARBARA: Yeah and

IRWIN: Mrs. Conrad.

BARBARA: Yeah Mrs. Conrad. Exactly. We were speaking early of being, the pit falls of being known as Mrs. Anybody because no one ever knows your name. So all of this women input into the thing, and then it gets to Lady Slipper, and Lady Slipper sends it

back. Well can't distribute this because it has some men playing on it. And I was outraged. Incensed. I wrote them back a scathing letter explaining all these things that I just told you and, you know, I said I thought it was, I'm the producers, I'm the one who originated the label. I'm, you know, the men who have to do with this thing are, outside of Irwin, everybody else is employed, you know, in a case by case basis, and Irwin's work in this thing comes after my work. I mean I do, he can't, it's very very important, but it can't happen until I produce a record. How can you say that it isn't going into a women's catalogue, you know?

JEFF: I had a similar conversation with **Deer Sildrove** about that. That there's a problem and they were, you know, that highest separatist is a word, you know

BARBARA: Yeah

JEFF: But except for Holly Near, who was one of the people heavily involved with the thing, who had a couple records with an accompanist named Jeff Langley who was, but since she just one of the main people she seemed to be exempt from that problem and other people, you know that

BARBARA: Interesting

JEFF: Yeah.

BARBARA: So I decided anyway, and the strength of this, I decided that all the participation in the label was up to that point pretty invisible, and that I would make a women's catalogue. So I went through, I just combed through all the different things, and pointed it all out, and you know, highlighted. And just by concentrating it all and saying here it is, it became clear that the women's participation was quite strong. Not nearly as strong as I would've liked it to be because it was a reflection of its times, you know. Women were just not, I mean, you know talk to any of us from my generation who are out there trying to be, doing whatever we were doing, you'll find that was a kind of a silently conspiracy to keep us in a certain category. And anyway all of sudden, by putting it all together, aggregating it, and highlighting it, then you see the power of it. So that was (I thought) very instructive for me, you know. I've got a couple copies of that in the file I'm going to give you so you'll see the women's catalogue. But I wanted also before we get into the, I want to turn this over to Irwin so he can talk about the distribution, but I also wanted to talk a little bit about the concept of the packaging - especially the booklet. I mean the booklet.

JEFF: We'll break for a second?

BARBARA: Yeah.

JEFF: Okay.

BARBARA: Yeah. I wanted to talk about the booklets a little bit. As you can see the idea of having a booklet at all in there is akin to what Folkways was doing. And I guess, in my very formative years of getting to know about all this stuff, Folkways had a big impression on me too because I actually learned a lot looking at their booklets. I'm not a college educated person. I went and I barely finished high school, but what education I have comes from these kind of sources. So I really respect that those seemingly casual inputs to your intellectual life, you know, if they're well done, they can get to you sometimes when to the people who don't sit down and read a book or go and take a course or whatever.

And in fact, I was in the files of stuff I've been going through to turn over to you, there was a letter from some guy that I kept because it was so poignant 'cause he said something about he how, how did he put it? He's like Francis Bacon going to (was that who it was) buying Shakespeare's folios. Every time he got a paycheck he'd run out buy all this Shakespeare stuff and rather have that than eat. And he said that's what he was doing ordering all this Paredon stuff. He'd just gotten a paycheck and he's ordering all these things and he knew, he sees, I just hear my father telling me no, no, you know you should be paying your bills with it. But he said I got to have it, this is my main thing.

JEFF: Some of us fall into that, yes.

BARBARA: But he got to the point of saying that, you know, he says but actually it's that each of these records are so much I could. The easiest answer to my father would be that each of these records is like a whole course on this thing, you know, I can learn all about it right from this booklet, and it saves me the price of the course and having to go to school and everything. And that's exactly, that rang exactly with what I had in mind with these booklets. That they wouldn't be in anyway superficial or just another, an adjunct to the record but they would actually be as important in a sense as the record in that they would have these elements. It would have usually we're dealing with an area where somebody would need an introduction to the whole, maybe even the country.

Let's take Haiti okay. We have Haiti here. Now how many people know that much about Haiti itself. You know, the population or the what the population is like, what the land is like, is it arable, is it not, or is it, you know, can people live off it, or are they. These kind of facts. A little map so you can sort of get an idea and here's maybe even where it's rocky and where it's populated and where it's, you know. That will tell you something about why this political movement developed in this area, you know, because now we get into the exploitation of the people that live there, and the conditions they live under, and how they.

So then there would be an article about the political situation. And then that maybe tell you that, well, I suppose you don't know that Haitians, there's a business of selling their blood in order to live. You know people. There's an industry in the U.S. that exists by buying the blood of Haitians in order to, you know, something, I mean information that you wouldn't find in your average university course. But that the, where the person writing about the thing would know the subject intimately enough to tell you things of

this nature that should be known. I mean if I'm going to be in the hospital and be given blood from a Haitian who's living off of selling the blood every two or three months or however often they can sell it to an American company that's profiting off of this or something, shouldn't I know, shouldn't I sort of know that? Or whatever, I mean this is all, so to get deeply as you can within a couple pages into some of the realities of the life of the people who produce the songs. Or the singers, who produce the singers. The society that produced the singers, let alone

JEFF: The music just doesn't stand on it's own.

BARBARA: Exactly

JEFF: It's part of a bigger social fabric.

BARBARA: So then an article about the singers or songwriters or the musicians, why they do the work the way they do. How it's down in relation to what, you know, that kind of article. Usually written by the, often these introductory articles would be written by some group like NACLA you know who they are? The National, what is it, North American Congress on Latin America. It's a research group.

IRWIN: There's a left wing think tank like that. It still exists I guess.

BARBARA: Yeah, they still exist.

IRWIN: They started in the Sixties and the Seventies.

BARBARA: But there are groups like that, that, you know, have somehow, I mean, like the first records were done a lot, the Angola record was done through the assistance of a group called Liberation Support Movement. So they had a way of getting a lot factual material directly from the liberation forces in Angola. From the, in some cases you had to go the maybe to the UN, mission to the UN, and say to that person in the Angolan mission to the UN, or if they didn't have a. If it's a liberation movement they don't usually have an office, you know, but they might have a mission there. And ask for photos or ask for, so you try to get photos that illustrate the real life there, and maybe you get them from some source like that.

The person who helped out with that booklet, Angolan booklet, actually got some of the translations, the songs it turns it were not only in Portuguese but in Kimbundo, Umbundo, etcetera. Languages that you can't just call up a university and say do you got a, you know, teacher who can translate this or something. You got to go to the UN mission, make relations there and say do you have someone around who would be willing to translate this song. Give me a rough idea what this song is about. Some of it took quite a bit of, you know, that kind of persistence in combing. So to pull that kind of thing together about the artists, then the songs, the texts of the songs, as much as we could we put the whole text there.

In certain cases, like with those African languages, we had, and some of them are not written languages per se or not there's not a lot in print in those languages, so we had to use just a sort of synopsis. But in most every case you get the whole text. Sometimes we even to the extent with the Greek and the Arabic stuff and all that would find somebody who could set the type in that language. Even though it's not type scripted most type setters have. In the case of Haitian record, the Haitian group in the U.S. of exiles were so excited that someone would actually put all this information in Creole in print 'cause there's so little in print in Creole in their language that they provided a person who could come over and type. We did the whole thing on Irwin's typewriter at the time. It was the only carbon ribbon typewriter we had in the house. So she came over and typed it all up in, I laid out some columns, and she typed it all up and we just reduced and it put it right in the thing, and so that's in Creole in that book and so that's the kind of attention to detail.

And then the translations of the songs, I spent a lot time learning how to conceptualize in English after knowing the content of a song in another language. I've, as a singer, was making a practice of trying to translate, make a good living, poetic you know usable lyric type translation from other languages into English to use. And so I began to realize some of the problems involved with that and I really taught myself how to, sometimes it would mean listening to two or three different people's translations. And then you find that needs a cultural interpretation because literally translating the words is not enough.

I'll give you an example from, I was not very familiar with Spanish or Spanish speaking, the culture that goes with it in Latin America, at the time, and there was this phrase that popped up over and over in one song, I think of Violeta Parra or somebody who goes *hay pajarito, pajarito*. *Hay* little bird, you know. And I thought, well, okay. Little bird, little bird. Doesn't make a whole lot of relevancy but, and after showing the words and asking for a translation from about the third person down the line, somebody said oh well *pajarito*, yeah, well, that's a symbol for the holy spirit, you know the god, the father, the son, and the holy spirit. That's the *pajarito* you're talking about. Oh okay.

So then you had to get on the cultural wave length. Then you had to find out that, you know, I'd found out that there's a class thing too with what word you select to translate into. In other words, I don't know what, food or it might be just food or grub or something. Let's say you call it grub and he calls it gourmet brioche or something. You know.

JEFF: Right.

BARBARA: There's a class translation. There's a

JEFF: So we have an old colleague from our office who now has a, well, was nationwide, I don't know how to describe it now, but in the Soviet Union he had a radio show playing American pop music. All over the Soviet Union he would narrate in Russian, and he was talking about the problems he with a lot the American slang, that if he translated directly it comes out completely absurd

BARBARA: Sure.

JEFF: to people but how do you communicate, you know

BARBARA: Yeah, yeah exactly. So that's it. You have to be on, and then with political language often that has a very, it's very coded. And people understand it one way and another way and so it, I. Then I realized that you can't just throw this at anybody who can translate and tell them to translate this and we'll put it in the booklet. I had to go over everything, over and over, and try and get the sense of it, understand the essence of the thing. And then maybe rewrite the translate I was given, you know. So that I'm always in the picture with those song translations, I've rewritten or I've gone through this process with all of them, and then, and I've gotten also gotten a lot of good feedback about that too. A lot of people who, you know, speak the languages from which it came, they would write me saying that, well, we really thank you for the attention that was paid, you know.

So, okay, so the translations, then another important element I thought was to try and have, in the back, a little list of different organizations that had to do with that movement. So there's usually a list of here's some contacts in case someone's reading the thing and wants to then, oh good, I'll get involved, you know, so how do you do that. And a bibliography so that in case you want to read further, you really want to get into this thing you'll know what books to. And then since a lot of the information often was obscure or hard to find or whatever there'd be a list of periodicals and you know sources, where can you go to get more information about this. And last but not least try and have as unhackneyed and as good photos as we could find. You know not use just the obvious things, try and get stuff from original sources and things, photos that really added to your understanding of the whole thing.

I think those are the main elements of the booklet and all of those things had to be produced by somebody, pulled together, and you know it meant that a lot of people cooperated with this process in booklet after booklet. Sometimes the booklet would turn out to be 8 or 12 pages long. Well that's an investment so, you know, if we had left the booklet, we probably could've put out twice as many records in a sense, but if we put the, without the booklets I always felt that it became, tended to become commodified. In other words people would start to listen to it just as sounds in the background or something. Whereas the booklet gave you a handle on it so that you could cross over into the reality of the source of the music. You know. So you weren't just consuming it. You'd actually become a participant in the process.

IRWIN: On the surface, it struck many people sort of, oh just the same as Folkways. And in many ways it was. Because there were very few record labels other than Folkways that did booklets. But there were also some distinctions between the Folkways booklets and what we did. And the kind of attention to detail that Barbara's talking about, I know because I worked on so many Folkways booklets, they have incredible amounts of information but it's not always in the most organized and focused form. And

BARBARA: The Folkways ones.

IRWIN: Yeah. And very often, I mean it was more or less what the collector felt like putting together, and Moe would just kind of grab things and put them in, and they were fascinating in their own way, but we tried to really focus it a lot more, and it was one of the ways to give the various political movements a stake in the thing. In a sense our booklets grew, while the form seems like Folkways, they grew more out of the teach-in tradition that developed in the Sixties. Where, like around Vietnam and then came around other subjects, part of the movement's mission was to educate people. Part of the process of countering the demonization so the booklets played a very important political role from our point of view in trying to establish the cultural worth and significance of people whose political movements for the most part were rooted in the concepts of national liberation. So, in other words, we did not do the music of Thailand or the music of Angola and so on, which are great documentary stuff that Moe did. But we did the liberation stuff and we documented it from that point of view.

JEFF: Sure.

BARBARA: So yeah that's, and then the of course the slicks we tried to make in the same spirit as much as possible have a photo that told you something about the people involved, and the colors would usually be chosen with from some, with some relation to the movement itself. Usually movements have banners and colors and symbolic colors and, or flags if it's a national movement, or I don't know. The Irish record, for example, has both green and orange because the spirit of that was that it be not sectarian, and that it would be, represent something about the Irish working class and not just one, you know.

IRWIN: As I recall there was some controversy about that.

BARBARA: Well

IRWIN: Among the people who did the record.

BARBARA: I don't think so.

IRWIN: I recall. Because the first album we did, we were the ones who added the orange and then they wrote to us about it, and they were a bit antsy about it.

BARBARA: Yeah that may be. Yeah.

JEFF: Orange was Protestantism orange meant kind of

BARBARA: Yeah

JEFF: Yeah

IRWIN: Course these were people closely associated with the IRA and our concept was this, you know, like cut across the national lines and the whole class thing as sort of, you know, the ultimate goal, I think that's the message we were trying to convey.

BARBARA: Yeah, I think you're right about that.

IRWIN: But they objected to it. As one of the cases where, it's not that we wanted to override. We just sort of read into what they were doing some concepts of our own.

BARBARA: Well and, you know, as we went along we learned a lot about this thing about consultation with, you know, I mean there's, because we were under so much pressure from doing the rest of our lives and doing this stuff as a sort of part time activity, we often would assume something rather than check it in the beginning. And then we realized later that we had to go to, you know, the representatives as closely as we could find, representatives of the hear of the struggle and pass the whole thing through their filter so that, not so that they would be able to, you know, tell us what to do or whatever. It's not that. It's to get the sensitivity, you know, the sensibility from them about what it was.

IRWIN: That's another very important difference between what we did and Folkways because Folkways, by and large, got that type of material from American anthropologists who were doing a book, doing some research, and in the course of which they tape recorded indigenous culture and music and so on, and this was like one more way of reflecting on what they had done. We, so Folkways was accountable to the anthropologist.

JEFF: But not to the actual informants.

IRWIN: Exactly. Where as we were accountable to the movements that produced the records, so it made a difference in what we could and couldn't do.

BARBARA: Well an interesting example of that (and there's some documentation in the Angola folder) was that we knew of the existence of a Folkways record about Angola that purported to be of the liberation of Angola, etcetera, and that's what Moe thought it was all in good faith. But we had also shown it to some of the people in the Angolan liberation circles and they all said oh my god you know, no, don't put anything like that out. And this was when we were looking for material. We thought well gee, maybe we'll just make a deal with Moe and we'll put this out or whatever, something. No no no. Don't put that out; that's a bad group and everything. Well

IRWIN: I think it was the Jonas of that group.

BARBARA: It, or, but in any case there was a woman who was writing for the *Guardian* under a pseudonym and living in Angola and working closely with the liberation, the NPLA. And she, we'd been trying to contact her to see if she could get us some material, and try to get us some rights or try to, you know, etcetera. And at one point we, I think

sent her that record to see what her opinion. But any way there's a letter in there where she tells you exactly what that, what the mistake was that made, and how she felt wasn't his fault but someone just put something over on him basically. And

IRWIN: Well Moe recognized that later on. He told me, when our Angola record came out, he said you sure you got the right group, he says, 'cause I got burned once.

BARBARA: Uh oh, he did? I didn't realize that. Well anyway, so that, you know, we pretty early on began to realize that you had to do that because, you know, you'd naturally make mistakes because you can't know everything. You can't, and then there's a certain arrogance about Americans anyway. We always think that we are in the center of things, and we know, and we have the right to do this and that, and it just, after a while as a participant in these movements, you realize that you have to drop all that because it's irrelevant, and it's what, in fact, in some ways what it's all about, you know. It's that equalizer. You have to sort of level the thing so that everyone.

JEFF: You have to watch out because of the cultural imperialism where you go into and take out somebody's stuff and

IRWIN: Exactly

JEFF: It's something I've been really adamant about for our fieldworkers. I just went into this now about, especially with some people like southwest indian tribes that have sacred material they don't want photographed or recorded, and have to be conscious of that and

IRWIN: Alan Lomax ran into this problem all the time. I mean for all the wonderful work that Alan did, and even more so his father, and the professional folklorist in general. You know once they treat people as informants, that objectifying word, you already into that kind of a relationship. And I think Alan learned the hard way in quite a number of occasions, but because I think he did try to establish relationships with the people he worked with, but, you know, his background and everything made it very difficult. It's a fascinating play by Zora Neal Hurston, I don't know if you've ever heard of it or seen it. I forget the name of it. We saw it here.

BARBARA: The second version of it was a different name, but it was called "Sanctified."

IRWIN: Is that the name of it? But a lot the focus of the play is about a folklorist modeled on Alan Lomax, who Zora Neal Hurston knew well. Who goes into this black community and is trying to record this material, and the play portrayed the totally alienated relationship. I mean it's kind of a caricature in a way, but there's enough truth to it, the alienated relationship and then what really happens after a while is that the people begin to make fun of the person who's the folklorist and

BARBARA: Or run scams.

IRWIN: Yeah, run scams. They make up material. You know, they do all kinds of things, so anyway that's.

JEFF: I have a friend who is a folklorist who works in Appalachia. And Alan came down, was working on something, and sort of had Gail take him around to certain places. And he got people irritated, and they started pulling his leg and he didn't realized it. And she told me about that.

BARBARA: Sure. I saw Lightening Hopkins do a whole concert at Carnegie Hall under the same circumstances. There was a concert, what was it called? It was one of those big folk events, you know, where they had about half a dozen or so people in a show. Was it in Carnegie Hall? I'm pretty sure, or some place equally prestigious, you know. And he came, I was sitting there in absolute amazement. I said no one in this audience but me and Lightening knows what's going on here. I swear. Because what he did was he came out and scammed the whole thing. He never played at his top, he never played and you could tell he could, I mean it wasn't that he couldn't, it's that he didn't want to. I'm not giving you my best. I'm not comfortable here. This ain't my scene. You people don't know you're doing. You don't know what you're hearing. I'm just going to try and see what, how much of a, and just to amuse himself, was scamming the whole concert. You know.

IRWIN: It wouldn't be the first time that a black musician did it.

BARBARA: Yeah.

JEFF: All sorts of people do it. Well, what we've done with Folkways is in the case of a lot material, especially if it's material that we don't know. I know there's certain booklets, I've read Folkways booklets where I actually know the material well, I find lots of mistakes.

BARBARA: Yeah.

JEFF: And people's names are spelled wrong, or their names are wrong, or something definitely historically incorrect. And so what Tony did is he sent off copies of all the Folkways titles to different people he knew who are versed in that, and he said give me feedback.

IRWIN: Right.

JEFF: You know, what is this music, and, you know, and to find out that, you know, this is not really, or people were familiar with, and this is really a group of ethnomusicology students living in Jakarta who went in to the hotel and recorded, you know. This music is not really from the community, or this music is just a really bad example of this or etcetera, etcetera and try to. And he put that in the file folders so if you're going back and thinking about reissuing something you'd, you know, look at that and say this is not the example. This is not the really good Angola record somebody says, there's been a few

things we've thought about, you know, that some one put out and we find out from people that it's really not, we shouldn't do it.

IRWIN: I heard that about some of the American Indian records too.

JEFF: Yeah.

IRWIN: Anyway let's

BARBARA: We should move on to other

JEFF: Okay

BARBARA: We can cut it off.

IRWIN: I mean you don't have to turn this on.

JEFF: No, it's on but actually it's okay.

IRWIN: Well I guess where we were was talking about why Paredon records and so on. In, I tried to look at these things both from the point of view of what our intentions were but also what I think it reflected objectively, independently of what we thought we were all about. When you're lucky, the two coincide. But, and this isn't just true of an enterprise like a record company. I think this is true of all events in history. People make revolutions thinking they're going to turn out a certain way. It turns out the significance of that revolution was something that they didn't have in mind, but what they did was still historically important. So that may sound kind of flamboyant, never the less that's the way I try to look at it.

And in that sense, Paredon was a reflection of a period in which ideas of revolutionary upheaval were extremely prominent in the world. There were especially acute in the third world because I think what the world was experiencing, in Sixties and the Seventies, was the final stages of the overthrow of colonialism. And it's more like where the bitterest holdouts who would not adapt to the changes, that's where those struggles were taking place. Some of them happened a little bit before we went into business, but for instance the French in Algeria, which also produced an incredible cultural explosion. There was this incredible film that was made, *Battle of Algiers*. Which, in a sense, was in film the kind of thing that we were doing with Paredon records. That is, it was produced by people who were trying to make a statement about that revolution. They weren't just trying to document it. And it was propaganda in a sense. But it was propaganda reflecting a real struggle by a liberation movement.

There was also the whole counter cultural thing and the New Left phenomenon in the United States which began to take an ideological turn toward revolutionary solutions. And that spirit of revolution, whether you wanted to call it the cultural revolution, the counter cultural revolution and so on, that was very much in the air. And the rhetoric of

the time, whether it was the Women's Movement, the Black Movement, the Student Movement, was revolution. And this was something that was happening in other western countries as well, like what happened in France. And then you had the rumblings in the communist societies with the Prague Spring and so on.

So that was the world cultural climate out of which Paredon came. It had particular, for us, and again I think it was reflective of the movement in the United States, its sort of the touchstones were Vietnam and Cuba. Vietnam for, obviously because of the war in Vietnam and the feeling on the part of so many young Americans that this was sort of the absolute damning evidence of the corruption of the system, and gave rise to a whole revolutionary outlook. And Cuba because of the particular antagonism toward the Cuban revolution by the United States government and the way in which Cuba had become a symbol of incredible defiance of the American monolith. So there was great identification with Cuba for those reasons. And especially among people who couldn't identify with the Soviet Union. And with the eastern European countries, they're sort of like, either they thought these weren't really revolutions, so they were tired revolutions, or, you know, all of the different things that for different reasons turned people off. But they could identify with the Vietnamese and with the Cubans. And for a period with the Chinese revolution also. But Cuba and Vietnam were very much the touchstones of that movement's international outlook, and of Paredon Records' as well.

And the seeming anomaly is that what we were doing was documenting these movements and at the same time our approach was quite partisan, and very often the two were looked at as mutually exclusive categories. Well, if it's propaganda it can't be documentary and vice versa. But our view was that so long as the movements were real, their propaganda was also real. And documenting what you might (and I don't use the word propaganda in a pejorative sense) documenting what was their genuine cultural, ideological expression was a way of undemonizing the so-called enemies of the United States (the Vietnamese, the Cubans, and anybody else).

Because that occurs every time we have to use our armed forces, the enemy has to be demonized and made less than human. So partially it was that, and that's a part of propaganda, saying no these are real human beings, with a real culture and genuine expression, and in the most simplest terms they're just like you and me, one could say, or whatever. But that they were the bearers of traditions and of national heritages that were worthy of respect. And that those who would destroy the national cultures were guilty of a kind of cultural genocide.

At the same time these records were partisan in that they usually were made in cooperation with a particular political force in these revolutions. Now in the case of Vietnam and Cuba is obvious, there were no rival political forces. But in some of the other situations there were different political groups in different countries, and judgments get made at a certain point as to which groups have a genuinely popular social base and represent the interests of the people. And frankly, one of the measuring sticks was the degree to which the United States was antagonistic to these groups. And to the extent the United States would be promoting some groups, like this was the real liberation

movement, we, like many other people, would say now that's a contradiction in terms. If the U.S. is promoting it, then there's something wrong with that group because the interests of the U.S. government and these movements are too much in contradiction.

While a lot of this stuff was third world and heavily Latin America it wasn't exclusively that. We felt we should do stuff reflecting the different social movements in the United States, and I think a lot of the emphasis there was on Black Movement (we had the interview with Huey Newton, Bernice Reagan, things like that), and women singers, singers like the Red Star Singers and others who were very much in tune with the counter culture but expressed it politically, not just in counter cultural terms. And then we had other material coming from Western Europe and so on.

So this is, that's what Paredon represented, and we felt that it was important to do it, that this was part of our political agenda, and we were, in a way, uniquely qualified to do it. I mean Barbara has said something about her motivations, and her being a singer herself, it sets up a very interesting relationship with the artists in a record label. On the one hand, it's a little strange because artists are, there's a certain natural alienation of performing artists from record label producers, like, well, we're on opposite sides fence, and there's always an adversarial relationship. But here's somebody who's both a performing artist herself and a record producer. It doesn't solve the alienation problem, and there were, is a certain amount of adversarial relationship almost inherent in it. At the same time she was sensitive to the performer's point of view in a way that no non-performer possibly could be. And I think that comes across in the respect for the material and things like that. Plus, you know Barbara's own political commitment over the years.

From me, one of the, the movement in the United States in the mid Sixties, at that time when we started Paredon, was a very young movement, and even people my age (because in the late Sixties I was, you know, like in my mid forties) we were still a step removed from the action. I mean it was a generation that did grow up saying don't trust anybody over thirty and so on, and you had to sort of re-earn your credentials no matter what you might have done when you were younger. And when we did Paredon I was, at that time, been started writing for the *Guardian* especially on cultural stuff and then later on a lot more on political stuff. A lot of my involvement then was one step removed from the organizational centers of these movements. As a journalist you just almost inevitably, even if you're partisan, you're still one step outside it.

And, never the less, I felt that doing this record label was an opportunity to use skills that I had developed over the years in a way that probably, at that time, were not going to be utilized by anybody else. In other words, because of my unique combination of the political outlook I had and particular skills and experience with recorded material, something might happen that otherwise probably wouldn't happen because there was a vacuum. Even those record labels that would occasionally put out political material, including Folkways, were not prepared to do what we were doing. They might have done some of the things that we eventually produced, that's true. But I think (I say this having worked closely with Moe Asch at Folkways and having a lot of respect for him) I still think he would not have produced a good number of the things that we put out. And I

don't know who else would have. Monitor put out, they put out a lot of stuff from Eastern Europe and things like that, and sort of vaguely political stuff. I don't think they would've done hardly any of this. So I don't know who would've, and yet there was a need for it.

I've always been very interested in the use of records that way, way back in the People's Songs days. I mean this was always one of the big frustrations of what we did with People's Songs, people sort of sing at, and that is our medium was music nominally, but in fact what we worked through was the printed page. We worked through live concerts, but by and large the live concerts were seen as a means of supporting the printed work which was our main reason for existence. And so there we were, prisoners of the tyranny of print, dealing with something that had to be heard and performed in order to take on life. This was, I know, one of Pete Seeger's great frustrations. He was always, can't we put out a record with each issue of the people's songs bulletin, and then he always bugging us about couldn't we do that with Sing Out. So we were always trying to figure out ways to use audio means of communicating what we had to do. And different times at Sing Out we experimented with attaching a record to a magazine. We did that with our twentieth or twenty-fifth anniversary, or one of those anniversaries, I don't know remember which one it was. Probably not that high a number, maybe the fifteens. In any event, we did that with one of them.

Early in the fifties, I actually started a little record label on behalf of People's Artists called Hoot-N-Anny Records. Which, and they were just 78's at the time, but I think the Weaver's very first recording was done on a Hoot-N-Anny record. I did the "Hammer Song" and the "Banks of Marble. This is before they were recording for Decca. And I don't know, we only did about a half a dozen such records. And then in the mid Fifties we did the first LP of a live folk music concert. It's called "Hoot-N-Anny Tonight," subsequently reissued on Folkways under that title. So I'd always been scrambling for that kind of stuff.

And then in 1958 I went to work for Moe Asch in Folkways, and over the next number of years worked with Moe, and was, I had very little to do with the actual recording. That's not my thing at all. So Moe was always engineer, the one who dealt with the performers and so on. But I became responsible ultimately for everything else relating to the production of a record of. In effect Moe would finish a tape master and turn it over to me, and I would deal people who would the metal master, the stampers, the record pressing company, the printers who did the booklet, the people who pasted up the booklet. I'd edited, one way or another most of the booklets, deal with the typesetting, deal with the artists who designed the covers. Coordinate all of the production, and deal with a lot of the distribution also, and a lot of sales promotion stuff.

So I learned a lot of different aspects of the record business, which put me in a position to know how to get Paredon off the ground and skip over a bunch of stages that somebody with less experience would've had to go through in a very painful way. And, you know, took advantage of that experience. We started out using the very producers that Folkways use, some of whom I had brought around to Folkways. But the printers, the pressing

plants, the artists, the people who made stampers and so on, we used the same ones. They already knew me from the Folkways days, so that helped us establish some credit, and we knew what we were talking about. So we were able to move into production in a relatively smooth way, fairly quick, and then once we had the records, we were able to utilize the contacts I'd made in terms of distribution, in some cases. I mean a lot of Folkways distributors didn't, you know, didn't know what to do with this type of material.

Tape 4, Side A

BARBARA: Off the record I think it was Jeff Cohen and Mike Seeger, but that's just my.

JEFF: It's the 10th of December, 1991 talking to Barbara Dane and Irwin Silver about Paredon Records. We're about ready to discuss unusual titles in the catalogue with some information about each one. And here we go. Who wants to start?

BARBARA: Well let me just. The material is all taken from the (I guess we've already gone through this) but it's from *Cancion Protesta* record set that was issued by the Casa de Las Americas in Cuba. I'd just extracted all the Latin American stuff and put it on one, and I think this actually was the first sort of record that was, came out as the new song movement or the new Latin American song or whatever, the first compilation that would be, would've been available outside of. Well, the one in Cuba wasn't specifically Latin America either. It was of the whole festival. So extracting it and putting it in that one collection, I think, was then became like the first expression of that movement in a accessible form.

And there were then some additions made to the things that were on the record because I had some live tape that I made while I was there. I think I describe about standing around on the beach with Paradero with Carlos Pueblo singing the song about Che, which he'd just written, and. But I think later on, because of the fidelity of that, that I substituted a studio recording of his singing that song. It may be, you'd have to listen to it to see what that record has on it. Now that, so if it sounds like a studio thing at that point that's what happened. I just decided that we'd pressed it originally with the outdoor singing, but it was, the fidelity was pretty, you know, hard to. And then there was a little about when we were out at the encampment with Fidel and he talks a little bit, just a sentence or two in there, about culture, something about culture. And to the extent there's any live material on it, that's what that's it. I was wandering around with my own microphone.

JEFF: General question: if this holds true for any of these titles, sort of if either of you are aware of additional materials you didn't use that exist on tape or anything like that, you know, will be coming to the collection that you might mention that, if they're a part of it.

BARBARA: In this case I don't think there really was, probably my own tape, that is the rough stuff that I took out what I used on there for my taping at these different occasions, I've got that. I don't know if that's in the materials that we're turning over. I'm not sure. What does it say in terms of what's, is there a list there somewhere of what's?

JEFF: It says master, one copy with booklet cover art, yes all art's there.

BARBARA: But in the

IRWIN: No, there's a different list. You just have to go through that and see.

BARBARA: Yeah, we'll have to go through. Yes, I'm not sure. That may be in that other bunch of stuff, but if you wanted to have with this instead of in the library

IRWIN: ...down by cartons, not just by. It says carton A contains the following tapes. So some of them are outtakes and material never used and so on. So there maybe, you know, you'll see that stuff.

JEFF: You'll see it, yeah, okay.

BARBARA: And anything that's not in this collection of stuff that you're going to take now is in the material that I intend, at some point, to give to the Library of Congress, or to you, which ever would be.

JEFF: Right.

BARBARA: So, that's, and as far as any other prerecorded sources, there was very little of it in existence any where at that point. So I don't think there, I don't have anything else that I think was contemporary with that.

IRWIN: This record, we have (I think) something like five records that come from Cuba. We have had an informal, what they call a handshake understanding, with people at the record label EGREM, and people in the Ministry of Culture giving us this stuff to do with it what we see

BARBARA: In some cases directly with the artist.

IRWIN: Yeah, in some cases the artist, so there are no formal contracts.

JEFF: Okay.

IRWIN: But we've never had any complaints either, and we've been to Cuba and so on. So far as they're concerned, they have given us the material to do with what we want, and we're now transferring that over to you. So that's one of those cases where you don't have to track down the original producers or artists and so on.

JEFF: Okay

IRWIN: Okay

JEFF: Good.

IRWIN: One other thing about the *Cancion Protesta* gathering. It was held in conjunction with a much larger political gathering which set up what was called the Organization of Latin American Solidarity, OLAS, which was sort of Cuba's answer to the OAS. OAS or LAS. And it came at this at a time when Cuba was on a very determined course to try to encourage the development of the Latin American revolution more broadly, both as a matter of conviction. These were all Latin American revolutionaries and in Latin America in general, in the Caribbean the national distinctions are rather important. In the rest of Latin America they're not quite as important as they are in other parts of the world. So the continental tradition of liberation struggle, going back to Bolivar, is a very strong force. And that's what Che was trying to build on, and the view being that any Latin American is at home anywhere in the continent and has the right to try to promote popular revolution, etcetera.

BARBARA: They call it our America, you know.

IRWIN: Right.

BARBARA: Our America.

IRWIN: Che had gone to Bolivia shortly before this, and I think the hope in Cuba was that he would trigger off a more, a continental-wide revolution. That moment was viewed as a critical turning point. It was probably, after Che died, Cuban policy changed. That's they went back to a closer rapprochement with the Soviet Union and so on. 'cause they had felt that their only real guarantee of survival was the success of the Latin American revolution to spread the revolution elsewhere in Latin America. When that failed, and in trying to do that they'd alienated themselves from most of the communist parties in Latin America, and they were actually promoting political alternatives to the communist party. Anyway, the *Cancion Protesta* was viewed as sort of the cultural attachment or parallel to this OLAS conference. It was held simultaneously, and we all attended the closing session of the conference and so on.

So it's important to keep in mind, I don't think all the people who participated in the *Cancion Protesta* were fully aware of what the objectives were from in that broad sense. I'm not saying they would've necessarily objected to it, but it had a life of it's own, but it also was done in conjunction with this other conference. And it's one of the factors that helps to explain a lot of the dynamics that took place at the conference, the very, the role played by a lot of the Latin American singers, who themselves were closely identified with those movements in their own countries that were part of the developing pro-Cuba block of Left political parties in Latin America.

BARBARA: P.S. it was for going to that that I lost my passport. That, because the excuse they gave was that it was that I'd went to this thing which was attached to. They felt it was an extension of the OLAS conference, and saw it as a, that we were all getting involved with, you know, collusion with these armed struggle groups in Latin America

and so forth. That was the rational from the point of view. I mean why take the passport after I'd already gone there twice before and they didn't take it, but I explained to you how I got it back, though, because of the supreme court decision on the other Staughton Lynd case. So.

JEFF: Okay. So next, number two, is Angolan record, *Victory is Certain*.

BARBARA: Yeah, well all that material was brought. I was thinking the other day how we happened to actually get in touch with the Liberation Support Movement. I don't know. I don't know. I can't, for the life of me, maybe in the correspondence somewhere there's a hint about, there is some correspondence from them somewhere in this mess. But there was

IRWIN: At that time they were located in Canada.

BARBARA: Yes.

IRWIN: And I know we had correspondence with them in Canada.

BARBARA: Yeah. Anyways a small group of people out here in the West Coast who were, called themselves the Liberation Support Movement, and people who had some expertise and experience with some African countries, and particularly interest in aiding the liberation struggles going on, and in this moment, of course, Angola. And so all of the material was collected by them.

IRWIN: In this folder that we're turning over to you, there's a bunch of correspondence, and I see the earliest one from the LSM to us is dated April 6th in which

JEFF: 1970?

IRWIN: 1970, right. And apparently this is a letter, it's from this guy Roy Hobby, addressed to Barbara, apparently in response to a letter he had written. So I guess that how it all got initiated. And in this letter he talks about how they were actually planning to try to put out some of the material that they had gotten, but then when they heard about our operation, they decided to turn it over to us. It's all pretty well written out.

BARBARA: Yeah, I think that's what happened, but you can, you'll have to go through the correspondence and maybe, if you really want to pin it down. How the original contact was made, I suspect, was because of all this couple of years previous that I'd been mentioning the idea of putting, making a record label, you know, to so many people that word gets out, and eventually people start contacting you. But we actually never met face to face during the whole time we were. It was all done by mail, and they sent me the tapes, they sent me a large quantity of raw footage of raw, you know, interviews and they collected a lot singing because they were back in liberated zones, and they went to hospitals or to, you know, makeshift schools and things that they had, and taped people talking and singing and so on.

And did a lot, the woman involved there, Karen Harvey I think her name is, was a very good photographer so she sent a lot of photographs. And because of their involvement with the political forces there, we had a, certainly all the, you know, ample materials to. I think in a way the thoroughness of their work helped to set a tone for the kind of booklet we could do, because, you know, we could start right out with, you know, all, that whole spectrum of materials in the booklet, and then a friend of ours, who was not involved except that we asked her to get involved, did something, did some volunteer of work tracking down the translations and things. Went to, got the idea of going to the UN mission and talking to somebody, you know, who could find her a translator for Kimbundo and Umbundo and these different African tribal languages. Her name is Pat Payande, and I think that's one of the few records we have still, some how the documentation survived. We have a lot of correspondence there and you can see what it's all about.

But the, oh, the material that they gathered actually is the first side of the record, and the second side is taken from a record that they brought back, an existing record that had been recorded in some where over the border in someplace, and was very good material and very much along the lines of what we wanted, the statement we wanted to make in there. And they proposed that it be incorporated, and actually I was able to fit the whole second half or the whole second half incorporates the whole other record, so there's nothing deleted.

One of the things we found out early on, you know, was about, we found out that you didn't have to be limited to the length that commercial records are limited to because it doesn't have to be, the equalization doesn't have to be such that it can be played, blasted out on the radios or wherever. So we started to just, you know, limit the waves that, you know. Cut, in other words, equalize enough so that you could fit more grooves on there, so you could put more time. 'cause I was in the learning process of figuring out whether to sacrifice fidelity for quantity of material, or quantity of materials, you know, you have to cut a little bit here and there to get better fidelity, etcetera. So in that first few records, the decision basically was on the side of getting more material on there.

JEFF: So we're really talking about here is 30 minutes to a side.

BARBARA: I think it may even exceed thirty minutes to a side in some cases, but we

IRWIN: Not too many...

BARBARA: But as time went on, after the first, well, that's what I'm saying. After the first three, four records I realized that actually even though you put a lot material on there, if it's difficult to listen to, it doesn't matter. So, you know, nobody's going to listen to it anyways. So we have to make some decisions and edit things so that we can, and then I really was, the balance is much better later. But I think the fidelity on these is perfectly acceptable at this point. I don't think there's any reason it would be uncomfortable listening to them.

IRWIN: I just wanted to note. I noticed in this letter I mentioned, this guy notes the Folkways recording of Angola, and he says, it was, this was, he points out that this was a record made by the Holden Roberto Group, which is, I had mentioned yesterday I thought it was the Savindy Group, but this is the third group that was actually based in Zaire. So for reference when you come across that in Folkways

JEFF: Okay.

BARBARA: ...people were speculating was a CIA creation, the Roberto Group.

JEFF: Interesting, okay.

IRWIN: Okay.

JEFF: 1003 is the *Songs of GI Resistance*.

BARBARA: Yes, well, I'm probably as well prepared to talk about that one as anybody. I was in the middle of what turned out to be about five years of concentrating my work on, as a singer, in relation to the G.I. resistance to the war that was coming from within the services. And I wound up traveling extensively over the States and singing in all kinds of clandestine situations, and sometimes, after it got rolling, in big rallies. And in one case I can remember Fort Bragg, going back there several times. Each time I'd go back the thing, you know, it starts with a handful in a room, and then the next time you go back it's a march through town of a few stragglers of a few hundred, and the next time you go back it's three, four thousands. It was just growing by leaps and bounds.

But in any case it was an activity that was, I felt, important to get on a record because of this: there was a definite, and I'm sure conscious, policy on the part of the Armed Forces, or the Pentagon, to wall off each one of these little rebellious groups of GIs in each place and, in a sense, not let it. If you could keep the people in Fort Bragg from knowing what's going on in Fort Hood, and the people in Fort Hood from knowing what's going on in Camp Lejuene, etcetera, then those participants wouldn't get a chance to see the strength in their numbers. And so keeping these people incommunicado, and throwing them in the brig, and cutting off their little, you know, the y'd make a little newspaper, two-page newspaper, and stick it under the pillows in the barracks or something. Cutting off those, all the communications they could, tried to suppress the information from one to the other.

So I thought, well, if we could document on a record, especially if we could put, you know, some tangible evidence on the record there of this group, that group, that group, that place, you know. So that then the record would itself become living proof that there was a movement going on. That would be an important tool. And a moral builder for this movement. So I got someone to go along with me. Forgot his, Peter? Whatever. It's in the booklet. But an engineer from a group called Radio Free People that existed around New York. It was one those, you know, the Sixties was replete with little cultural gorilla

bands of one order or another, and these people had a something they called it Radio Free People, and they were making all kinds of radio work reflecting the what was going on at that period of time, getting it out on college stations or, you know, listener response station, or wherever they could get it out. And so he was the logical, was pretty good engineer, you know. And he had some remote equipment, some portable equipment.

So he went with me to three different bases and we taped during these, what it would be like a, the coffeehouse thing was, it became known as a G.I. coffeehouse movement. But the coffeehouse idea was basic, you know, was clearly out of the Sixties folksy coffeehouse concept. It would be a place that people could gather, and it would be where also some guys who were, I mean this was a movement built by very inexperienced young people, people in their teens (a lot of them) and early twenties. People who had no notion really of what living in a democracy was but that they had a fantasy, a dream of what it should be. And they felt they had some rights. They felt they had the right to express themselves and to, but they soon found out that once you're in the Services you don't, you know, your rights are really basically signed away because you committed yourself to this larger institution.

So they had a big struggle with that, you know, but the form of a coffeehouse was pretty good because they could bring in interested other GIs to, okay, let's go down and see what's going on there, you know. They needed a social gathering place, and they could have a cup of coffee, and they'd see all the posters on the wall, and buy some literature or take some free literature, maybe. And then I would come around, and some other people (few other people) went regularly to go either perform or talk or something. There was sort of a handful who made up the faithful who would go to do these and

JEFF: Did you ever run into any personal sort of harassment from the military establishment?

BARBARA: Absolutely. All the time I mean it was, I mean the movement ran into harassment all the constantly. The, I remember the one in Fort Hood, for example, was the term "goat roper" somehow got around recently. I guess it was somebody was using that term who. I mean George Bush knows what a "goat roper" is, that's a sort of the know nothing, you know, motorcycle gang type of proto-fascist that roams around Texas there, other places I presume. But these were like basically Texas motorcycle gangs that thought of themselves as cowboys, you know, and they would ride around, buzz the place, you know, in a group. Ride around the block, and then throwing rocks, and then eventually shooting into the place and that type of harassment. So there was always a physical danger, we, I mean we, I was usually going around in a little, broken down VW or something like this, or second hand something or other, driving from one base to another.

And a lot times we'd, you'd get, you know, can tell you were being followed or whatever. But sometimes you'd get these vigilante types who would try to bump you off the road or, you know, do different things like this. But the more organized form of

surveillance was what some people would've been troubled by. I wasn't troubled by it, I expected it, fully part of the package. I knew it was going to be there.

But my son traveled with me a bit. I was telling him before about you know, Chris on school vacations in the summer and so on, I would recruit him to go with me and we made at least two trips with the car all over going to different bases and things. And then we did some flying trips, you know, 'cause we went all the way to Japan and Okinawa, and then we went to Italy, and to different places. We went all over the world one summer, and he noticed that every time I would go up to the counter and check in, and then I'd walk away from the counter, that someone else would come right behind me and ask to check the tickets and check my destinations and all that business, and so then I began to notice it too, and observe it, and we were quite convinced then that there was a pattern of checking our movements all the time.

On another trip to Europe I went to do fundraising, basically to try and raise funds. I was invited to do some singing in Europe by some other people but I took the opportunity, since I had a place, trip paid, you know, to go, that's when Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger organized a tour for me to sing in around England, and I did some stuff in Spain, and that was organized by a man named Raimón who was a political singer, Catalanian singer. It was illegal to sing or talk in Catalan language under Franco. So he used to sing in Catalan and therefore wasn't allowed to sing. And he'd attended the *Cancion Protesta* meeting. Later he got the idea of inviting me over, 'cause he figured well an American can do whatever the hell they want in this world, you know, they sort of stomp around and do whatever they want, nobody

JEFF:...

BARBARA: Yeah. So Raimón organized this tour and I, Irwin came too. We went around to a lot of Spain and did stuff there, but always there basically in clandestine conditions. But on that trip, part of that trip when I first got to France, you know, this is just one illustration of how I knew perfectly well there was surveillance on me all the time, was that when I got there I didn't know where I was going to stay. Someone had given me the name of Delphine Seyrig (the actress that recently died, very famous actress in France, but she was very sympathetic) and this person had said well, call her up. Maybe you can stay at her place 'cause she had a big house.

So I didn't want to call her 'cause I got in late, you know, so I stayed at some just arbitrary little cheap place on the Left Bank And got up in the morning and phoned her from a corner phone booth, and she said, oh fine, come right over. Got in a taxi, went right over. When I got there somebody had already been there asking the concierge about the American woman. See? So somehow they were, I don't know how they could tap the phone, it was a street corner phone. But I mean, I don't know how, they were following me I guess. Maybe I was just. But they got there ahead of me, and they asked about the American woman. So stuff like that, you know, kept happening. So I knew, and there were other periods when our phone was definitely tapped, and one of these fine days I'll get it together to ask for the Freedom of Information Act and get all my papers but

IRWIN: Well I got a little bit to that, but first the G.I. Movement was one of the, it was without precedent in American history. I, you know, there's always been a certain amount of dissatisfaction in the military, but usually just with conditions and not with more political purposes of the wars. Even in the worst days of the Korean war you didn't have anything like this. But it was, the nature of this war, and the temper of the times (the Sixties) and there were so many factors that went into it, and this movement, it actually didn't begin to take off until about 1967 when people began to realize in the peace movement that.

Up until that time there had been (some people in the press today say) a certain amount of, some feelings within the organized peace movement that the ordinary GIs were, if not the enemy, they were sort of like, you know, why are they colluding in the war effort and so on. And then some people began to realize that this was a very mistaken approach. That these were young, scared kids who never had thought in terms of resistance or anything like that, political alternatives. A lot of them were draftees who did not have college deferments and so on, and they came from the boonies. And they tapped into what was already beginning to develop spontaneously as opposition to the war.

Well over the next several years, this thing mushroomed to just an incredible point. But it started in 1967 in this most organized way where a guy, I don't know how much of this is in the booklet, probably some of it is, but a guy named Fred Gardner started a, opened up a coffeehouse in North Carolina near Fort Bragg, and that sort of set the pattern for what happened afterwards. And an organization opened up called the United States Servicemen's Fund which basically was a vehicle for getting money in order to setup coffeehouses or any other appropriate establishment near army bases, and to help GIs put out newspapers. There was a flood of G.I. newspapers during that period.

BARBARA: Yeah, and also legal support to try to get

IRWIN: Right. For draft resisters or conscientious objectors, people who didn't want to obey orders. All that kind of thing began to take to place.

BARBARA: The USFF was made up of basically pacifists. People with long pacifist histories and along those lines.

IRWIN: So a lot of the songs that you hear on this album was recorded at these projects that was setup by the United States Servicemen's Fund. Now this never would've worked if it was simply the idea of people who said look, we want to try and proselytize the GIs. But what really happened is they tapped into something that was there, in some ways latent in form, but it was there nevertheless. And by the time the war was reaching its peaking, this movement was quite widespread and was clearly a source of great concern to the U.S. military. They would identify the most prominent and active leaders of the movement and transfer them to other bases, constantly trying to breakup whatever pockets of collectivity and cooperation that existed.

And there was incredible harassment of people doing this other kind of work. Barbara was talking about some of that before. We found on one trip, we were coming back into the country, and this happened many times, Barbara's name was on that special list that the State Department maintains for double checking the comings and goings of people who were considered unusually dangerous and subversive. So every time we'd come into the country, she'd get pulled aside and there was a whole delaying process. And not that the rest of us were less political, but it was this military thing that Barbara had in particular.

BARBARA: I was even strip searched one time on coming into the country

IRWIN: Right.

BARBARA: Took into a separate room and strip searched.

IRWIN: I was with Barbara once in San Diego. They had set up a little storefront headquarters that was especially designed for the, there were marines in Oceanside and there was a lot of navy people in San Diego. And the shore patrol busted into the store one day, just broke down the door literally and hauled off every serviceman who was in the place on some kind of spurious charges, just to break up this gathering that was being held. Anyway.

BARBARA: I was singing inside

IRWIN: And she's singing

BARBARA: I was singing, "I'm going to prison so I can be free. I'm going to prison for what I believe."

IRWIN: And these scared to death GIs are singing and, you know. Anyway, it was really quite a phenomenal movement, and so far as I know this record, and the other one we have (which was number 1015 which was recorded by a group of active duty Air Force people in Mountain Home, Idaho) represent the only such documentation in sound of the culture of that movement. I mean, later on people, when the veterans came back and threw back their metals, and people began to realize hey, the dissention within the ranks of the military was a very important factor in convincing the United States government that war was unwinnable. But this record was like a reflection of some of the earlier rumblings of that movement, and so it had a lot of significance at the time it came out.

BARBARA: The record did to the extent that, you know, I mean I don't think it sold much beyond the G.I. Movement itself, but it did get around quite a bit in after the war too. So, you know, people would look me up to see if I still had copies of it and things because, I mean, this country, let's face it, is full of ex-GIs. And some of them vaguely heard of the movement and didn't participate, and didn't, you know, are curious now about what it was and so forth, but it's

IRWIN: Through the end of 1979 that album sold eighteen hundred and three copies. It's in that list I mentioned.

JEFF: Okay...

BARBARA: Yeah, a lot of them were just hand carried, you know, to these meetings, and but I was. There's one little other story about the manipulation of facts around the thing that, I was, there was a bunch of GIs at different, you know England has Air Force bases all over that are ostensibly RAF air force bases, but they are actually run by the U.S. So there were all these air force guys who wanted to (and soldiers too but mainly air force) they wanted to protest against the war, but also, again, they were put on alert for the Middle East a couple times during that period, and they were nervous about that and didn't think that was right. So they wanted to do something, but you can't protest while you're in uniform, and they were on foreign soil, you know. You can't, that's the big no no.

So Vanessa Redgrave got involved with them as heard about it, and she organized, decided to organize a cultural festival to allow them to express themselves through the cultural means, which was, that was allowable, okay. So she got a hold of me and invited me over to sing, and when I got there then to promote the thing, she got me onto a BBC show. And I won't tell the whole story of that show, but the one thing stand out about this particular relevant to this is that, well, the BBC has a custom of showing, they invite you to come over an hour or so before and do a lot prep work, you know, for the show. This was a show like Johnny Carson's where, you know, the most popular talk show in the evening. So they have you come over, and they have a little bar set up in the corner and everything. Sit around and read through, they give you all the information to read through, so what's going to be said. I looked at the thing and I saw that certain things were crossed out, and in particular stood out this figure. At the time the *New York Times* regularly had been talking about this G.I. Movement of resistance in the numbers of maybe 50 to 60 thousand people were involved, but we know it was vastly larger than that but that's the figures the *Times* is giving out. And so that's what the script, BBC script, originally had in there. But it was crossed out and above it was written 11 thousand, and so that in there opening remarks about how big this movement was they were going to say 11 thousand. And so I said well why did you change that. And they said well before we go on the air with these things we have to check with the embassy, and the embassy checks with Washington. And they came back and said to us that we had to change it to 11 thousand. So it's just cold facts.

JEFF: Yep.

IRWIN: Okay, let's move on.

JEFF: One thousand four is the Huey Newton record.

BARBARA: Yeah. Oh wait a minute. I wanted to say about the other one, in the booklet, you'll see there's a, some of the songs are recorded when there was a big kind of a teach-

in type of thing. Well it was like a mock trial, a trial of the, I don't know the government, the war makers. Putting them on trial and having a sort of a Nuremburg style trial, but done by the G.I. resisters. And this was done on a rather elaborate scale, and a lot of people were invited in the legal field to come and testify. It was all held out in a big park I remember. And so that present for the thing were some of the regulars who had gone a lot to talk to the GIs, one of them Mark Lane. He's an attorney, used to be a New York State Assemblyman, and was a researcher on the Kennedy assassination for years and years, and is an old friend of ours because of all that, and lives in D.C. And Mark, yeah, Mark was there, and Flo Kennedy, another attorney. Black woman from New York who has done a lot speaking around campuses about women's rights and things subsequently, but she was very sympathetic to the G.I. thing. And a few other folks.

So about a third of that record, it was recorded at a little house party for the participants, so those all very knowledgeable people are sitting in the room, and then they're asking me for to do some of the favorite things they'd heard me do in other locations, and, you know. And then, when I sort of encouraged them to respond musically, you know, so the voices you hear were all these notables who'd been brought there to appear at this sort of Nuremburg trial thing. I think that may be documented in the notes. It must be.

Anyway, we're on to the next one which is, what? *Huey Newton Speaks*. Okay well Mark Lane, again I just told you about our involvement with Mark, and Mark was extremely interested in the Panthers and Huey Newton and the whole development of this very interesting. Well, Irwin can talk about it perhaps. But he was going to, he had spent a lot time trying to get permission to go and actually interview Huey at the prison because no one had been allowed to do this. And so he was able to arrange it through the, Gary the attorney for Huey.

IRWING: Charles Gary

BARBARA: Charles Gary, and I think Charles Gary and Mark went together, and Mark did the interviews. Well they there were fascinating for what they were but for also what they came out of because Huey had been held in solitary for a couple years and hadn't been able to be heard from, you know. And so I thought would make a fascinating record to put out. We were never able to really communicate directly except through the lawyers, you know, but so I don't think we have much in the way of documentation of the arrangement involved. But if you need any future, look into that end of it any further Mark would certainly know exactly what the story was on that. But we sort of put it out on the assertion of Mark and the lawyer that it was okay.

IRWIN: Well, you'll see from the material in the folder, we have here the complete written transcript of the interview that Mark did with Huey Newton, including the parts that were edited out of the record basically for, they were less interesting. And so we couldn't encompass the entire interview, but it's, so you have the entire interview there. Mark told us when he gave it us that Huey Newton had told him to do anything he wanted with it in order to kind of popularize his case. It was on the strength of that that we said okay, let's go ahead and put out the record. Shortly there after, and you'll see I

wrote a couple of letters to Huey Newton sending him a copy of the record and saying, you know, we hope it's okay with you, we were assured by Mark Lane that it was alright. We know that the Black Panther Party got copies of the record because at different times they ordered copies, and we never had any objection from them. So we just operated on the assumption that what Mark had told us was correct. But that's about the extent of what we can say about the authority we had to do it. At this point it's all pretty moot. I mean Huey's dead, you know, I don't know who would have any kind of property rights in this. But I don't think there's any problem in continuing to issue it.

BARBARA: No, and I think especially in light of the fact that was gone and movement has basically busted, you know. That it would be important to have the thing available.

JEFF: Sure.

BARBARA: I think it's a significant

IRWIN: ...history. I mean the Black Panther Party was quite important for, you know, a couple of significant moments back in Sixties...

BARBARA: Yeah, I think one of the most important things about it is the methods the government used to destroy it because it's a, in that lies a lesson for everybody else. And of course the message that was intended was one thing, but the message that you can draw from it is another.

IRWIN: Okay, let's go on.

JEFF: ...one thousand five is a Puerto Rican

BARBARA: Pepe and Flora. Okay Pepe Sanchez and Flora Santiago were in fact the leading political singers of the Puerto Rican independence movement that were operating around New York at the time. And they, young couple that when I'd met them had been very much involved in the squatter movement there because so many Puerto Ricans were having terrible time living at all. You know crowded conditions and rents were very high, and so much of the city was being destroyed by the ravages of the rent control thing, making the landlords desert buildings because they weren't profitable, and then they get burned out, etcetera. The whole deal.

So they were very of the living New York Puerto Rican movement, you know, of its time, and I really thought their performing was exciting and admirable and courageous too. And knowing how marginally they themselves lived and, you know, I mean it was sort of hand to mouth. And because the Puerto Rican community was so poor (it still is), it couldn't really support the artists in a very, you know. I think they alternatively worked at other things in the day time and so on, and struggled to keep their little family afloat. They had kids and it was very difficult, and anyway, obviously they should have a record around and they.

So we decided to do it, and since we were very under funded too we contacted this group Radio Free People and it got the thing recorded in their studio. Well the studio itself was worth talking about because Radio Free People was a voluntary group of folks who just thought doing revolution by radio was their thing. So they had to, they'd gotten the cheapest possible quarters to setup their studio and everything. And the first time I went there I was shocked out of my mind because it was in the worst slums of New York Manhattan. It was down in somewhere off the Bowery, I forget exactly where, in a building that looked from the outside like it was going to be condemned and falling down. And then to get to their studio you had to go through a broken down, you know, full of stale rain water and old garbage and everything down some basement stairs. And then when you got all the way down into the first basement you still had to go down to another basement. So it was basement below a basement, and it was actually, once you got down there, they had done a lot to clean it up and sorta dry it out and make it habitable, but it was really like the lower depths. It was like something unbelievable, like the catacombs. And the studio room where they did their singing, I mean they had managed to make it relatively sound proof. Well that was one of their reasons for liking this way down in the earth locale cause, at least for New York, it was quiet, quieter. But they had insulated it with, I don't know, egg crates and things. And they had an old beat up carpet on the floor and very primitive equipment.

But so that's where Pepe and Flora recorded the bulk of it, and I got the idea it would be good to have them out with their community too on the record. So at the time they'd gotten some kind of grant money from place. There was a thing going around, it was like a mobile stage going around New York stage, and they would do performances in the Puerto Rican community. That was one of the early, you know, every time New York city authorities contemplate a hot summer, a long hot summer is coming, then they think of giving the people circuses, you know, give them some entertainment and the streets, and maybe they won't blow up the city.

So this was, that's what it was. It was that kind of attempt to accommodate neighborhoods, and so Pepe and Flora were doing that, and we sent our friendly roving microphone, which is the same guy which went with me to the South Peter (whatever his name is). Went out in the streets and recorded them in the community, and he, that part of the record is my, those parts are some of my favorite parts of the record 'cause there's so much excitement going on, and you know, people singing along and clapping along and just generally demonstrating what kind of response Pepe and Flora got wherever they went.

And it put in there some of the most important historic songs of the independence movement, and plus new things and new versions of old songs. And they always did this sort of sing along things. They always invented new stuff as they went. And there's one controversial, they call it controversy type of *decima*, where's there's a, one side makes up something and the other side makes an answer, and it's sort of one of these, well my woman is this kind of thing and then Flora is saying no I'm not, I'm this kind of thing. And it's a really nice song too, so that's one of my real favorite records.

I have to say I think Pepe particularly because, well I think he was a little bit offended by the conditions he had to record in, and he had visions of well, we're going to do a record for a label. We ought to go in, you know, we're going to go into a recording studio. And he may have felt that the, I think he expressed that he didn't exactly appreciate it. He thought that was kind of, wasn't going to be good enough fidelity and all that, but the fidelity is actually quite good surprisingly considering the conditions. So people have built up illusions, and I think he's one of the ones who thought that the record was a, you know, some kind of an institution with a lot of money behind it and an upstairs office and a board of directors and a lot of fancy equipment. And we disabused him of that in a hurry. And Flora, on the other hand, has, they separated after a while, and Flora, the last I know, you know, went back to Puerto Rico and very involved in the singing and the Grupo Tayone it's called down there.

Tape 4, Side B

BARBARA: Flora went back to Puerto Rico and joined up with Grupo Tayone, which Andre Simenez was also in that group, and it was the most significant political song group going around Puerto Rico for years in end of the Sixties and beginning of the Seventies and she's one of the few women too who is successful at continuing to do this kind of work. You know it's not easy for women. So I put in word for Flora's persistence and her personal sense of dignity in doing it and everything else. As a young beautiful woman, very powerful singer, I'm sure she was harassed and hassled and put down and what have you, but she did it anyway, she did very well. One other thing I wanted to mention about it, what was it? Well I guess

IRWIN: One of the unusual things in Paredon, I think will strike people as unusual, is the number of the records dealing with the Puerto Rican independence movement that we put out. Out of a total of fifty records five deal one way or another with the Puerto Rican independence movement, and it's more than from any other country in the world except for Cuba which also had five in our label. And it's a little strange because, you know, to be perfectly frank the independence movement in it's most focused political sense doesn't really command that big a following in Puerto Rico numberswise.

BARBARA: ...or something...

IRWIN: At least when it comes to you know when people vote that they want independence or don't they want independence. But it's kind of deceptive. First of all one of the reasons to doing all of this was there was a very sizable Puerto Rican community in the United States. Some estimates are that forty percent of the population of Puerto Rico has been transplanted to the U.S. mainland and a very large number of them of course are in New York City. I think there's about a million Puerto Ricans maybe more by now living in New York city. And what's very striking I've been to Puerto Rico several times and invited by especially by the Puerto Rican socialist party, which together with the Puerto Rican Independence Party were the two leading advocates of independence in Puerto Rico.

And what's deceptive is the fact that these organizations had a political influence that was far larger than the vote they received in the elections because I think there is substantial independence sentiment in Puerto Rico but it's neutralized by a wide spread sentiment that independence is not practical. So it's a strongly nationalist island in the sense that people really fight very hard to maintain their culture, their dignity, they're very much I mean even those who advocate statehood for Puerto Rico are not, and nobody's interested in making English the language in Puerto Rico. It's definitely a Latin American country. And in my opinion definitely a colony, but what happens very often in situations like that is that the economy is locked into that of the mother country. People, so many people, maybe half the population in one way or another is dependent on U.S. federal government handouts, food stamps, welfare checks, etcetera. Plus Puerto Ricans are exempt from the income tax that people can't imagine that they would survive if they went independent.

But in terms of fighting around particular political issues and political questions the influence of these independence organizations is much larger. So you can go to mass rallies of 20, 30, 40 thousand people in San Juan or elsewhere. I traveled around the island and you could see the kinds of buildings the Puerto Rican Socialist Party had, the services they performed in each community. You could see they had a tremendous amount of influence. That was also true in New York City where Independentistas (DSP) and others they were active in fights around housing and low rents and welfare in the community and supported by people who did not particularly care about Puerto Rican independence or had similar attitude. Yeah it would be nice but it's not practical. But they could be mobilized by the independence forces around these other political questions, would come to their meetings, would support them and so on.

So there was a social base for this culture that appears on these records that goes far beyond the formal expressions of support for Puerto Rican independence. And anyway so that's important to keep in mind. We also had an outlet because we had arrangements with the record label that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party started in Puerto Rico called Disco Libre which helped us obtain some of the material but also acted as a distributor for these records and other records in Puerto Rico. So there was a, you know, from a market point of view it made a lot of sense of us to maintain it. Now how that will work in the future, I don't know what institutions presently exist in Puerto Rico to buy this, but I think that there still is some kind of specialized market that could be reached out to in the Puerto Rican communities here and also in Puerto Rico. We also have a signed contract with Pepe Sanchez authorizing this record and also an arrangement on this other record we have on Albizu Campos which is the speech we'll get to that later on I guess.

Now I have to leave.

JEFF: I'll make a couple notes.

IRWIN: So go as far as you can and at some point we'll just backtrack a little bit.

JEFF: Yeah

IRWIN: I'll start making additional...

JEFF: I'll make a note that that's where we ended with you. And we'll go back to see if there's anything you think of, any of the other titles.

IRWIN: So there might be a little overlap but what the hell.

JEFF: Yeah...better more than not.

IRWIN: Exactly.

BARBARA: Yeah. So I think that about covers that one. There was something else back of my mind. The Irish one, yeah one thousand six, since the situation in Ireland was really heating up at the point, you know in 1970 it was turning point there, I think it was like they call it bloody Sunday happened, so a big demonstration. The whole movement really came alive again and became a national, of international concern and all that. And we, I'd been in England, talked to Ewan and Peggy about doing, do you know any Irish singers we could put out a record from. And they, Ewan had this contact with a group of people. He says don't worry I'll get you some people. That's all, he didn't tell us any names or anything. So then we heard from them, and they always used pseudonyms and wrote to us. There's a lot of correspondence there you can see, you know, wrote and said they had the stuff and sure they wanted to put a record out and so on.

And so eventually they send us, that's there I began to realize that, you know, if you got singers who are, you know, really prepared to put out a record that you could also ask them to work on the booklet material, get some of the. So they sent me artwork and they sent me you know all songs typed out. And usually I had to sit down and transcribe them myself. Like in the case of Pepe and Flora I had to sit down and transcribe all the songs and translate them and a lot just grueling work, but in their case they sent me a lot of information, a lot of background material on the songs and on their movement and newspaper clippings and all kinds of stuff. And so I think it's a damn good album. It's really the only thing that was available around here, I mean in the States of the contemporary Irish political song. I know a lot of stuff came out in Ireland but not too much that ever circulated over here. And so that, I might as well talk about their other one too, because later on, a few years later, we decided that, you know, it was time to get another record from them. That situation must have developed by then.

JEFF: That's number?

BARBARA: Can't remember numbers. Yeah. I think it may be on the file folder.

JEFF: Anyway keep talking and I'll

BARBARA: Yeah. Okay so on the second one, the second one is actually kind of interesting because but, when we made the first one I didn't know, the first one is actually

more, you know, specific incidents. The songs are very topical and local and I didn't know much about the Irish movement enough to tell you know sort of the Provos from the what they call the other branch, you know, the one there Provos, as you probably know, are the ones that are sort of more arms struggle or incident, armed incident oriented and considered by the other branch to be the crazies and the so forth. But I didn't understand the differences, and we didn't, I didn't realize how serious a problem it would create in selling the record in the States to Irish groups. You know, that the politics, I mean the politics were very very essential to that. People are not going to support it if it's got any flavor of being from the wing that they don't support, you know. And so there were some difficulties. We didn't have so much success selling the first one although I think the first one in some ways is a better record, a more important record in a historical sense and so on. So when the second batch of material came along

JEFF: 1039.

BARBARA: 1039? *Ireland the Final Struggle*, is that the name of the, that one? And when that material came, by that time I'd been chastised and knew, I mean I gotten the feedback to know

JEFF:luck with the...

IRWIN: It was my car.

BARBARA: When the second batch of material arrived I decided I would go and talk to the people that I feel the most close affinity with, which was in this case the people from the, well it's, what do they call themselves? The Irish Republican, there's correspondence in there with their letter head, and I think it's called the Irish Republican something. Well in any case their base back at home was Sinn Féin The Worker's Party. So the politics there were much more like, you know, mine I guess. Where that the, in a nut shell, that situation there was not due to some historic differences between Protestants and Catholics. Because those kind of differences had been fomented and exaggerated and advertised by the English, and that in fact the problem was for the Irish working class to unite, Protestant and Catholic, in order to get the British out so that Ireland could be for the Irish, and so that I guess is a fair representation.

So I decided that well, I went to them, and they listened to the record the tapes, and they said oh well wait a minute this is clearly actually from a Provo minded group of singers and so we wouldn't sort of be able to do anything with it as. But so I said well what can we do. They were actually the reason I appreciated them they were very nonsectarian. They really wanted to further the movement of Irish nationalism. So they said well let's see, what could we do. Well then they pointed out here a couple songs, there were a couple songs there that I actually edited out because they the songs were glorifying these armed incidents type of, you know, one was a kidnapping and one was a - those I might have probably, do have somewhere in those types are the ones that were culled out of 'cause I never throw anything away, it's gotta be in there. It's either one or two I'm not sure, but there were, anyway the idea was get rid the songs that were actually promoting,

you know, stuff like bombing a store or something like or you know kidnappings and hostage situations or any that kind of stuff.

So we set those songs aside, okay, 'cause I figured it won't violate their sense of what their thing is if just take out a couple things it's not gonna as if, we can't change, we wouldn't change what they've said but we just down played the aspect. And then I said well okay what else can we do. Well we'll find a photograph for the cover that is Irish working class people and specifically plenty of protestants. So I said we found, we went through a lot photos and looking at them and finally the one that is on cover, I love the photo just the design of the photo the way the men are coming out of the factory, and women too, workers are coming out of the plant and how they look. He says well those are mostly Protestants. I said how do you know? He says oh I can just tell by the way they look. I gather by the way they were dressed by their general air or maybe there's a something subtle in their general physiognomy that not to, to the non-Irish it's not apparent. But he said no they're mostly Protestant. So I said well good that sounds like a good cover, you know. So we used that.

Then I said well I'd like get like a overall statement of sort of the aims of the, you know, both wings of the Irish revolutionary movement would espouse. He dug up an interview by Catha Goulding. He was the or I guess still the spokesperson for the for Sinn Féin The Worker's Party but a good. Anyway so we put that speech in the booklet and in those ways we kind of balanced the scales, you know, so the record came out as a record that both sides of that debate could support, could grasp, could deal with. Yeah. In the course, very interesting, in the course of dealing with all these questions I got to meet pretty fascinated actually historic figures in that movement. They were around New York. There was one woman, I don't know if she's still alive, she was pretty elderly at the time, but she was some kind of atomic scientist at the same time as being an Irish revolutionary. Something like that, some very you know very scientific pursuits for a woman, her age and all that, I thought that was pretty special. There's a letter in there somewhere. Myra what's her last name? Well you'll find it. Okay.

JEFF: Next one's the China record set

BARBARA: Alright now so at that time Irwin and I and lots of others like us were curious at minimum and some enthusiastic, not me, about this kind of politics coming out of china or what we thought were represented by China, and lot of people were pulled toward that when they were disillusioned by certain aspects with what was going on in the Soviet Union. So they're looking for where is the locus of revolutionary thought and so on. So and then at the time there were a lot of small groups on the west coast and in the east too of Chinese political activists who were American born Chinese a lot of them or some of them were immigrants, most of them were American born, a mixture I guess, a mixture. I shouldn't say mostly anything. And so we thought it would be interesting and important to get something out, you know, from China.

In fact Irwin and I were in China early on because Irwin was working at *The Guardian* and *The Guardian* the first group to be offered sort of a franchise to make tours of

Americans going into China. You know after all the long time they weren't inviting any foreigners in so pretty early we went to China on such a trip and got more enthusiastic from that trip and so on and I don't know if this came out before or after the trip. But any case we couldn't exactly find already on records something broad enough or at least I wanted something that would you know be epic and monumental and tell the whole story and so on. So it came to us word of a film called The East Is Red which was made in China, which the sound track of which was the all the songs the main important songs came out of the whole Chinese revolution. They strung together all the things created by the folks themselves, and you know the Chinese philosophy about, you know, art or any of this stuff comes from the masses it doesn't come from individuals composers and all that. So they were very big on digging up the what we would call the folk, you know, product of telling the whole story of the revolution, the different stages of it and different aspects of it. So they took all that and strung it together in what they called a folk opera and made a film accompanying it. So I thought okay maybe a sound track of that would be the perfect thing. So that in fact is what we got there. This is a transfer of the sound track of the film and is and then the

JEFF: In this case the sound track this is all the sounds of the entire film?

BARBARA: Well I don't know. I don't think so.

JEFF: It's pretty long.

BARBARA: It's long but it's the whole Chinese revolution you know. This is it. It's all encapsulated in three records. It is long and it's but it's quite exciting. I mean sit down and listen to it for a whole evening or whatever it takes to hear three records. You get it feels as if you've gone back in time and gone and far, far away in place and transported yourself into a whole other way of looking at the world. So the translations of all of them that's a Pardon policy, right. We don't put the sound out, just the sound, we have to give you the content of it too. So we got help in translating all the songs from the, there was a political group called Ewarku, and I think Righteous Harmonious Fist it meant, you know, who did translated the songs with, I guess they it was, New York has a big Chinatown. They just used whatever resources they had and translated all the songs and annotated them. So it's all there. That's about the size of that.

JEFF: The next two are Vietnamese Records.

BARBARA: Yeah.

JEFF: Eight and Nine

BARBARA: Well I guess I told you but I don't know if it was on tape about going to the - what on earth are they doing out there?

JEFF: Earthquake repair?

BARBARA: Yeah. Well so going to the New York public library which deals with music and Lincoln Center and asking them to bring out everything they had from the stacks on Vietnamese music, and then the librarian sheepishly coming out after a couple hours and saying well we don't have anything and that sort of clinching my dedication to the idea of starting a record label and so I started from that point collecting materials. And I got, yes Moe has a couple things in there now but they're. The main thing he has in the Folkways Catalogue is an error again, a political error, because he, it's music that I'd I took those records to the Vietnamese who were in the mission to the UN and asked them to listen to them and give me their opinion. And they said well no this guy is a singer who is identified with Saigon government and he's a, the problem with his songs, you know he's singing against the misery and things that are going on and everything but the problem is from their point of view they said was that all the songs were negative and sad and sort of defeatist and just complaining songs.

And I said well that's hardly the kind of thing that I want to put out because from my point of view they were going to win and they did, and that their struggle was a just one and there was joy in it because that even though there was plenty death and destruction, but, you know, to resist something that's wrong is a joyful thing to do. They then people from the mission to UN helped me with records and I began to comb other resources and I found a Le Chant du Monde in France had put out a couple things, and I just kept putting the word out. And then my trips to Cuba helped a lot because every time I went there I went to visit both the north and the provisionally revolutionary government's embassy they had in Cuba and they would give me material and any help I wanted with translations or this kind of thing.

And then I got help from the, you know one of the crazy things I mean our government spends money on things you know the average citizen never dreams of, but we were spending money on in Saigon looking, you know, for the cream of the crop trying to do a brain drain number. You know pick out the brains and the ones who seem to be going along with the game with Saigon Government and give them scholarships and send them over to States to be educated so they would be, you know, the future if we had been successful in our enterprise other there we would be able to send over all these educated, in our way, young Vietnamese who could then become, you know the educators of the future. Bring the American way of life to Saigon, right. So I think about two thirds of those people actually were, you know, joined the patriot's groups and stuff here, and patriot's groups were spoke out against the war in the different anti-war demonstrations. Every big demonstration against the war during the Sixties and the Seventies there was a spokes person from the Vietnamese patriots. I mean they were always, or from the, yeah from the patriot's groups. They came out and speak against the war from the Vietnamese stand point. And then of course people were always arranging meetings with the vets who were coming back or with the G.I. resisters and all that with the Vietnamese. It was quite poignant I mean real relations were developed.

JEFF: You were talking about the one thousand eight, one thousand nine.

BARBARA: Yeah. So anyway between all these different sources I was managed to piece together a very exciting panorama of the kind songs that were coming out of the situation, first out of the situation that produced the war and then the war itself. But the thing is the Vietnamese view of the war is that essentially, you know, for hundreds of years they've been in a situation where other people have been trying to come and take over there. You know the Japanese, the French, and before that the Chinese, and their whole national history is full of invasions and attempts to take over, and so there whole, you know, hundreds and hundreds of years just to limit it to song, their song backs up the whole, it represents, it tells a story of that whole millennium of stuff. So even in fact there is something on one of the records flute solos. And the flute solos and the flute is imitating the bird song of birds that have become extinct because of this warfare. You know so it's that profound. It's very it's really in the guts of these people to try and make live what others have tried to kill.

And so the songs are really run the gamut of you know situations and emotions and everything of course it's mostly all saying well one day we're gonna be free from all this and we're going to build a beautiful future and that was kind of Ho Chi Minh's main thrust was that he talked about spring, always talked about spring, spring's going to come. All this winter will be past and we'll have a beautiful spring. So anyway this is it, this is the best stuff I could get together and put it some kind of sequence that would make sense, and translate it, and annotate it and there it is for your listener to, this stuff is especially of interest to people who went through the war experience in Vietnam, you know, from the American side. I mean Americans who spent time there, even those who weren't against the war at the time would've just soaked up a little Vietnamese culture through being there, you know, are interested in twenty years after the fact looking at the stuff and finding out what were the Vietnamese thinking of, what was their outlook. The sensitive people, you know. So if I were putting the record out to make it available to anybody I would pitch it toward those folks because I think there's a real, I mean after all we're living in a country where twice as many people committed suicide over the war as were killed in the war over the lack of understanding of what happened to them. And this kind of thing could help to heal some of the wounds. See what I'm talking about? It might save somebody's life. People sit down and understand, you know, or be able to identify themselves with the other side, quote unquote, of that whole enterprise. So I happened to think they're really important records, you know. Okay well.

JEFF: the next one is *Cuba Va*.

BARBARA: Well *Cuba Va*. Well *Cuba Va* means Cuba's going right on. Cuba continues. Right on Cuba or however, it's hard to translate. It's a very, you know, idiomatic phrase, but anyway and it was made. That was the first record of the *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora*, the Experimental Sound Collective. I had the extreme great fortune and pleasure of having a son who basically grew up in that group and he, that's Pablo up there on the right hand side, and

JEFF: on the right?

BARBARA: On the very far end, on the right, and odd historical notice he's holding a trombone. That's Jack Teagarden's trombone that Jack Teagarden gave me when I was on tour with him about ten years before and

JEFF: Let me steer us back to the Vietnamese record real quick for one quick one last question. I found some photographs in there too. What the source of those?

BARBARA: Well a lot of them came from basically places like the, what's it called, **Prince Latino** you know was the Cuban, they were always sending reporters and photographers to Vietnam and documenting things. And some came from the Vietnamese news services or the Vietnamese, you know, the people at the embassy, the mission to the UN or whatever. Most of them will say on the back what they're from. Does it tell you?

JEFF: I actually put...away.

G: Oh okay. Yeah okay.

JEFF: The Cuba thing reminded me of that. Okay.

BARBARA: With those kind of sources, remember I always had access to the Guardian picture file and unfortunately a lot of the stuff I promised to return are still in my files. That's probably moot by now, but I tried to put on the back all the pictures what the sources were as often I had the minute to do it. But *Cuba Va*. Okay well that group was a hand picked group, all the stories in the booklet I guess, but hand picked group put together strictly with the intention that okay it's time for Cuba to have a whole new kind of culture and music and everything of its own. A post-revolutionary culture and the revolution wants to do something about sponsoring that and making it possible. So which, after you know the pre-revolutionary culture in Cuba was very much dominated by North American or U.S. culture. The T.V., the radio, and the record industry, and the night clubs, and the whole gangster lifestyle, and the corruption and all this stuff they fought a revolution against the culture was very tied up with because it was all that kind of, it was like a Las Vegas culture, you know, in the worst sense.

So there was this great understanding and effort made after the revolution to overcome that by encouraging the local Cuban culture. And two institutions were set up that were quite important in that work and one was the Casa de Las Americas I guess I talked about that in connection with the, well, some discussion yesterday. And the other was the Cuban Cinematic Institute which is known as ICAIC there, ICAIC. And those are both post-revolutionary cultural institutions that, so this hand-picked group of musicians actually was put together from an impulse coming out of both of those places. It came under the wing of ICAIC because they figured well they can if nothing else these kids can make sound track music and so forth, and so, you know, we'll provide a home for them. Actually they had a building with some space in it and so on, and I guess that was another good reason.

The person who was sort of the godfather of the whole group is a man name Leo Brower. He's a, well I think his hand is not functioning well anymore, but he was world class concertising guitarist, you know, a classical guitarist and composer. He composed, if you talk to a classical guitarist even in the U.S. they will know some of his composition as the, you know, the primary contemporary guitar compositions, and on the other hand an electronic composer of world note. I happened to be there one occasion in the studio watching him mix something when a couple of famous European electronic composers came looking for him, and they were all a dither because they were going to meet the great Leo Brower. And all the time the guy's only in his mid thirties, you know. So he, then the people he put together for the group were basically early, my son was in his late teens, some were in their early twenties, some were maybe as high as early thirties, but in age, so Leo wasn't much older than the rest of them.

And I was in Cuba a couple years ago when an event was held to sort of celebrate the, or that they were going to celebrate the founding of the group but this was actually a few months before hand it was Leo's birthday or something or other. It was in honor of Leo by the people closest to him in his work and so they had some of these folks were reunited for that occasion. It was wonderful because they were reminiscing from stage and playing and talking. It was small event in a theater just of Leo's friends and co-workers, a very moving night. Anyhow it was the seminal group out of which came, you know, Silvio Rodríguez, who is probably the most important of the singers and composers of the Latin American New Song Movement who today can sing in Argentina and fifty thousand people will come. You know governments bring him to sing. He doesn't just necessarily go on little concert tours. He's a, anyway, his first recordings on the Cancion Protesta album that we put out and his next recording that got outside of Cuba was on this record, the *Cuba Va* record. And then toward the end of our whole history we're going to come to a solo album of his which was put out just by agreement directly with him, and recently he has finally gotten onto a record label that will distribute him here, and that's a label, what's his name Peter Gabriel maybe, somebody like that.

JEFF: Oh yeah is it like Virgin?

BARBARA: One of those labels. Yeah. So it finally you can go into a record store if it's a good one and find a Silvio Rodríguez CD or tape there and when came out I have a clipping that my son sent me just two or three months ago there in my pile of junk, I mean my pile of treasures on my desk, which in which Silvio gave an interview. It was in relation to reviewing this new record. And they're saying well isn't it great you finally have a record out that can bought in the United States. He says well it isn't the first, and then he mentioned, he specific thanks to me, Barbara, for making what he calls a heroic effort to get the stuff out over here. Anyway so he took note of that and he knew that it didn't have any big commercial reach but at least his voice was here. And he I'll tell you more about him when we get to his record.

So Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés I guess not even you can't say second to Silvio. I don't like ranking anyway but I mean Pablo Milanés is equally important singer. He hasn't written compositions to the extent of Silvio. Silvio was like very prolific poet you

know. Pablo Milanés has written wonderful songs though and has also in recent times helped to resurrect some of the old *Nuevo Trovo* music, the old troubadour beautiful songs of that, and well anyways a very important singer. He came out of that group and others. Servio Vitie is a very important composer. I'm just looking at the picture of all them as kids. Some people who have become important jazz musicians there.

In any case the group, the importance of the group, is it's the first time that because of this peculiar set up where they were they were put in situation at the film institute where they could, that was their home, that was their school. All of them were fresh out of the National School of Art or some place where they'd gotten musical training and basically high school education and probably some of them, you know, went to college on the side, but their main life was going to down to the ICAIC studios and studying everyday. Everyday, everyday. And everyday they had actual physical playing together sessions and they had the chance to rehearse new material that the different song writers would bring in or make arrangements or do collective, most of the work was collectively arranged in those days. And they had also sessions where they held discussions and the experts, all kinds of experts, were brought in. Whatever, really whatever Cuba could provide of people who could come and give a talk and discussion and interchange with these young people to help them the history of Cuban music and then the theories of music in general creating music.

And they invented their own theories about what they, I mean they are very much in the Guevarist era. They were all very committed to the idea that well, Che had a saying about something about striving for excellence is respect to the people, okay. So they really tried to make themselves the best musician possible, the best songwriter, the best whatever. Really perfect their skills. They also felt that well there this wonderful song that I think it was, which one of them wrote it? See at that point when they're working so collectively it's very, it's hard for me to sort out which one did which, but there was one a song called "Pobre Cantor," poor the singer who is really is pretty poor who doesn't have anything to sing for, you know, any ideals to make his songs about. And so they all of this was what they did everyday so they basically developed each other in a collective way.

Leo's input was just to be the guiding hand and make sure they got all this input, but like the, I mean the Cuban revolution for one thing is famous for the youth of the people who succeeded in making the revolution and then had to run the country, you know. So I guess Fidel and those people were in their early thirties when they had to start running the country, you know. So there was great respect for youth and the energy and creativity youth and these people came up at the moment when that most, you know, most apparent so this sponsorship and kind of respect. I mean this something very, very hard to come by. This accounts for really why my son decided he wanted to stay there because nothing like that, nothing comparable existed in his own country. Respect for musicians, you know, State support for musicians. They all had a stipend that they could live on. They didn't have to go out and scuffle and sort of sell themselves. They could concentrate on the main thing.

So that's in fact they pretty live still that way. The ones I mean they still they have small stipends and they, if Silvio makes a lot of money on his records selling in Spain or Latin America or somewhere he donates a hell of a lot of it back to the State and keeps a certain amount to maybe get equipment for his own work and he lives very simply is no relation nothing comparable the sort of rock star mentality that, they're not interested in that. Course now it's a little hard to get groceries but, you know, but I'm just saying that's the way it's handled. And if Silvio has a car, that's because the state gives him the car because he's basically done all this sort of extra special service to the Cuban people by going out and being a representative and so on. So clearly he needs a car in his work so they gave him a car. But he doesn't go out and buy himself a Mercedes and import it to Cuba. It's a whole different thing. He has a Fiat that they gave him, you know, something like that.

Anyway that's the background for that group, and this is their very first record and it was not obtainable, I mean nothing, my son a seventeen year old kid, saw the necessity for getting that record out because they were producing so much material and they were recording it like this. They didn't have access to a real studio because to this day only one or two now real recording studios in Cuba because of the blockade. There's one twenty four track studio in Havana and another one in the other end of the island and some other sort of 8 track or whatever is at some radio station something. And the way they had the equipment that they had at their disposal was a they had two big old ampexes, stereo ampexes, and when they wanted to do multi-track things they just had to bounce it back and forth. So they'd record over here and you know play it back and record this other thing over it onto the other thing. So all of this is recorded that way but the fidelity is surprisingly decent. I mean the young engineers were raised, those are the engineers - the guy in the middle sitting down. Yeah those are the engineers on the right hand side. And so they all came up together and the engineers were committed to excellence. They did the best they could with the material they had. But you know they had such a scarcity, and they still do, of just tape stock that you weren't allowed to cut tape. You couldn't have a razor blade in the studio. You know, 'cause you couldn't have tape laying all over the floor when they didn't, had to know where the next tape was coming from. So they always had to be very very careful and things often would get erased by the next need that should've been preserved in any logical, I mean if they had plenty of tape access. It's really a tragedy, you know, that they had to keep reusing over the same stock.

JEFF: Unfortunately a lot of major record labels in this country did this out of laziness, a lot old tremendous material.

BARBARA: God. Yeah. So anyway Pablo was coming up here, you know regularly doing this work with me in the G.I. Movement and all that and he knew I had started the Pardon, and so he started to think about how to gather enough material to make a record. And he showed up one day with all of the requirements, and the group decided this was a great idea and so he produced it at seventeen. And then he went back and made sure that all the rest of the stuff they did was kind of held together in the same way, and he was responsible then for a series of things that were put out only in Cuba but not in the rest of

the world, so and in limited quantities. So this in fact was the only reliable place to get a record of this group, and yet the group, the interesting and important about the group musically in the world, was that this was the first time people had taken all these skills and applied them to. Well you've got all the all, I hesitate to say the folk elements because in Cuba it's always been so sophisticated, the musically development had been so high, for so long that even when you go back a couple hundred years it's, you know, what they call folk music or Trovo music or something is very high order of composition. It's folk only in that it was so wide spread and so general in such general use, you know.

But anyway they had all the national base of Cuban music to work with, all of the commitment and passion about their ideas. And then we have this new element of new technology coming in. So there was a big struggle in the group and in the country about how much of the new technology and new kinds of music that were floating around the world should be incorporated, and for a time actually when the Beatles were something new I think that kind of music was banned in Cuba because there were certain purists of the old timers, you know, who thought that all that stuff was foreign music, and we should just have Cuban music, and we should get away from all this cultural imperialism and infiltration of stuff.

So on the other hand there was the other stream like Leo and himself who felt that just for example what the Beatles were doing was very musically important and it should be heard and if nothing else heard, but certainly available as cultural raw material. So the battle was obviously won by the progressive elements and it wasn't long before all that stuff was heard again on the radio there, but and frankly the first time I ever heard Michael Jackson was in Cuba you know.

Tape 5, Side A

JEFF: I'm interviewing Barbara Dane the tenth of December 1991 in Oakland California. We're discussing Paredon records.

BARBARA: Yes indeed. And currently discussing *Cuba Va* record and I was about to say that the one of the aspects of the theory that they created among themselves was that okay now we've made this revolution to not to suppress anything but to make everything in the world available to us, to open up the world to us, and therefore any techniques, any other musics from any other world, whatever we select from our volition, you know, with our own sovereignty over the situation can't be classified as cultural imperialism, you know. We have as much right as anyone else in the world to select from all the world has to offer the musical the tools that we'll chose to work with. So then when here comes my son Pablo with his electric guitar, which was completely not in the *trova* tradition or in the Cuban past tradition, it was considered at first shocking to hear electric guitar in protest music or in Cuban music or in any of the kind of music they could be called playing. So he actually was in the first to introduce that electric guitar sound into the Latin America new song shall we say. So when you hear now sort of the ones who came along and you hear that sort of some would say oh there's rock influence or something, you know, well yes and no. And if yes I think in a positive way of, I don't think it's any

problem. I mean we're saying earlier off the record that you know the really, anyone who talks about cross over is a of limited knowledge of music because any music that exists is cross over, if you will, or synthesis of all the music that's gone before.

So what they did was being young kids and interested in everything, you know, the material they had to listen to was limited. They couldn't just go in every record store and buy any old thing they wanted. But they did have, you can hear loud and clear anything comes out of Miami radio in Cuba. So they listen to all the pop material that was coming over the choice of the DJs in Miami, to that extent they had, you know, that available. But then some of them had external contacts, like my son had me and I was constantly we had an old Wallen Sack tape recorder that had the capacity that you could separate the tracks out. So I could put on a reel to reel whatever, they were seven inch tape I'd, I could put, you know, four tracks worth of music, go four ways saving time and money. And then we'd buy film cans to put into a metal can to keep it from, protected from all the tropical heat and mold all that kind of things that develop there. But boy those tapes got worn to a frazzle what I sent down there because that was one of the main sources for them to, you know, of outside input. I'm sending everything that I could imagine that was relevant to their investigations, you know, and just taping, taping, taping and borrowing stuff and buying stuff whatever, and sending them as much as - he'd go back with an armload of these tapes with all recorded in four directions.

And but any how they had their resources. Leo for example wrote he has some of his some kind classical guitar composition based on Beatles themes, stuff like that from that era. They all, so anyhow they were, their sound was what people heard in Latin American when they heard Cuban political song. At a certain period it was that. So this record represents, in a real sense was a seminal record in terms of the Latin American new song movement. Okay.

JEFF: Number ten eleven.

BARBARA: Ten Eleven. *Daniel Villetti, A Desal Ambrar*. A Desal Ambrar really means "let's cut the wires," but "tear down the fences" was comes out of one of the songs in there about the need for land the peasantry was struggling about. Can you hear all this? Yeah, you can hear. Eating dates.

JEFF: Pretty historical importance.

BARBARA: I know. It's dates folks. Okay Daniel Villetti is in my estimation one of our times really great artists. He's a very excellent singer and songwriter and guitarist. Real musically the record is very, very beautiful. And poetically he chooses the best poets to express, and he chooses Cesar Vayajo and people that stature, best poets of Latin America of contemporary times This record was recorded by him, I believe, in I believe in Cuba on one of his visits. He's a person who has been very politically involved and he was at the *Cancion Protesta Encuentro*, that's how I first met him. Did some little programs together and subsequently he went back to his country. And that was when there was a, you've heard of the *Tupamaros*, the people who were serious urban

revolutionaries, you know, in that country. And he at some point was accused of being sympathetic to them or doing some music sympathy, I don't know what. Anyway he was thrown in jail. When I heard that he was jail I thought okay SOS I've got to get out a record of his right now so someone in United States might possibly know who he was or some kind of campaign to get him out of jail could be waged or whatever. So I went right to work on trying to figure out how to do that.

Well right around that time I was in Europe to sing at a festival, and I passed through France and I stopped off to see people at La Chant Du Monde and asked them if they in fact had anything of his. And they did have this record that was recorded in Cuba. You know the Cubans if, especially for Latin American revolutionaries, if someone was unable to record in their own country could get to Cuba they would make a studio available and studio time even given terrible press of circumstances there of Cuban musicians with no place to record. But they felt this was a priority to make sure that they people got a way to record. So he had made this there and taken it with him to France at some point and it was put out on La Chant du Monde. So we arranged with them to exchange something from our catalogue that we had recorded for that tape and to put his record.

So I rushed back home and got it out, and later when he finally got, he wasn't actually in jail, that look it turns out, and he eventually got to go back to touring and so on, and I think has been based in Europe for a while. I've seen him on a couple other occasions when we performed on the same festivals or something in Europe. And he expressed some, at first, the first time he came to the States I guess somebody so, oh, Daniel was singing at this place. It was some, maybe it was one of those Hudson river things some place and he really wants to see you 'cause he's really upset because his record was put out without permission and so on, you know. I said well, upset, because you know we're trying to get something out that might even save his life or something, you know, and we well, anyway finally I did see him. I discussed it and I think he understood that our arrangement was with La Chant du Monde and therefore completely on the up and up. And anyway, but he was just, you know, in that paranoid state that a person who had been put in jail and mistreated and all that would probably be in anyway of everybody's out to get me. But since then we've been on other, as I say appeared on other festivals and I've not gotten the sense that he's still upset or anything, he's fine. He's a great artist and his work deserves to be much more broadly known, and that's about all I can tell you really about this record.

JEFF: Okay the next one's Mexico, Judith, France.

BARBARA: Mexico. Judith. Okay I went to sing in Florence at the festival of Lunitas. *Lunitas* is the national newspaper of what used to be called the *Communist Paper*. It's like *Lumonites* and it's *Lunita*, in Spain I mean Italy. That was arranged by other people contacts from the *Cancion Protesta*. See my life was very influenced by years after that by those meetings. And so that was an invitation arranged through that the, while I was there I heard this woman singing and realized by the different, I mean there are certain subtleties back stage and, you know, in programming and general treatment and so on. I

realized that because I mean you know have no idea what a difference what this whole political assertion on the part of Latin Americans in the last twenty thirty years has, you know, before that Latin American music, Latin American literature, Latin American anything was considered totally third rate. Nothing, nobody was interested in it, nobody would buy it, nobody cared. It was really, you know, downgraded, degraded and low rated. And I could see that there was a certain kind of hangover of that even though this woman had been invited to sing at this political song festival. She wasn't seen as anything like as important as whatever, Mikis Theodorakis from Greece who was a great composer from Europe, you know, or whatever. But here's this humble Mexican woman who was there, a great singer and invited but still being treating in a second class way and it's kind of, you know, scheduled at odd hours and whatever. So I kind of took note of that and got to know her a little bit and really made a point of hearing her sing. And I thought this is dynamite stuff. So I, when I was talking to La Chant du Monde it turned out they had just recorded her and just put out a record of her stuff. And they liked her a whole lot. So I said well let's make a trade about that too the same time I did Daniel's thing.

So when I got back I tried to get in touch with Judith to let her know I was putting out her record. No way to do it so we had to go ahead and put it out. Then some years went by and I finally did, I went to Mexico to sing, I think in '83, and she came to the festival to look for me. And we went out and had lunch and spent an afternoon together and all that. She was telling me about her life and it's just incredible. I mean she lives in a Mexico, has whatever 15 million or 20 million people living there now. So there are slums of all sorts. Anyway she was in a particularly, a place that I didn't get to go there. She was saying if I had an extra day she would, you know, come out to her house but I didn't have the time to do, and I was going on to Nicaragua from there with some other people. So I didn't get to go there, but she said, you know, I live on a street with no name and I've tried to name it Che Guevara street but they keep tearing down the signs whenever I put up a sign. And so then she says there's no way to mail me anything because I don't have any post office, and I don't have anywhere how to get mail. And so she had made some arrangement she said well, oh she's been dying to have some records, some copies, some actual, you know, copies of the records to sell. I said well I'd love to give some so how can I give them to you, and she gave me an address in Texas some place and said write there. Some friends of mine might be able to get them over the border when they come down some time. And so I eventually I wrote to those people and never got an answer so never was able to get her any records, and haven't been down and haven't seen her since.

But I suspect that somebody could tract her down, someone through in the Mexican Left would know how to find her. But she's pretty marginalized from the mainstream of the Left too because she really is a woman of the lower classes or whatever you want to call it, you know. She's not a intellectual, she's not a sort of the, I mean the Mexican Left is like a lot of the lefts everywhere. There's a, there tends to, the motors run on the basis of people of some means and some, you know, I mean it takes some money to run an office and have a newspaper, whatever. So it's usually some middle class intellectuals that, you know, have to be sponsoring you if you're, and she doesn't cater to that kind of thing and

is not interested in it. She's very independent, very; the kind of person who just wants to be her own woman and do her own music.

But she writes her songs right on newspaper headlines or her personal experiences. She's very topical and there is a song in there about the massacre of the students at Tlatelolco - the place, the three cultures where most people say four hundred students were shot down or not just students but bystanders too. The Mexican government wanted to end it for once and all, all this nonsense of people asking for their rights. You know out in the streets like that, and so they, this is '68, people were doing that all over. I mean they were, the Mexican government probably over reacted to the whole, the potential of this, you know. Student engendered street demonstrating and all that was not, it was not a threat to the Mexican government, you know. They overreacted and in horrible way. But anyway she witnessed, and it was, it's documented I guess. That's about all I can say about Judith.

JEFF: Next one is 1013 which is the Castro speech, three record album.

BARBARA: Well as it says there in the notes we made, it's a very, very important speech. It's something like the American "Declaration of Independence" in a sense that it's a turning point for all of Latin America to have, you know, all of this material digested and put forward in one speech which is very widely quoted, very. It's gotten into the folklore now, but it's, the speech has that kind of importance. It's really a valuable speech and so, and it's Fidel delivering with all crowd reaction or whatever so it's the actual thing. They had issued it in Cuba and I thought it was important to get it out in the States. I knew it was going to be financially, probably a never going to pay for itself but whatever. But actually sold quite a few sets of it because institutions and organizations and then just individuals who felt it was something they needed to study, and they'd rather have it on a record than in a book so they

JEFF: I would think universities and you know libraries and what not would have an interest in that.

BARBARA: Yes. And it's also laid out in the booklet in such a way the translation is parallel to the Spanish text that you can use it as a study guide. If you want to be practicing your Spanish you could follow it. I've learned a lot of Spanish just working on it you know. On that and on the Che spoken material because both Fidel and Che used, they used the kind of Spanish that's very universal to Latin America. It's very, it would be the closest you could come to a sort of ideal Latin American speech. They don't use a lot of idiosyncrasies, you know. It's all very, it's very understandable to anyone speaking any kind of Spanish. And exemplary in terms of diction and all that and delivery so it's very interesting to just from a linguistic stand point to follow it. But it's also like witnessing history, you know, just sitting and listening to it. I have done that from time to time. Just take it out and transport myself back to that to those moments, because they were luminous moments in history, you know, and very great aspirations were seemed to be possible.

JEFF: Yeah. The one after that there's your *I Hate the Capitalist System*.

BARBARA: Okay well. That song that title comes from is of course Sarah Ova Gunning's song, and I had been using that song for a while in my repertory because it's sort of gave me a traditional base for a contemporary statement that I wanted to make. Odd thing about it is I never, I was singing songs from Arlen Kentucky all my performing life and didn't find out till the day my father died when he told me that his name and where she came, because he'd been an orphan, you know, since he was under ten I guess. He'd never actually mentioned his mother's name or where she came from, but she came from Arlen Kentucky. So it's kind of one those odd I've don't want to take that too far out to lunch but it felt right when I found that out. Anyway the album was put together in sort of a, out of a, I really hadn't done a record in quite a while. The GI, the FTA one, I, it's not me singing so much as a document of the times. I had a lot of material that I, you know, I just, but in also as a tool for me as performer I needed to have a record out and stuff. And I didn't have time to sit down and plan one, or go sit in the studio or anything because I was very much on the run then all the time, performing all over the world in this G.I. Movement work and then producing the records. So I had to just kind of do it catch as catch can. So when I had a minute or two here and there I would, I mean one or two songs Pablo and I went into the studio late at night. Somebody moonlighting, you know, an engineer friend of ours moonlighting, sort of slipped us into the studio when we did it without paying. And somebody some other place was in somebody's living room.

Or some place was at - one piece there is the "Plane Wreck at Los Garos" was recorded down here in what used to be the Cabale in Berkley by Chris Strachwitz actually, and he had his equipment all set up to record. I think I was supposed, was I going to do an album for him? I guess I was and I didn't have enough time to stick around and finish it, or something happened like that. But he was recording Lightning Hopkins in there too. So that Lightning and I went in there one day and did some just sort of jamming together, which he recorded and that later came out. I didn't have any notion that that was going to be on a record because, but Chris just wrote me one day and said well I want to put out this record called *Lightening Hopkins and Friends*, and he's going to have one side with Lightning's cousins and the other side with Lightning with me. So I gave him permission to do it 'cause even basically a private conversation on the, you know, jamming blues, making up blues verses back and forth at each other, one for with a few friends while he, I thought it was an interesting, you know, after the fact I heard and thought I like this pretty well so he put it out.

But anyway I knew he had this stuff in the vault, and I knew he had some, you know, of me singing in the Cabale, and so he, I wrote him and asked him if I could have that tape 'cause I like the way I did that song. I remembered that I had done it in a way that I felt good about and he gave the tape. So it was put together like that, the whole record together out of snatches of things, but it actually has a lot of coherence. I felt that what was achieved eventually was a kind of mini autobiographical statement, you know, because it was, that's why I put in the Detroit medley. There's songs that I knew from my youthhood around Detroit with all these labor questions flying through the air. And let

me see I can't think of all the elements in there, but it's all pretty well documented in the booklet. You could find out anything.

JEFF:..songs that...

BARBARA: Sure.

JEFF:Next one, maybe we talked about before, was the other G.I. resistance record.

BARBARA: Well that one, yeah. That I think is that paragraph that I put down there is pretty explanatory, but that particular group of GI's they were in the Air Force, and that was one of the first Air Force groups to get organized. The rest were mainly the Army, you know, draftees. Air Force, now you're talking about college educated people who were more like on a, you know, officer level or what. They've got more education. They're more, so you've got people with more resources in terms of what, so there was a demonstration there, and Mark Lane was invited to speak at, and his then friend and often times traveling companion, a good friend of ours, Carolyn Mugar went with him. And she's a photographer. She, both of them were really quite taken with the guys there because they really seemed committed, and they also seem to have a lot of ideas new ideas. And their base up there in Mountain Home, Idaho was where a lot of planes were leaving directly for Vietnam, you know, were just taking off from there and flying to Vietnam and dropping their bombs. So they thought it was, really would, really fascinating idea to help those guys, well, more better established. So they actually moved up there. Mark and Carolyn moved up there and spent two years helping organize the, was the, it's called the Covered Wagon Singers. But that was organized out of it, but the place was called The Helping Hand. They took all these terms out of G.I. code and "helping hand" is one of these code phrases you say when you're under enemy attack and, you know, need something I don't know what. Anyway these are all.

JEFF: A helping hand.

BARBARA: I guess. So in an unlikely place of Mountain Home, Idaho up there in the middle of nowhere, this thing got going. So with the help of Mark and Carol they rented the old the theater. They had a movie-house in town. They rented this movie-house which had been abandoned, was sitting there empty, and they fixed it all up, and they painted it and the GIs came in, some of them had a lot of artistic training, and painted Picasso's *Guernica*. Duplicated it on the wall, did a mural the whole size of the movie-house wall of *Guernica*. And they said it was fantastic. It really looked like the original *Guernica*. Anyway, shortly after that, 'cause of the town the right wing elements, around the army base there are always some vigilante types, and so the place was burned down by these vigilantes. And so then they got another place with a little better security and so on. The place lasted quite a while, and out of it, specially because of the work of man named Jimmy Schafer, I guess that's all in the booklet, but Jimmy Schafer was a singer songwriter, and he gathered these other people around him and they made this, they thought of it as a way of getting the word out about how they viewed the war and everything to the surrounding community and to the rest of the whole state.

And so they became quite influential in the sense that, you know, any, I mean I don't know. I think whenever people always talk about, you know, the whole middle of the country of being people that are just sort of know nothings, and what's the point of trying to reach Middle America because they don't care and all this kind of stuff, I don't think that's true. These people really proved that it isn't true 'cause they went with their songs, they went around to different churches and all over the state, you know, singing where ever they could singing their songs, and they found really good response. People really backed them up and, you know, except for this, as I say this vigilante group nuts that I guess seemed to cluster around military towns and stuff for one thing.

JEFF: There seems to be a lot of right wing militias in Idaho and Montana too...read in the paper they don't want to pay any taxes, shoot down the police when they come around.

BARBARA: Yeah. So they, anyway I think they did something absolutely unique by making this record. They made it all themselves. They made it on somebody's home equipment 'cause they couldn't, there was no studio within miles of where they could go. And they wrote, the GIs wrote the songs, wrote all the songs, played them all, recorded them, and did the artwork and did everything. Put it all together and we put it out. We're very proud of that record because it was really that the kind of thing. I was hoping that in terms of this country we could somehow engender the possibility of doing that in a lot different situations coming out of a lot of grassroots struggles that are going on around the country. And I think if we'd been able to continue it, maybe in the next decade, we would've been able to reach that level of, 'cause I apart from all our interests in international struggles, which is quite apparent in the label, I was very concerned that all this be reflected in the our own national life, and that there be, you know, we always were on the look out for what American groups could do this or would be producing the kind of material that we would be, there was no point in us putting out the same stuff that the commercial labels put out because that, but that all had a different. I mean some of it was quite useful and progressive and helpful, you know, and so on. But there was no point in us putting that out, because I mean our whole thing was much more this is a tool that you can use, you know, to change your life with. It's not just something that you put on a record and listen to when kick back. And I think that this is a good example of that. *Covered Wagon* record is a perfect example of what I was trying to do in terms of, you know.

JEFF: The next one is Suni Paz, her *Brotando del Silencio*.

BARBARA: Yeah. *Breaking out of the Silence*. I created that title, she liked that title because well, it was her record, so it was her breaking out of the silence. But it was Latin American women breaking out of the silence, because for Latin American women it's even harder for women up here to be taken seriously in their work as musicians, and Suni was clearly very worth while, she's still performing since that record went on to make quite a few records. She has things on Folkways as you probably know, she has children record I think and some other. Yeah and I think she's remarkable example of a woman

who went ahead and did what she felt was necessary in terms of, you know, writing about what she saw, what she felt she wanted to, not worrying about whether or not it was going to sell or not just putting down what she thought was necessary to say, and growing constantly as a musician, you know, I mean I think since that record she studied voice. She hadn't really studied voice training or anything before, so she, I think she, after the record came out she heard herself, and then she, I think, I want to improve these different skills. And she went on to become a better and better musician, has made really made a lifetime of, you know, singing the truth as she sees it. And on there she's also accompanied by her then teenage son on the percussion instruments, which of course touched me because I like working with my son. I guess that's about, that is the first record she made. I met her because she was singing with this, it was called El Grupo. just means "The Group," but it was the song, sort of a song extension of the Puerto Rican socialist party and their various efforts around New York city. And they did a lot, a lot, a lot of performing in a condensed period of a couple of years, and that's how I met Suni.

JEFF: 1017, Che Guevara speaks.

BARBARA: Well that record was very hard to put together. It was immediately that he was killed I had the idea there should be a record with his voice. That he, somehow his whole his ideas and his spirit, and his very enthusiastic and loving that attitude toward all the people that his ideas dealt with should be somehow, you should be able to hear his own voice, you know, telling about these things. So I started to try and gather up materials, and this is Cuba and for the year or two after his death they didn't quite, they hadn't figured out how to manage his patrimony. Actually they had, I mean his certainly, his wife and his ex-wife and his family and his parents and everybody all felt that the Cuban government had a claim on, you know whatever, or had total claim on whatever was left behind, because actually Che's will says that he doesn't have anything. He's not taking anything with him. He doesn't ask for anything. He doesn't leave his children anything except the, whatever the Cuban people wished to provide for them and his family, you know, and that he relinquishes whatever claim he has on anything.

So the government hadn't quite figured out how to manage this material or what to do or how to put it together. They formed an institute and they were gathering it all there at this institute. And now for a long time now it's been readily available if anybody wants to go and investigate Che's lifetime, his artifacts, whatever, all of that. There's a Che institute. I believe it still exists and functions, but at the time that I was trying to gather this, it was too new and everybody I was meeting a stone wall, everywhere I went everybody was saying no, no, no we can't give it out, can't give out anything. Or else in the Latin the way would promise it, you know, because it's impolite to say no knowing they couldn't come through with it. And so I kept going back to offices. Oh, well we just couldn't do it today and, you know, like that. And so I wasn't getting anything, and the only thing I was able to bring back was I believe the recording of his speech during the October Crisis, which is what they call the, we call it the Cuban missile crisis up here.

The October Crises Che gave a very, very important speech to, by way of calming and reassuring people in Cuba, he didn't talk directly about the missile crisis. He talks about

Antonio Maseo, the “Bronze Titan” they call him. He was the bronze skinned man who was the hero of one of the major wars against Spain, you know the liberation struggle against Spain. And he talks about the conditions under which Maseo had to operate and how he persevered anyway and so on and so on. Anyway, so it was at first glance wasn't relevant, but on second glance it was most relevant because it was by way of saying, you know, Maseo did it, well we'll be alright too, you know. It was very, very, it was a stroke of genius, I think, to make that kind of speech, you know. Think of him sitting there with this threat of world war and missile atomic destruction, or whatever, hanging over everybody heads. I mean people in California, I was out here and people were running for the hills and hiding out and going, getting out of metropolitan center. Everybody was terrified. Really terrified. Thought they were going to start throwing those crazy things right now, you know. So he gave that speech.

Anyway, that I was able to bring back because it was on a recording already public property. The rest of the material I had to, well I brought back photographs and I brought back, you know, odds and ends of things, but I didn't have this sound of his voice that wanted. I wanted him giving some talk. Anyway, a friend of mine who later you will see on a record in there Beverly Grant, she was then working for something called Newsreel as a film maker of a kind of guerilla culture film maker. And she had gone to Cuba and she came just right on the heels of the decision to invite let it all out, you know. Give it all out. She was, everybody was saying hey here's some Che stuff. Don't you want it? She didn't even have to ask. She came back and called me up and said oh yeah, by the way, you know, got all this Che Guevara material. I said, what? I was shocked. So she gave me all that she brought back, and it incorporated some really great diversity of stuff, so that we've got them.

Starts out with him talking to a very small group of construction workers on the anniversary of Camilo Cienfuego's death. He was the third of the triumvirate of Fidel and Camilo and Che, the great revolutionary leaders, and he died in a plane crash shortly after the revolution. And his death is always celebrated there by children go to, down to the sea and throw flowers in the sea and sing songs about Camilo and everything. So anyway Che had gone to give a talk to some construction workers about how he first, and it's very intimate personal, it's just him telling little stories about how he met Camilo. Really they worked together in the guerilla but he had then connected with him as person, and he talks about how they connected. One day when they were running away from an attack, and they both dropped their knapsacks. And so they didn't have anything to eat and all they could find was one can of canned milk, and they shared it out, each taking a teaspoon, very carefully being, you know, fair and square and everything. And talking about food and reminiscing about how great it would be to have a great meal back at Camilo's mother's house out in this part of the country, etcetera, and in the, so that one.

Then there's a, it kind of grows in pyramids from there. There's a small thing in, then there's the next thing, I forget, what is it? Well, anyway, there's, I have a good chunk of him at the U.N. He gave a speech at the U.N. that's was a very, very pivotal speech for Latin American political thought too. I think between that and the Second Declaration, you know, you've really got a lot there, the soul of the whole Latin American trajectory,

what was going on in that period of time from the Left perspective. So the U.N. speech I got some material from somebody who worked at KPF Air Pacifica. KP WBAI in New York, some tape of interview he did with Che while he was in New York to go to the speak at the U.N. So that's simultaneously translated on the tape, and anyway he makes a little statement in there about, well some people say that we're crazy to try to do what we did, you know. He says and but, he says, but a revolutionaries have to be a little bit crazy. So I use that as a motif. The little bit crazy thing. Under that the first time you hear it, well okay, I put it all, I produced it like a radio show. And so that, you know, a person could sit down and listen and have a kind of a whole experience, and not just have to hear a dry speech.

And had some music, well very skillful couple of Puerto Rican musicians who lived in New York, especially guy named Miguel Poventud, who I met because he played on the Pepe and Flora record. And I asked him to think of what he could put behind this in the way of music that wouldn't be intrusive but would just be gently sort of setting the tone or the mood. And well he did, he put a lot of thought into it. And he worked out, he picked out songs that all had something to do with what was being said or what was going on and, you know. So someone who knows really well what Caribbean or Latin American culture would probably be, get clued into those little musical clues. Like when they're talking about going to eat food, you know, they're starving guerillas and talking about going to eat food some day in Camilo's mother's house he's, in the background you're hearing this song about food from that same province. You know. He did very careful planning for this thing.

And then the day we were supposed to record he had just a couple days beforehand a bad accident with his hand and his thumb was actually held together with a metal pin and some stitches, but he was determined to make, to do this because he really loved the idea. So he brought along this other guy who had a, oh it was an early version of some kind of synthesizing thing. He played the accordion but he could make the accordion sound like other things. So it doesn't sound like the accordion playing. It's just this, is sounds like a synthesizer using the keyboard or according. Anyway, you'll see. But it's just these two guys playing this, and then it's interspersed with songs by people from the *Nueva Trova*, songs about Che or maybe from other parts of the world too. I forgot all what I put in there. It's quite rich in music even though it's speeches. So, and then I used that motif that, the one he says we have to be a little bit crazy. There's a little musical phrase in there. So then we sort of speeded it up and made it into a musical motif that keeps coming back at you at different points to remind of this little bit crazy thing. Yeah. So you'll see there's some interesting things in there musically as well as the great significance of what of Che's life was and what he says. So.

JEFF: The next one is 1018 which is Cuba songs for our America sung by Carlos Puebla.

BARBARA: Okay Carlos Puebla. Well he was the, if there was anything resembling a Pete Seeger or Ewan MacColl or whatever in Cuba he would be it. He was the grand old, you know, way back was singing and writing songs against the Batista government, and against the imposition of outside culture, and against the, and in support of the

independence for Puerto Rico or the struggles going on in Latin America. Anyway, he was always documenting and writing songs to support. And he also obviously sang just more general kind of materials because his domain before the revolution, the place he performed in was this place called the Bodegita del Medio, which was the place that every knowledgeable tourist who goes to Cuba goes to has to go to. It's a wonderful restaurant still run by the same guy that ran it historically, and was also Nicolas Gian's hangout. I saw Nicolas in there, you know, more than once, and had a really great conversation with him in there just before he died. It was pretty amazing, about his friendship Langston Hughes, and I knew Langston too, and so we were talking about Langston Hughes as a great. But I won't get diverted off on that.

Anyway the Bodegita was like a hangout for the, in the pre-Revolutionary days before American movie stars, adventurers what have you. You know, go there, still have that flavor. Everybody comes, the walls are covered with graffiti that people have put on the walls in layers and layers. I mean I've written on that wall, must be maybe ten times, and I can't find myself on there. Yet, you know, because it's always covered by another's layers of life goes on, you know, history keeps on being made on those walls. So it's an amazing place and the food outrageously good. It's the only place in Cuba where you can get a real good really, really good Cuban meal in a restaurant, you know, you have to get that usually in people's homes. Any how Carlos Puebla, after the revolution at the age of whatever, he would've been, god he's older than I am and I'm sixty-four, so it would've been, at any rate after the revolution he was finally able to study music a little bit. So he credits the revolution with a whole new stage in his musical development. The first time I met him he was in the uniform with the popular militia, you know. He apparently did his regular guard duty like a lot of people in those days, and still would do guard duty, and Carlos and his group, called the *Tradicionales*, he had the same guys working with him for years, was this was actually a crack group of musicians. I mean they were just superb, just no other word for it, just absolutely superb, and from working together for all those years really jelled. Anyway a lot of travelers to Cuba over many, many years only knew the name Carlos Puebla as a Cuban singer, you know, people who wouldn't be interested in the pop songs but were interested in, you know, more things with content.

And he, I mean, well we got to friends. He's the first person who taught me a song in Spanish. Not one of his, by the way, something else. He, so of course I always wanting to put out a record of his, and I asked him when he got around to it would he record something. So he recorded this for us, and just gave it to us and he died last year. Finally, but after, you know, the revolution, he then became like a traveling ambassador for Cuban revolution. He was very often sent of to Vietnam or to Europe or to Latin America or to Chile or to here and there or whatever. During the moment for a singer he would be the one to be sent in those days. And he always went even though he was getting old and not too convenient for him to travel, and to do that he, I know, he went, well he, Angola for example, you know, very difficult circumstances. He went there to sing. He was absolutely dedicated to being, he has his opening song on this record is actually a kind of a credo. He says I'm of, I can see...he actually selected the content of this with the North American audience in mind. You know. 'Cause he wanted

specifically address what to him were the questions that he would want to talk to people here about if he could come and talk to you ,you know. So he picked out that repertory, parts of his repertory that were aimed at addressing Americans, North Americans. So what's next?

JEFF: Next is 1019, Chile, *The Seige of Santa Maria de Iquique*.

BARBARA: De Iquique. Okay well this piece of material, that was already recorded by the Decop, I guess the name of the label that was created by the Allende Forces in Chile. One of, you know, a lot of cultural institutions were created then. People thought this was going to be forever so they, you know, all the intellectuals and artists and creators decided to start creating institutions that would last the long haul. So, but the composer of this, they call it a *cantada*, a people's *contada* I think he calls it or something like that, has in mind combining it. I think it was one of the first times it was done. Combining the folk musicians, folk, I always say that word with quotes around you know. I don't like the term, but folk instruments, traditional instruments of the Andes and, you know, the Chilean countryside. Combining that style of music with more conscious composer's mentality and putting something to, he wanted to make a work of art dedicating and depicting one of the worst conflicts in Chilean labor history, which was a strike at a mine which was very cruelly repressed. It was the key incident in Chilean labor history, that sort of turning point for some just bearing things to resisting. So that's what that's about. I, we recorded it, under the circumstances we put it out as a record right after the assassination of Allende and the coup's taking over. Some Chilean exiles in New York came to us and said we've got to put something out, we've go to put something out, mainly because they needed a tool in order to do their work to try and, you know, make manifest to American, North American people what the thing in Chile was about.

So I said well pick out, they had a big, you know, bunch of the DICAP output, and I said pick out the most important record that you think is the most important. So they picked out this one, and they said, well let's, you know, do this. And I said well, you know, of course I have no way of securing any rights for this. And they said don't worry just put it out, whatever happens it will be alright. So we went to work and did all the translating, and got it out. And I think got a really nice picture on the cover, and did a good job of it. And then later when it turns out it's performed by the Quilapayún, which of course everyone knows about now, and Quilapayún was thought to have been killed in the coup. Turned out they'd actually been in Europe on tour and were sort of stuck in France, I guess, and I think that's still where they make their base. And so later on they and some people, some of the people who had originally founded the DICAP by then in France, and they founded a new or combined with some French people and founded some way of sort of regularizing their output and their materials and all that. And they contacted us and we made subsequently royalty arrangements, and from the beginning we printed on the back of the cover that all the royalties would go to Quilapayún, and that's what we did as soon as we knew how to find them. So that's the story. It's a beautiful record.

JEFF: ...another one...1020, *A Grain of Sand*.

BARBARA: Yeah, *A Grain of Sand* is literally the first sort of American Asian consciousness record, but not only a record, because the people who put, created the record had also created a little sort of touring group who went around to, invited by different kinds of Asian American groups, student groups and so on to, you know, the whole wave of consciousness that was coming up in the early Seventies. They were part of that and this was first expression on a record of that new Asian American consciousness and sort of asserting a pride their own origins. And the most of them, most of the people involved around them and they themselves were part of, you know, came out of families who were in the camps in California out here in the West, in the internment camps, and had that experience behind them. And well there, so this Joanne Miyamoto and Chris Iijima are the two principle singers, and then there's a third singer Charlie Chin. Charlie was Chinese American who was born and raised in New York, I guess, and he was singing around and kind of got hooked up with the quote folk singing, and was banjo a lot then, and played very good guitar too, and composing a lot. When I saw him in the Seventies sometime, he was composing a lot sort of personal songs, the way the Seventies got to be, you know, writing about your inner life and, but he wrote a song called "The Wandering Chinaman," which I think encapsulates the experience of those Chinese men who actually got stuck here, you know. They came here to work, they were allowed to come, the men were allowed to come, but they couldn't bring in their wives and families. So he eventually could bring a wife and he has a family and then the family all gets sort of dissipated into the bad life in America and something.

Anyway it's all in the song so there's, there are those three and a conga player who was Joanne's sweetheart at the time, and a black man who was a Muslim man. He came and played on the date, did a really nice subtle job, very, very good. I will never forget after the session. We'd been really working hard on it. We always had do our things in like one marathon session or maybe possible two, but you know it usually was one marathon session we record everything and then we mix it. And so everybody was really exhausted and I had to drive the other two other places and things, and so the conga player with the big heavy conga drums and everything, he says no, that's okay just put me off here at the subway because he had to go all the way uptown to Harlem with congas. And so he did that, and saying goodbye to him, and he was very cheerful and sweet and the next thing I hear he's been killed. He was in a mosque in Brooklyn where a gun fight broke out between some Shiites and Sunnis, and he was just a bystander and he got killed. And Joanne subsequently had a baby with father, he was the father of, and she's in Japantown in L.A. as a Japanese Cultural, Japanese American Cultural Center, whatever you call it. Quite influential down there, and so they were both, Chris was very reluctant to make the record because he thought that it would, you know, even I mean the man if he went out to make a commercial career could've really done very well. He's a really superb musician singer and songwriter. But he was very political and very involved in the idea that, you know, people shouldn't be considered anything special just because they could do all that stuff, and he didn't want to make a hero out of himself. He didn't want to show off. He didn't want to be, so I actually had to go and talk to his mom who I knew, she was a person who had been to every peace demonstration or anti-nuclear demonstration I was ever at. And she, I got to know her that way, and so I kind of leaned on him through her, so convinced him that if he doesn't do this that I thought it was very important that, you

know, this concept of self determination and proud Asian Americans would be somehow reflected in this way. So I think that that album actually still should have a lot of currency. I bet a lot of people want to hear that and would use it I'm sure. There were some attempts later to do something similar. It, far as I know, there's nothing quite comparable to this. What's next?

JEFF: Next is Theodorakis

BARBARA: Okay Mikis Theodorakis. One of the greatest living composers of our times. Actually and recognized as such in most of the world, especially in Europe. And also a lifetime patriot and struggler for democracy in Greece. For that he's been in jail lots of times. He's been led a very up and down sort of life and had, from time to time, had a great difficulty getting his stuff out. But he, one of his great accomplishments that he almost single-handedly transformed Greek music, contemporary Greek music, by basing himself so firmly, so rootedly in Greek traditional music that, and then composing new things embodying the present reality based in those roots. Then he was able to revive some of the old rhythms and dance styles and song forms and all kinds of stuff he revived through breathing new life into them. Or bringing the material that he used to begin with was all this basically tavern music from the waterfront, you know, drunken sailors ...they're kind of the, what would be very comparable in our own experience to the blues, you know, stuff that comes from the kind of the low life saloon that's the only place the outlet for it. But he took it and gave it dignity and gave it content of issues that people had on their minds, and dedicated it all in the service of the democratic movement.

So he became a national hero through that and is, well, the unfortunate thing is that people in our country know very little about him because he's been basically marginalized, ostracized, not, for many years couldn't get a visa to come here even although he was known through his sound track music for a film called *Serpico*. He wrote that music. He wrote the music soundtrack for a couple of Costa Gavras' films. I think *Z* is the most and some others too I think. And through those film soundtracks is about the only way he's known here but, you know, can see that he's done that kind of work. He's written ballet music and symphonies and all sorts of things. There's a very broad, he uses every conceivable style, but this is sort of song based on the old traditional song is what I saw him in concert when he was finally able to come to out here, you know. And he didn't, amazing thing, I mean, after they performed the new songs they were going to do then he, the end of the concert comes basically and everyone's applauding and they go off. And then he turned around and came back on and then he just sort of walked down to the edge of the stage and sort of led the audience in singing maybe twenty songs of all this stuff that is now become the music of Greek people, you know. They were all his songs but everybody in the audience knew them, and they were all singing at the top of their lungs. The whole audience, I think it was one of the big auditoriums in San Francisco. It was a wonderful experience to see that.

But anyway how did we get a record by this great man. Because under the Greek colonels he was put under house arrest and was not able to leave the house let alone perform or get

his music out at least for two years, I think. That's quite an extensive period of time. He talks about the fact that they strip searched his little boy everytime he went out to school, and came back, you know. They had guards posted around his house and every move that was made, every groceries or anything that came in and out were searched. Everything. And during that time he composed a lot though. He had a rickety upright piano that he just kept composing and he, but he took for his poetic themes some of the great contemporary Greek poets. You know, Greek poets work on an uninterrupted tradition from ancient Greece till now. So there's all this, there's huge load of symbolism and, you know, symbolic language and forms and so on that are for a Greek who's knowledgeable about it, I mean in it of themselves very informative. So he was able to use a lot, to say what he wanted to say even though words don't say it the, all of this texture of symbolism and history says it.

So that's the kind of text, anyway he'd written all this stuff, couldn't get it out. He was allowed one visitor the whole time, and apparently that visitor they sewed some tapes into his coat lining or something he got out, and that circulated on sort of the Greek underground of the through the democratic forces on very, very, very poor sound. So he finally could come to New York after the Hunta was finished and Pependreous president and so on, he was finally allowed into the U.S. There's all, I think from the U.S. side, it was all a question of what to do with NATO basis and everything like that. Heavy duty politics were manipulating the negative end of all that. Anyway he was finally allowed to come to the States and he asked me to do some, I had made some songs translations of three of his songs I met in Europe at one of the Festival of Lunitime in Florence, I guess it was. And he asked me to sing the songs with him there in that problem in English and then he asked me to do them in New York. And so after the, he also incidentally asked me to make a tour in Australia with him and I didn't get to do that because I got sick just before it and never got to do it. I guess I'm the only singer alive who got asked to do a tour with Louis Armstrong and also with Mikis Theodorakis and didn't do either one of those.

Anyway he came to New York and did sort of homecoming type of concert. The Greek community had been waiting all these years, you know, for him to be able to come. And afterward, you know, I said listen I this little record label, and I showed him some of the things we'd done. And I said, would you like to make a record while you're here. And he said, of course, I've been dying to make a record. So the next day we went to this studio, and he sat down at a grand piano and for two days recorded these songs. And these he said, oh that's what I want to do. I want myself, sing the songs that I had to compose alone without other musicians, just singing them myself. That's the way I know these songs and I'll just put them down. So this is a document of a significant moment in this composer's life, and very, it was done, distributed with some amount cooperation from the Democratic Greek Movement in the United States. They, by then, you know, after the Hunta and everything, the steam went out of their movement because they didn't have a lot of urgency. So they didn't get as much distribution as it deserved, and given the kind of document it is, I think it's a, hope get a lot broader circulation some day. Maybe through you guys.

JEFF: Next thing is Palestine record.

BARBARA: Well, given the, you know, the Middle East is what the Middle East has been for so long such a, actually an area of the world which up until, maybe really only recent years most Americans had, don't even think about, you know, it's just there sort of, unless you have relatives in Israel or something, in which case you're pretty Zionist oriented or something. And to hear, even to hear Arabic music or to know anything about Arabs, let alone Palestinians, is pretty rare for North American to, you know, have any awareness at all. So of course me being, you know, the old trouble maker, I had, I was dying to get out a record of Palestinian point view that represented the Palestinian point of about that piece of land. So I kept asking people and trying, you know, but I just, anyway I was in Europe, I was in France, and I was asking everybody there too of France always being kind of a political hotbed. There were all kinds of refugees from everywhere circulating in and out of Paris, you know, and historically do that. So I just asked all the people around Paris Left at the time if anybody had any contact with any Palestinians or knew Palestinian music, and nobody, I was kind of drawing a blank.

I was in a some kind of Left bookstore, I don't remember the name of it, but asked the people there, and he said oh yeah, I think I got something. Turns out he had some forty-fives under the counter. He selling them from under the counter, you know, on request. He didn't have them on display or anything, and so I said well let me buy a copy of all the everything you've got. So I just bought them all and brought them back to New York. And then I took them all and had them duplicated on a tape, and started listening to it, and said oh well this is really exciting music. It turned out that most of it *al-fat*, you *fatah*, *al fatah* or whatever way you pronounce it in English. They pronounce it *al-fat*. *Fat-th*. And finally found who knew what it was and all that, and I got in touch with the Palestinian people around the U.N. mission they have or whatever the, I don't know if it's a mission or, you know, the U.N. has all these sort of non-governmental organizations that cluster around it. And so through that I was able to find some Palestinians living in New York and got help with that. Well they, the key thing was they got me in touch with, oh a woman named Miriam Rosen, I think she's in the booklet, was doing a radio series on WMAI in New York. Sort of a Palestinian news or Middle East news round-up or something like that. Got in touch with her, and she wrote a concise kind of history of modern Palestine/Israel whatever you want to call it area.

So that's at the beginning of the booklet, and she got me in touch or I think she did or the through some other sources, anyway Kamal Boullata is his name. He's a really recognized excellent Palestinian artist and he had done some illustrations for a book of poems of Mohammad Darwish. Darwish is probably the key Palestinian poet of the modern times, and so between the, you know, his drawing and his, anyway he got very involved in the project. He lives in Washington, and he got very involved in it, very, very wanted to see this happen. So he actually made in, and if you look in the booklet there's a typed out, things are typed out in Arabic script. Well he got them typed out. He translated the songs. He wrote the introductions to the songs. He researched all this stuff and he also designed and drew, made an original drawing for the cover. He did tremendous

amount work on this thing. Even though it is here he is a famous artist. He just decided he wanted this to happen. So there we have it.

And I wanted to, besides just these songs on the tape on this taken off this forty-five, I wanted to somehow bridge, and I wanted to have something in English on there. I wanted to bridge, culturally bridge the, you know, the chasm that existed between the average North American listener and this whole situations. So I found out then about a documentary film that had been made fairly recently there in occupied areas by a team of filmmakers from, I think, I forget who they were. I guess that in the booklet too. But anyway they had made this film. I went to see the film and I thought it was terrific. They had a lot interviews all the way through it with people, Palestinians living in, you know, the West Bank, Gaza or whatever or the, well living in the Middle East. And it was in a very accessible, I mean I thought it was quite accessible. I got in touch with him and asked if we could take some of the interview material and use it intersperse it with things on the record. So they said yes they loved that idea too. They actually had help from the PLO when they were there, and they'd been taken around, you know, assisted in making their, doing their travel and making their interviews. So they were anxious to kind of pay back a debt in kind, you know, so okay good you can have this material. They weren't proprietary about it. And so that's what's mixed in there, and there's some very touching things really. Spoken in English or translated right on the spot or whatever. Woven in and so that's how it came to be, you know. It was out a sheer desire to make something that would be a bridge between the American listener and the Middle East situation from the Palestinian standpoint because the Israeli lobby had so much access to American ears and American press, etcetera. I mean there's no getting around it. Everyone knows the Israeli position. That's why I didn't have the burning desire to document that. That's readily available, but the Palestinian voice was so hushed in this country. Well that's it.

JEFF: 1023, *The Red Star Singers, Force of Life*.

BARBARA: Well, they're from the Bay Area. They were a bunch of folks who were some, you know, pretty skilled musicians who got together just to be the Red the Star Singers, what it says. Red star in the political sense. They, I don't think they were affiliated with any particular party or anything, but they used the red star as their symbol and let's see. I was really scrambling trying to find more American material. I was getting concerned by this time that the label was getting to be too lopsided of too much foreign material and too much, I couldn't, but the thing was very, very, very hard to get any American material. Why? Because if you're any good and you're in this country you could probably get recorded on a commercial label. You know. Except that, you know, in the beginning of just talking about what was the whole idea with this my criteria was that your main concern was not having a career. Your main concern with making your music was to change the world, you know. So it was hard to find people who had that as their primary concern over, and I would never have condemned anybody for if in fact a commercial label would put out there you. There was time when Columbia Records actually had this marketing slogan about the man can't stop our music, you know, trying to hook on to the revolutionary trend that was going around, you know, the kind of revolutionary rhetoric that was around. Man can't stop our music.

JEFF: When was this?

BARBARA: Early Seventies. Yeah and they had corresponding graphic art to make it look as if Columbia with their use of Bob Dylan and whatever other people they had, you know, that's where the reservoir of revolutionary song will be. It was really, god so opportunistic. Anyway, I wouldn't have blamed anybody for falling for that and putting their stuff on a commercial label because, why because then get distributed all over the world and all the, you know, GIs who went off to Vietnam, for example, now when you see all these post-Vietnam films, and you hear how important the rock music with no seemingly, no relevant lyric or anything, all of it symbolized so much to them. It's all important. I mean it's all important to do. If you're good at it, you go ahead and do, you follow the logic of your own life and your own work. So, you know, so I would never say to anybody, well, you know, you're sellout if you go off this label or that, because in truth you will have a broader audience if you can do it that other way. I know we didn't have the possibility to get the things on the mass media and so on. But I also so that made it hard to get a lot of the best stuff that was around and everything. So I did make it a point though to keep looking for more American material, and these folks clearly set themselves out to not be commercialized and not be part of the sort of entertainment industry and stuff. And yet they had a big following here, so, you know, people kept telling me about them and all this.

So I wrote and asked them if they wanted to do a record, and they said yeah, absolutely they did. And I said well listen you might have to, by this time we were sort of getting financially stressed and everything, and I said you might have to do a little fundraising around it and stuff. So they actually raised most of the money to make the master tape from their audiences. That was a unique feature of their thing. They would do concerts all over the map, and they would always say we're trying to make a record, and we would like, you know, if people want to make special donations or they thought of this idea: well, we'll sell you the record in advance of it being made. So they took orders for the record. People paid for the records. And then they finally were able to make the master tape, and sent it on to us, and they sent us some wonderful cover art by a Bay area artist named Jan Norling. It's a good record. And the thing is the songs on it have been, and are still, played from time to time because they are emblematic of different things that have happened, you know. Just to finish about the Red Star Singers is that their songs, you know, they take up different issues that were really hot in those days. And some of them are still hot, and the songs were played a lot on the air out here, especially, and I suppose in other parts of the country, to talk about some of the some of those like women's health issues and, oh I don't know different questions. So it's from that point of view the record had a lot of

IRWIN: Well one thing that's interesting about the, our Chinese album P-1007. It was one of the few albums, I think I may have mentioned this to you before, that got reviewed in the *New York Times* because it coincided, it came out around '72 or '73. Just after China had been admitted to the U.N., Nixon had gone to China. You know there was a big China flurry at the, that time. So it was extremely timely. It's not my favorite

representation of Chinese music, but it, what it's typical of is the approach of a cultural revolution so the, what's the name of the opera again? The ballet?

BARBARA: There are lots of them.

IRWIN: No, the one that's on the record.

BARBARA: Oh, well isn't it the East is Red?

IRWIN: Oh yeah. The East is Red. So that was viewed a kind of prototypical opera during the Cultural Revolution. Actually I met Mao's wife was in charge of a lot of this stuff, and they had something like seven or eight model operas and just kept doing them over and over again. Well the film *The East is Red* is just a filming of the, it was basically a ballet really, although with opera and ballet combined. But it's really, you know, this very hortatory enthusiastic constantly enthusiastic stuff with not very much subtly.

BARBARA: But the East is Red.

IRWIN: Yeah.

BARBARA: No, the whole thing, it's not all like that.

IRWIN: Well that my ...off it. And but it got

BARBARA: Dissention in the ranks.

IRWIN: Yeah, we don't have the same opinion on lots of things. But it's the point is it's very typical of the Cultural Revolution of what was being the most actively promoted during that period, and as such it was, you know typical, of a certain era. Not of China, but of China under the Cultural Revolution. And it sort of tells the history of the Chinese Revolution in various episodes that advanced out, which in their own right many of which are quite interesting well done. You know, they're very literal. The whole production is quite literal if you ever see the film, and of course I guess as Barbara told you the album is basically the sound track.

BARBARA: Now I don't think I ever saw the film. You saw the film.

IRWIN: Yeah, I've seen it.

BARBARA: It was hard to, it wasn't playing around, you know.

IRWIN: No.

BARBARA: It was something that was, it was special showing for the people from the ...group I guess. That kind of thing. Wasn't it?

IRWIN: I don't recall anymore.

BARBARA: ...invitational thing. So he saw it and I was busy or off out of town or something. So I've never seen the thing. That made, the film itself maybe coloring his opinion of music.

IRWIN: Well that maybe.

BARBARA: You know 'cause the film could've been very, you know righteous.

IRWIN: Plus it's just my opinion so it has nothing to do with what you folks will do with it.

JEFF: I was telling Barbara ...three record set this must be a sound track that is most of the film.

IRWIN: I think it's pretty, I think it is pretty much the film.

JEFF: Yeah.

BARBARA: Why don't I put some of it on. I haven't heard it in a long time...on in the background.

IRWIN: Well it's going

BARBARA: I know.

IRWIN: We'll be talking about other things.

BARBARA: It won't mess it up. Oh. okay alright. alright. Alright. alright.

JEFF: Let's see what we get done.

IRWIN: Okay so then the two Vietnam records that come next.

BARBARA: yeah.

IRWIN: You must have gone into, a lot, you know, what can I tell you about Vietnam that you don't already know.

BARBARA: Yeah, I talked about it.

IRWIN: It was interesting because it was, you know, it was done while the war was on. Here we issue these records from behind enemy lines, and in effect, and just the very fact that it came out was a statement.

BARBARA: I know something I forgot to tell about those. At the same time we were working on the records and other things we were also working on a song book. *Vietnam Song Book* it's called. Actually I can give you a copy if you'd like to have the *Vietnam Song Book*. Has very good photos in it which Irwin selected with very commentating, commenting on each song. And the songs are from all over the world besides the, you know, the U.S. and G.I.s and all kinds of pacifists and right on people, you know, with the fist in the air and everybody, the whole spectrum, if anybody was against the war and wrote a song.

Anyway while we working on that we, one of the things about the Vietnamese, the whole strategy that the Vietnamese used was they really I think operated out of, they, what for others might have been, well the very inequality of the battle, you know, the stacking of the cards. It represented a David and Goliath effect to the whole war, was that a lot sympathy for the Vietnamese went beyond the ordinary taking sides in war. It went into sort of people wanting to befriend and foster and help and protect and whatever this little country that was being so mightily attacked. Out of that impulse you know there were lots of cultural works created around in, and the songs being written were all, you know, are reflections how many wars, you know. There were people were writing, you know, all over the world writing songs when, you know, some aspect or another of wanting the war to end for various different reasons. And, just a second. I forgot the point I was going to make. But so, yeah so one of the things that happened was that songs began to be written also in Vietnam about the fact that the rest of the world was writing songs about them. And they wrote song, someone there wrote a song called play your guitars in Washington American friends, you know, which is I mean a phenomenon. They were actually, their culture's producing things that encourage and support the people here for our reasons were protesting the war. So that song is not those albums, in those the Vietnam albums, but it does appear in the work of somebody else, and I'm not sure who. I don't that, yeah I think that is the song.

Okay this a long story but it is, I'll try to make it short. Okay the Vietnam song to finish about the *Vietnam Song Book*, it was not possible for us to take and deliver it in person. This is the height of the war, so we took it and delivered it to the Vietnamese presence wherever we could, I mean through the Paris Peace Talks, through our contacts in Cuba. Got it there so it got to Vietnam. It was received in Vietnam by a concert, the artists in Vietnam put on a concert welcoming the book. And it was very well received and then we got some documentation of reviews of the book. A review in Vietnamese. So anyways we had the review translated, and one of our pieces of information that was mailed out to potential buyers of Paredon was the copy of the review of the book. And you'll find it in the files. And it indicates how the book was, you know, so the book was also sold by Paredon through the catalogue and that's why we should also give you a copy or two. One for yourself and a couple for the files or something. We got a few left over because we did a reprint right near the end of the war that we didn't manage to sell out.

But anyway the follow up is that on one of the records called *What Now People*, the song magazine on a record concept that I had, was number one there's a man singing who connects right to this story so I'll tell it to you now rather than then. He was a young marine from California with, who was born and raised in a farm worker family made up of I believe a Filipino mother and American Indian father. I think that's how it was. It might have been the reverse. But anyway American Indian and Filipino is his lineage, and he grows up traveling from town to town and working the crops in California. Because there's no future in that you, he joins the army. Gets in or the marines. Gets in the marines, gets all trained up and goes out in the field, and got out in the field, you know, literally in the field going towards some Vietnamese with his firing equipment in his hands. Then coming toward him he's seeing mothers and children and whole communities coming out to defend the community, and it strikes him that this is not right. These are, wait a minute, I look like them or they look like me. Why am I shooting at them? And so this temporarily throws him off his pace. And he gets captured. Now he's captured and taken to Hanoi and there he spends something like five years in what they used to call the Hanoi Hilton. You know, which was the prison place for mainly pilots.

Now there's a big difference between seventeen or eighteen year old marine foot soldier and a pilot who never sees the people that he's dropping the bombs on. The pilot has a whole elite impression of himself and a very and a separation by whatever many miles up in the sky he is from the people he's killing. So when get's down and captured sees himself, you know, in a much different relationship. So this guys, his name is Alfonso Rarioti or Ravioti he was known as. I meet him when he's singing at a, he's gotten out of the Hanoi Hilton and he's been repatriated, and now the war's over and there's a rally in Washington, a quite large one almost as big as the antiwar marches. Asking for amnesty for all the people who went to Canada and so forth, and I was invited to sing. I had written some special materials for it. So I'm thinking about that and I'm walking toward the stage in the stage area, and I hear this Vietnamese person singing, I think singing looks Vietnamese, sounds Vietnamese, he's stands like a Vietnamese. He's everything that's Vietnamese. But when I get up close I realize by the people telling me that no, he's not a Vietnamese. He's an American. And it turns out it's this guy Alfonso Ravioti. So at the end of his song I go back stage, and I say I have to meet you, you know. I really in fact I have to record you because I'm putting out a little record label and I have a special idea of a sort of song magazine. I want to put out recordings made by Americans in, you know, who have certain things to say and this absolutely fits the bill. And so he, so he does he comes to New York.

He records the song, and it's on *What Now People One* so he begins to tell me his story. Well he, that thing about his parentage and how he got captured and all that. Turns out how he become to sing in perfect Vietnamese and how well after five years living among them I suppose you could take on the body language, the stance and all that. But the thing that happened was he said he felt very isolated because the pilot type guys didn't want to have anything to do with him. They thought he was just this, you know, dumb kid from whatever lower class America. So he was very lonely, and he didn't have any connection with, so asked the Vietnamese. He said listen, I can see I'm going to be here for a while. I'd like to do something, you know, I don't want to just sit around here. And this is

something the pilots never did. They didn't come in contact any more than necessary with the Vietnamese, but he said I wanna, you know, I'd like to do something. And now I feel the war is a bad thing, and I'd like to help you in whatever way I can. And I appreciate my, what you're giving me in rooming and board and all that because the Vietnamese took the best care of the prisoners that they possibly could because, partly through humanitarian feelings, but partly through propaganda things. They wanted the word to get out that they were, you know, humane people. And so anyway he felt grateful. So they said well alright we'll give you a job you can work in the kitchen with the cooks. So every morning he got up at five o'clock in the morning. Went to the kitchen and working peeling potatoes and whatever else you know all chop, chop and peel, peel. Whatever the kitchen workers were doing. And seems that the kitchen workers every morning to make the work faster would sing. So they would sing all these patriotic songs. So he learned over the course of years how to sing in perfect Vietnamese a whole number of songs.

So when got on the stage in Washington he was singing, playing guitar in Washington with American friends. And then said to me something when I first introduced myself to him backstage and everything and I told him my name. And he said, oh I know you! I know you! I said how do you know me? Well I heard you a lot on Vietnamese radio. Because I'd been giving my tapes and records and whatever and sometimes interviews when I'd go to Cuba to the Vietnamese, and they were passing them back to Vietnam. They were playing them on the radio so he knew me better than the people back home did. All that adds up to fact that music can jump very, very, big boundaries and obstacles, and so that's a little side detour, but it's part of the Vietnamese records are about.

Irwin: Okay so let's go on. The next one is

Jeff: *Cuba Va*

Irwing: *Cuba Va*. Well you probably said all there was to say about that.

BARBARA: Yeah I think so.

JEFF: Uruguay.

IRWIN: Well you discussed the Chant Du Monde stuff?

JEFF: I think we heard a fair amount ...if you can think of anything logistical. She's talked about the arrangement how she was ...whole thing about how the guy was in jail.

IRWIN: Yeah. ... was in jail. For the two records. That one and the next one. We got them both through Chant du Monde. The Mexico record. In exchange we let them put out the *Free Belfast* record. That was the deal. And actually in the files you'll see documentation of Chant du Monde sending us the master tapes for these records and so on.

JEFF: ...I'll open up that file...

IRWIN: then next is *The Second Declaration of Havana*

BARBARA: We talked about...

IRWIN: What all that represented okay.

JEFF: There is a question Irwin. I see on your sheet it says cover art no. That means the mock ups from cover used to make this ...

IRWIN: haven't been able to find it.

BARBARA: Yeah we can't find the flats...

IRWIN: I mean you can just reproduce it from the existing cover I'm sure.

JEFF: Yeah.

IRWIN: I don't know what happened to it.

JEFF: Yeah.

IRWIN: And it may show up somewhere, who knows.

JEFF: And in Barbara's record *I Hate the Capitalist System* was the next thing. We talked about that.

BARBARA: You know I've met people who've bought the record just to have the cover to put up on their wall. They wanted that slogan on their wall.

JEFF: While I remember seeing it in catalogues and stuff I never quite picked up on the connection until I saw the film *Sero and Gunning*. He's sitting in the kitchen singing...singing...write the song.

IRWIN: Well, what we tried to do with that was I mean it comes off as, you know, a real big propaganda statement. I was disappointed in the ... We just never could.

BARBARA: Idea was I was taken off on "Things go better with coke." We used to have things bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger. Remember that logo? Maybe not. They had a big campaign that "things go better with coke." So I was taking off on *I Hate the Capitalist System*, trying to make it very stark, you know.

IRWIN: I had in mind that it should be done as a straw, as though somebody had written it on a fence with whitewash or something like that. But the guy that designed the cover,

that violated his sensibilities. He could never, he couldn't, he couldn't bring himself to do it.

BARBARA: He could do it, but I really into that "things go better with coke."

IRWIN: Well it's your fault.

Tape 6, Side A

JEFF: I guess we're right here.

IRWIN: Okay but the concept of the record as I saw it anyway was to show the three songs, the various ways in which different people hated the capitalist system. Some of their feelings might not be that explicit. They might not even identify the system, but it was sort of like a chronicle of the endemic illness that we attributed to the socialist system, and so that phrase kind of was the, it covered it all. I remember all the titles on the album. You know, like anything else, you always stretch it a little bit, but that was the concept.

BARBARA: Yes to some degree I also sort of a, like a vaguely autobiographical feel to it because it corresponded with the different periods of my own work too.

JEFF: ...the ...about Detroit. ...was on that one?

BARBARA: Yeah.

IRWIN: Yeah. So one part of the record was really historical stuff, people hated the capitalist system, a lot labor stuff. And then another section of the record is more contemporary ...having to do with politics. Next is

JEFF: *We Say No to Your War.*

IRWIN: Well you know all about ...that's not ...

JEFF: And then the Suni Paz record.

IRWIN: Well I don't know exactly what, I mean the significance of that in a way is I think it's the only record album we have which makes an attempt. It's sort of like the Asian American thing. This is sort of the Latino American thing.

JEFF: Okay.

IRWIN: That expression. We did that with some of the Puerto Rican stuff because there were Puerto Ricans living in the United States, but this is a little more eclectic.

BARBARA: Yeah, except it's all in Spanish and she's from Argentina.

IRWIN: Yeah, she's from Argentina but the songs reflect different Latin American groups.

BARBARA: Well it's

IRWIN:in the United States.

BARBARA: Yeah, it's basically, this woman who is very sensitive to the Latin American questions living in the United States and how she sees it.

IRWIN: Right.

BARBARA: How she, you know.

IRWIN: Okay.

JEFF: Next is Che Guevara record.

IRWIN: Well I'm sure, just sort to repeat what I think is the obvious, but who knows anymore. Che was such a culture symbol.

BARBARA: Who knows what anybody knows.

IRWIN: I mean that was part of what was important about this record. He was for many people he was not just a symbol of the Cuban revolution, but as I was saying earlier symbol of the ongoing character of Latin revolution as a continental revolution in Latin America.

BARBARA: You know, what in the broader sense, I think he was a symbol of, is and still today he represents this, the integrity who would put his life on the line for what he thought.

IRWIN: Right.

BARBARA: And was unequivocally, you know, held himself accountable to certain standards and principles and never varied, and never was ever even suspected of deviating from his principles.

IRWIN: But the culture of the period. You did not, there was, you know, go by the posters people put on the walls. The two favorite people were Che Guevara and Malcolm X in the sort of the Left broadest, Left circles in the country. It wasn't, some people had Ho Chi Minh. Not that many had Fidel. But Che and Malcolm X. Those were the two, sort of like these were people who were going to be revolutionaries come hell or high

water no matter what, and where ever they went and everything they did, the way they lived their lives as well as what their actual politics were as people understood it. For better or worse. Rightly or wrongly that's what they meant as symbols. And so there was a lot of interest in Che Guevara and, you know, very people had the opportunity to actually hear his voice. So just having his presence on the record and in the varied circumstances that people heard him in it was a lot interest to people.

BARBARA: I still think the rarity of people who have that kind of integrity today in today's life that makes them still, you know, for people who aren't even fantasizing about revolutionary ideas necessarily but they see them as a symbol of integrity.

IRWIN: Well and then, you know, he and Malcolm X were martyrs. It's sort of like a lost cause thing associated with it. You know all these kind of undercurrents to it.

BARBARA: I don't think people see them as lost causes. They were martyrs but their causes...

IRWIN: Well the cause of the continental revolution didn't proceed.

BARBARA: Well but that wasn't the whole idea. I mean that's

IRWIN: Okay, listen I think some people, that part of the glamour of these figures was the martyrdom which is often, which is also associated with lost causes in an immediate sense.

BARBARA: In an immediate sense only. But why do people value and cherish symbolism, martyrdom? Because they see it as an ongoing thing. They see it as a piece of the past that you want to carry forward, and that will help you carry it forward to the future.

IRWIN: But what you're saying about people's integrity, integrity means giving your all even if the cause seemingly is lost.

BARBARA: Yeah.

IRWIN: That's all part of it I think.

BARBARA: Alright.

IRWIN: Anyway.

JEFF: Next one is the Carlos Puebla.

IRWIN: Well we say the grand old man of Cuban colorful music. We got to know him pretty well the times we were in Cuba. In fact the very first visit we made. He's a great

wonderful character, you know, widely respected in Cuba. And very much in the Cuban tradition this.

BARBARA: Better all be carried around. Picked up.

IRWIN: Anyway I don't have much about him.

JEFF: Okay, the next one is the Chilean record.

IRWIN: I probably don't have much to add to it....

JEFF: And then the *Grain of Sand* record.

IRWIN: Which you all, we discussed to death last time.

JEFF: Theodorakis record.

BARBARA: Talked a lot about that.

IRWIN: Well, you know, that was the period in which the colonels were the ruling Hunta. And Theodorakis, in many ways, is the, there's no better person to represent the synthesis of politics and music in our time. There are lots of singers who are political in a sense that their themes are political. And the political people who also dabble in cultural things one way or another. But this guy really integrates both in a total complete way. And this guy's life was politics and maybe if not the most talented composer of our time one of the four or five. There's a tendency to say, oh a Greek composer, but this guy's an international force. Great, great figure. At the same time he was a very active member of the Greek Communist Party. He was in the underground against the Hunta, and throughout his life he's that kind of a person who took on direct political tasks and responsibilities, not simply those that were directly associated with his music. So he's a towering figure of our times in my opinion.

BARBARA: And think that's an important point about his being the best example of the integration of the artist and political activist.

JEFF: Next one is Palestinian record.

IRWIN: Well I'm sure Barbara told, you know, all the troubles we ran into with that one.

BARBARA: Oh I didn't tell him about the, maybe I put it in the notes in there about what happened.

IRWIN: Yeah, there's a line in the notes, but I mean we really came under incredible attack. And I don't remember how we resolved all of this but I think the people made the metal stampers didn't want to make them. We, word got out that we were doing.

BARBARA: Somebody made a deliberate campaign calling all of our suppliers and the pressing plant and everybody.

IRWIN: The music industry, especially in New York, is very heavily Jewish and most Jews in New York are pro-Israel. So when word got around that we were doing this record a campaign began to try to stop it. Literally to stop it. And the important figures in the music industry called our various suppliers, the people who made the masters, the plagues, the pressing. Listen, we're going to withdraw a whole lot of business from you if you cooperate with these people in putting out this record. There really was such a campaign. And I don't remember exactly how we solved it, but I know in a couple of cases we had to go to some outfits other than our usual supply. Not Pelas. Pelas did it. Their main view was listen, hey, these were customers and we just press. We don't have to ...opinions. But it really was an insight into the depth of the emotions stirred by the Palestinian question. You know it really. I mean I knew it. I mean I'm Jewish and you know I know the ...in the community. But it really got brought home. Really got brought home. And it was in a way a provocation to the music industry because of its particular character. But I have always felt that the Palestinian issues is sort of one these cutting edge issues which it's sort of like crucial litmus test, because there's nothing to be gained by supporting the Palestinians. Career-wise or anything else. Just nothing at all, and to stick your neck out and get down in the line with them in the United States.

BARBARA: Hadn't thought of it that way. Nothing to be gained.

IRWIN: No. You know, and I'm not judging other people, but let me give you an example. Here's Pete Seeger when Pete ...wanted Pete to go to Lebanon and sing. Pete, the only time Pete went to do or the first time he did, I don't know, what he did after he made it his business to sing in Israel and in Lebanon at the same time. He wanted at least that even handed treatment. Okay that was the way he viewed it. But Pete certainly got used to taking risks through out his life. That was the kind of pressure that existed. Sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly around the Palestinian issue. And I think still does to a great extent. Although there have been some interesting shifts in public opinion in the last couple of years. But I think the Smithsonian is going to get more flack over this record than anything else in our catalogue. That's my flack prediction. More than *I Hate the Capitalist System* or anything else.

JEFF: As part of this festival program summer before last with the title *Losing the Struggle* we did have a Palestinian presence there.

BARBARA: Oh yeah?

JEFF: As well as Israeli.

IRWIN: Yeah.

JEFF: And

IRWIN: Did you get any flack?

JEFF: Little bit, but strangely enough not that much, and the CD that I pulled out and gave to Barbara last Sunday, it's the cover lying right there has that on it.

IRWIN: I see.

JEFF: Has Palestinian music as well as Israeli music.

IRWIN: I know a little bit about it, but at the time we really caught it.

JEFF: We got

BARBARA: I think times have...

JEFF: ...actually from the State Department because I think the program book had listed ...as being from Palestine, it might have been Jerusalem, I'd have to look at it, but anyway

IRWIN: That's...

JEFF: Jerusalem, Israel.

BARBARA: What did you do with

JEFF: Some problem with that, we had to change the program book to elaborate on that.

IRWIN: Well, you know, 'cause the United States does not recognize Jerusalem as totally being on Israeli soil. But Israelis insist that it is. Anyway, there's a lot of sensitive diplomatic points.

BARBARA: Irwin, what did you do with the mints?

IRWIN: They're in that little jar in the cupboard.

BARBARA: In the cupboard?

IRWIN: Okay.

JEFF: But next thing is, when we quit before, the last thing we did was the *Red Star Singers, Force of Life*. That's was the last one

IRWIN: Well, I mean I'm sure Barbara knows more about them than I do. I think what's interesting about them, I think the Red Star Singers are very typical of the most politically oriented sections of the New Left and the counter culture. Unlike our

generation, they were in tune with the new culture the New Left and so on. But they were not hippies. They were not lifestyle type politicals and so

BARBARA: Not all together.

IRWIN: No, I mean everybody of that generation was influenced to one degree or another, but they didn't make it a big cause. So they're pretty explicitly political. It's one of the best selling records we did actually. But I think to a certain extent they sold a hell of a lot of records themselves because they were very popular on the West Coast at the time.

BARBARA: Yeah, they'd been performing a long time before the record came out, and so there was some interest built up, and that was their only record and so

IRWIN: Okay.

JEFF: Okay, well now we're going onto fresh territory. I guess the next thing is *Human Condition with Beverly Grant, Working People Gonna Rise*.

BARBARA: I get the ball here, okay. Well I spoke a little before about Beverly Grant. Beverly's a real example sort of an indigenous American political singer. I mean she's from her bones wants to talk about, you know, what's happening through her songs, and has made it her business to do that. In the beginning of her work she was one of the few women who was around doing that who was capable of arranging their music and writing their own songs, organizing the band, making sure they survived and all this kind of stuff. And band, she was the only woman in the band because it turned out that way. Except the, one of the musicians has a wife who got interested in technical side and became their, sort of ran their sound board on the jobs. Beverly, I think, comes from Washington State or Seattle, somewhere like that. She, when I first met her was working on this kind of, this film maker group called Newsreel. And they were going out and documenting all this stuff that was going on. As much as they could at the end of the Sixties and beginning of the Seventies. I don't know exactly what she did in Newsreel but that's where she was active, and she began to do her songs on her own, and she organized the band. She had the idea that musically she wanted it to kind of cross the boundaries.

They used a lot of country western feel, lot of rock feel, lot of musically it's a good blend of American strains, important American strains in modern music. And her songs are mainly, well that record there's a pairing of songs that represents, there's a lot talk around the country and all that about, you know, women's role and home being sort of the absorbing the shock of the man goes out to work. The woman's at home with all the domestic and he comes home, all full of frustration and pain and from that at work, you know, and being underpaid and under evaluated and under appreciated and everything else and takes it out on his woman. And she has to bear that burden besides, well that was a very important theme of for women during that period when they were kind of emerging out of the consciousness of the Fifties, which is still existing in the Sixties and early Seventies and maybe still today. That's the scenario. It happens to a lot of people.

So they had a song about that and then how Janey in the character in the song. Janey finally leaves and goes off on her own, and Janey is not Daddy's Janey, not Charlie's Janey, but she's Janey's Janey. Okay. So it's ...self definition for a woman. A very good song. And then companion song is about Charlie. About how Charlie, what he endures during the work day, and all the troubles he has and why he brings home this whole baggage to dump on his wife and everything. And so I think it's rather unusual in that, in the pairing of the two. You know, looking at both the problems of both people, because Beverly didn't want to come off in the mode of some of the early feminist recordings of being anti-male, or, you know, cutting out the male society. But it was in rather let's try and understand, and, you know, went over to our way of looking at our own self definition for women and that was one.

And they had a very working class outlook. All the people in the band working class families, and some of them were of ethnic Italian extraction or different, I forget what all, but they all had kind of working class ethnic groups, and that was the sort of philosophical basis of the band. And it, because quite popular played around New York a whole lot. Around New York and vicinity. Played a lot. Later on Beverly, after the record and that period, later on formed a larger group and had more of a, more singers. She had a Zimbabwean woman who was singer in the group, and a Puerto Rican man who was a, did a lot singing in Spanish, and it became a very international sound after a while, and Beverly personally played quite an active role generally around song movement. She was went to play in El Salvador when there was festival held in El Salvador of political song. So it's pretty frontline activity you know. And they went. You know, she went and did her thing there. I think that, well be good to hear sometime, have her detail story of that trip because it was very, the way they organized it to have a big music festival political song right under the noses of the fascists within the country, and during the arms struggle and everything else it was pretty interesting. So Beverly is alive and well in New York if you want to talk to her about it.

JEFF: Any observations on that one Irwin?

IRWIN: ...record speaks for itself.

BARBARA: The record really does speak for itself. It was, 'cause I spoke earlier about the Red Star Singers and other things, I mean it was real answer to my plea generally to try to get more American stuff, you know, more of what was actually going on here within the country in response to all this worldwide movement, and partly in a counterpart of it, you know. While war is going on here we just all playing dead or just all out demonstrating everyday, or what were we doing? And so this was really to me really helped to fulfill, but the band also had certainly commercial potential, and they were in fact, for a time they were signed to Vanguard. And it was interesting because I had been telling Beverly for a long time, Beverly, you know, might as well record with Paredon because commercial labels are not going to let you, if you go to record with some commercial label they're going to want you to do milder material. You're not going to be able to do everything that you want to do, and your full statement, you know, you can make on Paredon. And plus we don't care after that if you go and record on some

commercial label. We're not going to hold you to some exclusive, our policy was never exclusivity see. It was like we're going to give you whatever support we can to put out a record, but, you know, we don't own you. And if this helps you as a stepping stone to get you a record with some label out there that can distribute you widely that's beautiful. Do it. You know.

IRWIN: Well actually our philosophy was Paredon's reason for existence was to do stuff that other record companies wouldn't, and if we found other record companies wanted to do it great. Because they could get wider distribution than we could. So we never, I mean that was our approach to all the artist who were willing to record, that we're very happy if this becomes a stepping stone that opens doors to broader audiences.

BARBARA: That's right. So Beverly felt the same way. She felt like, well gee maybe we should record for a commercial label. She was very nervous about should we do this, should we not, sort of back and forth for a while. And then she got signed with Vanguard. Vanguard run by Maynard Solomon. Maynard Solomon wrote a book called, something what was it? *Marxism and Culture*. He considers himself, you know, a political guy. And he's the one who put out Paul Robeson's records and Joan Baez and what have you. And he said to her come by and bring your, I want your most outrageous, you know, your most political songs. So she brought them over there and she called me afterwards and said, well he told me to bring my most outrageous songs. But when I got there he said, oh I didn't mean that far out. So they didn't do a record for Vanguard. Did it for us. Okay.

JEFF: Okay let's go on. The next one is *Dominican Republic, The Time Is Coming*.

IRWIN: Well the Dominican Republic. I'll just talk about that for a second. The Dominican Republic is probably, I mean like so many Caribbean countries, so much tragedy. It, you know, it shares one island with Haiti. And there's probably no country in Latin America, all of, you know, Latin American Caribbean more destitute than Haiti, but probably Dominican Republic runs them a close second. And but there have been active political movements from time to time. Of course U.S. troops invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 because there was a move on the way, actually a kind of a progressive minded figure got elected and the marines went in ostensibly to protect U.S. property but actually to make sure this guy didn't take office. So this is a record that was put together by a group functioning in the Dominican Republic. I think they were largely student based.

BARBARA: Yeah young students.

IRWIN: *Expresión Joven* is young, you know, youth expression. But they were all actively involved in the anti-dictatorship movement. Anyway you know more about that.

BARBARA: Well it's all in the booklet basically, so from that point of view they made a trip to New York sponsored by, you know, progressive Dominicans there, and that's how we happened to be in touch with them. They, one thing, they were unhappy about with

the record we noted that, you know, they were just whatever three or four people singing with one guitar, and the musical accompaniment was thin and was not very adequate to the weight of the material, and also to the singing and everything else. So we decided we wanted to add on to it some more music. Musicalized it. So after they left town and I couldn't get in touch with them after that 'cause they were back in, whatever, the Dominican underground, we got a hold of a group, Carlos Masetongos in New York. And they, we mixed in some musicalization. You know. Little drums and things like whatever bass and fattened up the musical sound a little bit. And I thought it sounded pretty good, everybody around, you know, in our little circle of musical critics all, they all liked it. But they heard it, and they felt upset because they said it was the rhythms weren't exactly Dominican rhythms. They were sort of more generically Caribbean or they didn't have enough Dominican. Well this in a sense speaks to the strong nationalism that goes on in all these islands, you know, were culturally under attack all the time. They're trying so hard to defend their national culture that I can understand their sensitivity and had I really, you know, thought about it, I might have, well I don't know. The point was, you know, we couldn't imagine people actually buying or using the record as it was. It just sounded too empty and maybe that was a mistake. I'm not sure but just telling you that. I think it sounds good. They don't quite agree.

JEFF: Alright let's go on. Next one 1026 *Italy Avanti Popolo*.

BARBARA: *Popolo!*

IRWIN: *Avanti Popolo!*

BARBARA: [singing] *Avanti o popolo, alla riscossa, bandiera rossa*. You know, the old, it's the most famous revolutionary song of Italy. It's known all over the world. That's the song. *Avanti Popolo*. Rise up people. And that was a collection of things.

IRWIN: ...That's a communist...

BARBARA: It was collected in, well in Italy, there's a very strong, actually beginning back when Alan Lomax went there during the Fifties as part of, you know, escaping the Red Menace in the country. The threat of, you know, the red hunt, the red scare, the red the drunken senator, whatever his name was. McCarthy. Oh yeah, anyway, so Alan went to Europe and he spent sometime in Italy doing a lot of collecting and talking and getting to know people, and really had a lot of effect. It left behind a legacy of people who understood the value collecting the stuff that was there, and fortunately was still in the state, a little bit more still to this day, more of the whatever for want of a better word folk culture is alive and well there, you know, than maybe here or anywhere. So their thing about the folk culture there was highly politicized. So that, well, there was a team, sort of a few sort of teams of researchers and documenters and so on, and musical record label was formed called the *Dischi al Sol*, "Sun Records or "Records of the Sun." And there was man named Gianni Bosio. Gianni Bosio would sort of the equivalent of, it's Bosio. I don't think it's in those notes there. Gianni Bosio, but it's in the notes in the file. Was a very significant person in terms of collecting and documenting this stuff, and the one who

made sure that it all got translated into records or archives or whatever. He's sort of a, I don't know a combination of well ...was, was... There are little clubs still in Italy called the Gianni Bosio club of people who still try to do this on their own, and Alessandro Portelli happened to study here at Cal or somewhere in the States during his boyhood, youthhood, and was spoke English perfectly and hooked on American culture while he was here. He's written an important book on Woody Guthrie and another one on a sort of the protest song of the U.S.

IRWIN: He is one of Italy's most important folklorists. We had some friends who were visiting us from Italy. Woman ran a bookstore, and we mentioned his name and she says you know Portelli, wow like this guy is one of the great intellectual lights of Italy.

BARBARA: Anyway he teaches at the University of Rome, and now he teaches at the University of Rome and, you know, still very interested in all this stuff. Well, so he was part of this whole collecting, and very a political person too, very interested in the world developments and what was going on in the Italian movement. I think, for a long time, critical of the kind of chicken-heartedness of the Italian communist party and wanting to see this extra-parliamentary Left, as it's called there, have more strength. And anyway his point of view is quite independent of all these different, he wasn't, he doesn't operate out a particular party line or anything like that. He's an independent thinker. So anyway he collected, out of all this that he knew about, some of it he recorded himself, and some of it he got from other people. Put together this anthology of political song in Italy of that time, which I think is, you know, superb. I mean its superlative, it's goes beyond anything that I know of in any other place.

The one side of the record is concentrating on the ...just comes out of the folk, you know, it starts out with a little sort of town band playing "Avanti Popolo," this red song we talk about, and has some of the rice field workers, the women who are famous for harmonizing as they plant the rice and harvest the rice and sing. Some of those famous songs that they do, and they record in the field and so on. It's that side concludes with some workers in Sardinia who work at something like this sort of wool carting tradition of, you know, sitting at the table pounding the wool as it passes from, but it's passing cloth around doing something, carting it or doing something to it and singing at the same time. And they have a, they sing in a very harmonizing is very, is a pedal point deep bass voice kind of keeps it going. It's very, very interesting musically, but he found examples of them singing about Lenin and Ho Chi Minh, and these are people in isolated village in Sardinia, you know, and but anyway it's a great panorama of that.

And then the other side is contemporary political singers of a more, you know, the young conscious singers, people who come out of different political traditions. Who have written songs about, one of the famous songs of that era is on there called "Contessa." It's about the sort of contrast the countess, or contessa, her lifestyle and the worker's lifestyle. It was very popular in Italy during the Seventies. But he picked the cream of the crop of that and, you know, the cream of crop of the traditional stuff, and put them all in one album, and that makes it really very special document. And he wrote a lot of notes and made it into a scholarly booklet. Very, very, very well put together.

IRWIN: Yeah, well this is Portelli's album. He produced it. He sent us a finished production. With the notes and he worked with the singers and so on. So in all our dealings were with him. What's interesting to me is it's a glimpse into the political culture of a country where the communist party is a mass party, okay, so I mean at the time this record came out the communist party in Italy is still pulling out about a third of the vote. And that was not just a voters, I mean that reflected very real division in society. You're talking about a country where a third of the people think of themselves as communists to one degree or another. And then what does the records

BARBARA: More than the Soviet Union by now.

IRWIN: A lot more. What that record does, it give you a glimpse into a society in which the communist subculture is so all pervasive that it is totally infused with the popular folk culture. So that's what this, the *Avanti Popolo*, is just an ordinary village marching band which you can hear all over Europe in, you know, rural villages, except they're playing communist songs very unselfconsciously, like they take it for granted. And so there is that sense of there's no other country in Europe like it from that point of view, even France where the French Communist Party of comparable size, in a way there, they were completely concentrated in industrial workers and among intellectuals. In Italy it was throughout the entire society. Rural and urban and so on there and totally, totally integrated with the popular expression of the culture. It's a great record. I love it. It's one of my favorite records that we put it. But I think that's part of the significance of it.

BARBARA: It's, you know, the film *1900*? That wasfilm. That gives you a sense of what, you know, some of the songs in there, some of these songs are in there, maybe even from some of the same sources.

IRWIN: Well I suggest that we stop. I have to make dinner.

JEFF: Okay. 1047 *Argentina*.

BARBARA: Uh oh. We need to for this one.

IRWIN: Well, I want to get started then.

JEFF: Actually, I'm getting a little tired. Maybe we can

BARBARA: Okay well....Let me talk about this, get it out of the way.

JEFF: Okay.

BARBARA: Okay. I met a man named Bernardo Polombo about the time that I was, well he was a member of this Grupo, El Grupo. I told you about that, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's song group in which Suni Paz sang and maybe Pepe and Flora once in a while, I'm not sure, and this guy Bernardo. Even though he's Argentine he was, and Suni

too, was Argentine, but they were saying on behalf of the Puerto Rican cause because that was the main sort of, the main thing going for Spanish speaking people in New York. And I'd been thinking about, okay we've got records ...Ecuador, we've got different things but we need something, we need something from Argentina because it's a very important country in the hemisphere. And I met him through working on different platforms and different concerts and things with the group. And he said that his, he was frustrated about making a recording because a lot of his songs that he'd written, he says a lot of people in Argentina sing them, a lot of political song singers are using these songs, but I haven't recorded them myself, and there's no available record of them up here in the United States. So I thought, well this is a very good thing to do then.

So he got a couple other singers together and decided how to do the thing, and unfortunately it was recorded very late at night all the time because he got the idea of doing it with a Puerto Rican engineer who was able to moonlight, well he actually making some money for himself on the side by going in the studio that worked at during the day, going there at night. Open the place up and use it on his own, just take the money directly. So that's how it was done. I was at the moment, I was under doctor's orders to go to bed before midnight so I was missing a lot of the sessions. I was sort of just handed it over to Bernardo, let him finish the recordings and all that, and it got done. I found out later that unfortunately, remember I mentioned before that I usually tried check out whether the political community that would be logical for a given record would be there, you know, would appreciate and support the record that was made. Well I found out that the Argentine political community in New York didn't appreciate Bernardo. I don't know exactly why, but they didn't, so they didn't do much to support this work.

An interesting thing about the cover was that when the cover was, we were trying to find some, what is a typical Argentine look like. Well there's so many European strains in Argentina that it's very hard to figure out what a typical Argentine looks like. So we, at the time, knew an artist who wanted to do the cover, and she was willing to, we wanted to draw something for the cover. And she was willing to do the research, so she got out different books and all that, and looked around, tried to find out what an Argentine person actually looks like, you know, more of a prototype. Couldn't find anything so she went to the Argentine embassy, and she said I want, give me some photographs of some Argentines. I want to make a, some typical Argentines. So she said they kept showing her pictures of pin up girls and I don't know what, you know, stuff out of tourist literature. That they didn't have anything folkloric or whatever, anything to do with indigenous people. It's all to do with this very European citified, you know, commercial types and everything. So she said no, no. I mean Argentine, you know, like Che Guevara. And these, of course, were fascists Argentines in there. And they said Che Guevara. He's not Argentine, he's Cuban. You know. The whole world knows he's Argentine...that he's definitely Argentine. So she eventually had to just kind of speculate.

Later on, a year or two later I guess, I went to Cuba and I took a copy of that record and a copy of the *Che Guevara Speaks*, and I gave them to Che's father who was living Cuba at the time. Had a wonderful evening just talking, you know, getting acquainted with the

old guy, and so I told him the story, you know. So he says, well, oh I'm talking about, she couldn't find what a typical Argentine looks, and meanwhile he's sitting there with a pencil and paper, and he's like this and about two or three seconds, you know, he's drawn this little drawing which I still have somewhere in my files. He's says there, that's a typical Argentine. And of course it was a very indigenous looking face and he'd captured it perfected. It turns out he's a very good graphic, or a very good drawer, you know. So too bad we didn't have Che's father's drawing on the cover, but we have a very nice one though by this woman Amy Rosenberg.

There was some difficulties with Bernardo's record because contractually we set a date one day to make all this, make all these, we talked it over....through all this singing on the same platforms and all this stuff. And he was supposed to come over one day, and the other members of the group came over to my house and he never showed up. Never showed up, never showed up. Turned out there'd been some snow on that day and he didn't come, didn't feel like, I don't know what. He didn't call and he didn't show, so somehow we never made another day. So we never made a contract in writing. But the, you know, act of his taking over the sessions and doing the sessions, and we paid him for the sessions, and paid him to pay the engineer. He knew that we weren't going to pay any advances, or we didn't have the money to give any artist fees or anything like this, you know. It's a just question, you want to make it, you make it, and he knew. But later he began to have misgiving about, and I think what happened was he came in contact over some other things he was concerned about legalities some other song rights and things, and he came in contact with a lawyer who for a number of reasons thought oh well I'll jump on this, and the lawyer decided to sue us. So Irwin, do you want to get into this and tell about the rest of this?

IRWIN: What?

BARBARA: I just got to the point where Bernardo decided to sue us.

IRWIN: Save it.

BARBARA: Okay, well we'll save it. Let Irwin talk about it 'cause I think he could give you a clearer view of it. Okay you want to do anything else or do you want to cut, hang it up?

Tape Six, Side B

IRWIN: Oh you talked some about that...

BARBARA: You can listen to what I said if you want.

IRWIN: No. I mean, but said you will find there will be a couple cases where people say, oh there's some legal question around certain Paredon records. To the best of our knowledge there were only two situations that were raised. One was raised by Bernardo Polombo. Not about, not having anything to do with our right issue the record or

anything else. But it became a bit of a ...and there's a lot of gossip around about it. The fact of the matter is that Bernardo was clearly unhappy with, he felt the, either the sales were not what expected them to be, or maybe we weren't telling the truth about the sales, or there were a number of things like that that he complained about. And, you know, we kept saying this is the way we do business and we don't, you know

BARBARA: Thought we didn't do enough publicity on his record. We were favoring other people or something.

IRWIN: At some point.

BARBARA: We didn't do publicity on anybody actually.

IRWIN: At some point he went to a lawyer with his complaints about us and filed a suit against us, Barbara and me personally because Paredon wasn't a corporation. The suit was not about the record. The suit was very peculiar. It claimed that one of the songs that appeared on the album, written by Bernardo, that it was unauthorized use of the song. I said well how can that be. You actually went into the studio and recorded it yourself. The claim was that we had never given him any writer's royalties for that particular song, and it was the first time the song had ever been recorded. As you probably know once a song has been recorded anybody else can do it and they just have to pay the statutory royalty. Not for the first composition. So we said okay, fine we'll pay the royalties for it. We were under assumption that you had cleared all the material on the record, that was part of our deal. But if you feel you want this, we'll pay you for it at the statutory rate whatever it was. But clearly that was not they were after, 'cause we said look ...account for all the royalties on all the statements, all payments and we'll pay you. The lawyer said no, this is a violation of the copyright. And he actually brought the case to court. We did not take it seriously at all. The lawyer was extremely abusive to me every time I spoke to him on the phone. But it finally dawned on me he was trying to create a situation where we would just settle. Make some monetary settlement, and at some point in this we sat down Bernardo and said hey we'll give you your record back, we'll pay you all outstanding royalties and call it quits. What more do you want? And he said I got to think about it, and he refused because I guess the lawyer advised him, look we can do better. So

BARBARA: At one point determined that he was confusing you with Moe in

IRWIN: Oh I don't know about that

BARBARA: That the lawyer

IRWIN: Oh the lawyer

BARBARA: Yeah the lawyer

IRWIN: It turns out the lawyer was really pissed because he had once brought a law suit against Moe in Folkways that he had lost. Having to do with Moe's issuing some Israeli songs. And he knew I had worked for Folkways so he ...maybe thought I was even a partner in Folkways, something like that. It was like a personal vendetta on his part in many ways. Anyway, in any event Bernardo turned down this offer. We said look, we'll give you back the record, pay you all the outstanding royalties and we'll be done. He said I have to think about it, and then he came back and said no. We still didn't take it seriously because on the face of it didn't seem to be any case. And finally we walked into court, and thinking it would just be obvious to the judge, and the judge said no you better get yourself a lawyer, I'll give you one week and then we'll hear this case. So a good friend of ours recommended copyright lawyer to us. We ...he said no, this is not a case, I can't believe.

BARBARA: You can't afford ...me. The money that's involved it

IRWIN: Yeah it's too small and it's ridiculous case. I can't believe this guy is serious. Let me call up this lawyer, we'll work something out. I mean we were sitting right in his office at time. So he calls up this lawyer and he just listened and you could see he became pale. And when he got done he hung up, he said that man is insane. He said I've never spoken to such an abusive individual in my life. And he insists that he wants to go to court. So I said what are we going to do. I'm going to take it. I'm not going to charge you anything for it because this man has infuriated me. It is the most irresponsible thing I ever heard of. So the following week we went court and it was a real trial before a judge, civil action and it was a federal court because it was related to copyright.

BARBARA: So this lawyer we never met before in our lives represented us very well for nothing.

IRWIN: So the judge heard the thing and the way they do, they say okay you'll be notified what the decision is. It took about four six weeks. And he just threw out the case. I mean Bernardo testified. Barbara testified. Etcetera, etcetera. And the judge just threw out the case. It was just groundless. And that was the end of it. But Bernardo continued to spread the word that somehow we had cheated him, and we had to tell people look, the man actually went to court and it was demonstrated there was no grounds for it whatsoever. But you know how the word of mouth stuff can get around. So that's why we got a whole bunch relating to this trial which I'm not going to turn over to you, it really affects Barbara and me personally because it's a suit against us and it has nothing to do with your rights. Which it'll still have to deal with Bernardo because the masters were returned to him, tell him you want to reissue it and see if he says okay. From our point of view we've given you our rights. But Bernardo may object for some reason, and you'll have to work it out with him.

BARBARA: I think he'll be delighted.

IRWIN: He ought to be. But he behaved so irrationally in this case that I don't want to predict anything. The other case was not even a case but Daniel Viglietti was very annoyed.

BARBARA: I went over that.

IRWIN: Oh so you know the story.

BARBARA: And he seems to have realized that his annoyance was

IRWIN: I don't know what he realizes but we acted in good faith and there was never anything else to say about it, was paid royalties and so. Okay that's all I wanted to add about 1027.

JEFF: Okay, 1028 *Bernice Reagon*.

BARBARA: Okay, well you know I've known Bernice since the Freedom Singer days, appreciated what she does very much. And so when we first started the label I approached her about doing a record because I know she had done one solo record for Folkways, but you know she was under recorded as a soloist as far as I was concerned, and was exactly the kind of person that I thought should be represented in the catalogue. So you know I put the word out, but she busy with the formation of Sweet Honey I guess some other, and I think she was already working for the Smithsonian then, and so it just nothing happened. And suddenly I got a call from her, and she said do you still want me to make a record, and I said yes. And she says well I'm ready to do that, but you know so it'll be me, myself, and I'll come up to New York, and we'll, you know, we'll just do it. So Bernice alone in the studio with nothing but the ...which broke in the middle of the sessions, we had to go get another one someplace, made this record, but when you hear it you hear many vocal parts, you hear a whole ensemble singing because we, by overdubbing, she put in all the parts.

And as a singer I want to tell you, watching her work was an absolute revelations, and she, I consider her a real tour de force. I don't know anybody else who's done anything like it. She overdubbed all the voices and made this whole album, as you will hear, very texturally involved and interesting without retaking anything. I mean everything was first take, first take, first take. All the way through the album, which indicated to me that she had just clear grasp of what the sonority she wanted, what the harmony she wanted to hear, and probably that has to do with the work she's been doing with female voices all this time. But she, but this was a long while back, you know. She wasn't as experienced then as she is now, but it was it was a real feat. I don't know, maybe Bobby McFerin can do it but practically no one else I can think of can even begin to do what she did. It's a very exciting record. The contents of it, I realized after I started to work on the booklet what she had in mind was a sort of a an autobiographical statement 'cause it's a, she starts out with her earliest, you know, something representing her early days in her father's church, and then her days involved with the Civil Rights Movements, and right down historically, and it's got some commentary about the time that she made the record

in. The last song is something that she wrote, well it was made right on the moment of the victory in Vietnam, and she made a very exciting song to put on the album, but just prior to making the album, you know. So I think it documents a very important stage or period in the life of someone I consider one of our most important cultural figures, you know. Bernice did it single handedly. Wrote the notes on the album. I took the picture. Anyway, it's a wonderful album. It still stands up very much today. And I think for all the people who appreciate what, you know, the work she does know it'll be an interesting, it'll be a revelation to them.

JEFF: Jackie Jones is the obvious one for a reissue on a CD.

IRWIN: So far as I know she probably has the master tapes. I think they were returned to her.

BARBARA: Yeah. Okay, so I think that's about all we tell. She might want to tell you some more herself.

JEFF: She's easily contacted.

IRWIN: Part of the family.

BARBARA: What's next?

JEFF: 1029 which is the Filipino

BARBARA: Well the script of ...lot of description of how the thing was made so I don't need to go too far into it on the tape I guess - except for the germination of the idea. Let's see. What year does it say on there, what year it was made?

JEFF: '76.

BARBARA: '76? Well I think it was '71 or 2 there I went with my son Pablo to the Philippines, and we were going on one of these trips of in response to G.I. Movement activity, going to, well it was, we were invited to sing for the G.I. Movement ...had organized themselves in several places in the Philippines and in Okinawa, and the invitation actually was a, at the moment when Jane Fonda had gotten involved with the G.I. coffeehouse movement. And so the invitation was made to Jane and me to go there, and Jane on the other hand had some immediate commitments and would have, well when she got the idea of creating a sort of traveling theater group to go and present a whole show, sort of an alternative USO type. So it would take for her to do what she wanted to do it, it would take some time to raise the money and gather the artists and create the show and everything like that. I, on the other hand, had had a lot of experience these G.I. groups and knew that it immediately, that they were big enough to ask to do, be able conceptualize doing something, that bringing in outside artists, that they would also be subject destruction into the whole thing. And that if we waited more than a few weeks we would find nothing much there to, you know, everybody would've, because what the

Pentagon used to procedure was as soon the people got organized at a particular base they would start harassing and putting in jailing. Actually some of the people, and some of the people would just be threatened and given all kinds of reasons not pursue the activity, and other people would either be let out of the services or shipped to another place just to break up. So they could do that very quickly. Effectively. You know. And that they had pretty much accomplished by the time we got there, because what turned out the group that sent the, it was called the FTA Show, Jane's show. Like the earlier album. FTA means "Fuck the Army" or "Free the Army" in polite terms. But the G.I.s, they used to yell Fuck the Army.

So when, let's see by the time we went it was several months later because the body of the, well I started to tell you the organization that sent the group was the USSF United States Servicemen's Fund. This group of pacifists and others who constituted themselves as a funding group to try and make the G.I. Movement has support. And so again they had to raise money, by the time it all came together, they had in mind that we were all going to go together, of course, because the invitation had come originally to just to Jane and me. So as it evolved and Jane's show came together it was on the West Coast, and I was on the East Coast, and she had the conception of sort of cast it with, you know, she wanted to have make sure she covered sort of the minority groups in the cast, make sure it had certain number of women and men. You know she was being very politically correct in her casting, and she decided that she wanted to have instead of me go as the, in the role of whatever, the however you want to define this, you know, the white female singer. She decided well we'll get someone who is younger and more notorious and got Holly Nader. Holly had just been in *Hair*, you know the cast of *Hair*, and was actively in a show business career at the time. So Holly went and did a great job. I saw the show, she was great in the show. She had, well anyway, so we then were sent ahead. The idea was struggled over a whole lot because, you know, we definitely wanted to go and had been prepared to go for months, and this decision was made about the casting.

And anyway, they decided to send me and Pablo ahead, just ahead. We went about two or three weeks ahead of the FTA Show and went to all the towns, and sort of like point people for the whole process. And what we found as we went around that in fact this G.I. Movement had been decimated in a way that I explained. So we wound up singing a whole lot more for audiences of the Philippine Left which was, they had a youth organization, it was kind of youth cultural organization that sponsored it from our end of it. And so really, you know, couldn't quite see how the FTA Show was going to, well of course the FTA show, with the strength of Jane Fonda's name, they got big audiences because, and big audiences of G.I.s I'm saying, and probably the Filipinos didn't have any idea who she was but the G.I.s did. And so we sang, performed for the Filipinos and she performed for the G.I.s basically, except in some small sort of house gatherings. And in the process got acquainted with the Philippine movement, and so one of the things I determined we should do is produce a record from that movement, and, you know, from the songs that I was beginning to hear. We asked them to get started doing that, and they agreed and that was a great idea.

Then people started to work at it but then martial law came down, you know, and that was government got very tough on the Left, and so a lot of these young people were actually jailed or were had to go underground, had to just split. And, you know, so the record, the process of making the record became much more difficult, but also they felt much more important because it was one way they could have some visibility. So the rest is all detailed there in these papers, and I guess you can just get it from that it took, you know, quite a few years to get the whole thing done. And when it was finally done where they got to take it to the States, the quality wasn't good enough so we had to do it all over again here. We gathered a lot exiles together on both coasts and recorded the songs all over again. But it was, you know, I think an important album to make even if it took a lot more work than you could ever have imagined. More sacrifice on the part of a whole lot of people.

JEFF: Okay.

IRWIN: The particular movement here, the songs that are on this album, is actually at core of it was the Philippine Communist Party, but this was like the new communist party of the Philippines. There was an old communist party whose ties were with the Soviet Union. This was a Maoist party, and it was in active cooperation with the Chinese during this period, and was looked at as one of the strongest Maoist parties outside that wasn't totally in state power. The work that we did to get this record was done with what was in part a support group for the Maoist organization in the Philippines, but it was also an organization to for the political community in the United States, so that Union of Democratic Filipinos and, as I think Barbara mentioned yesterday, the original tapes, I don't know they were lost or the quality was too poor. So they had to redo it, so they got a small chorus of people from the Union of Democratic Filipinos in the United States to do the same songs, but they did the actual performing on it. And I believe you added some musical instrumentation after they got done, and that was another one of those situations where they were a little bit unhappy with it.

BARBARA: No they weren't the...really liked it.

IRWIN: Oh, okay.

BARBARA: In this case the edition we used some, well there's a cellist in New York, Abby, well I've forgotten her last name, used to work with Suni Paz a lot, who did a really tasteful job of adding sort of a little bottom on there. And then I don't know what else, I hadn't heard it musically for a while. I couldn't tell you all the details but anyway whatever we did to it they were really happy with it because it sounded really professional and didn't violate their thinking of, so I guess that's that.

JEFF: Okay. Next one's 1030 Chile Songs of the, *Songs for the Resistance*, 1975.

BARBARA: Well that's a very, that record there came to us by, dropped out of the sky because the Chilean refugees coming and living in the States, you know, most of ones we knew were, they were all using *noms de guerre* and were very, you know, people who

had just come with the shirts on their back and not too many resources. But some of them, quite a lot talents and educations and, you know Chile's not backward country. You get a whole different sort refugee than we're used to having come up from the south of peasants but there were educated people. And one day we got a call through, I don't know, I guess they knew about our activities, and just got a call saying if you're interested in making a record about Chile come to this coffee shop and meet somebody who looks like so and so and you know, so it's all very clandestinely done. And that's all in that descriptive catalogue too, but so we never did meet the people who either did performed or did any of the work on it. They did a lot of work. They did a lot of the booklet preparation work and translation work and got the papers, got everything together.

But it was always meeting and getting a packet stuff from somebody, and going over and sitting in the coffee shop, and different people. They did completely in clandestine manner of, I think that as I pointed out in those notes, you know, it was justified because I mean when they could see someone managed to kill Latelie with a car bomb anything could've happened to those folks. And he had no idea what they were up against here in this country where the U.S. Left has a better idea what, how far their opposition will go or what they'll do or how they work and all that. These people didn't know at all so they were just treating this as if, I think appropriately in their case, as if they were in, had to work in that way. I later found out who the artists, at least who was responsible for making the tape. I don't know to what extent he sings on it because I'm not familiar enough with his voice, but I think it was now, it can be told, you know, it's late enough after things I think it was Patricio Mans. He's a very well known Chilean singer who had gone after the coup to Europe, and I'm quite sure he was the one responsible for the creation of the music and the master tape. So that's the story of that record.

JEFF: Irwin do you have anything to add...

IRWIN: The political group behind this was the MIR of the, the initials MIR stand for Movement of the Revolutionary Left. The Spanish words add up to MIR. They were, they viewed themselves as the, to the left of Allende and traditional Chilean communist party. And they were among the critics of Allende. They supported Allende, but they were critical because he they felt he had not, he and the Chilean socialist party hadn't prepared the people for the coup. Didn't want to arm them and it's been a big political controversy among the Chilean exiles for a long time, as you can imagine. And so they had a whole separate program, and again we're, this is somewhat self descriptive from their point of view, but they claim that unlike the Chilean community party, many of who's members fled or so on, their line was to keep as many of their own members in Chile as possible working in the underground and trying to organize an armed struggle against the Pinochet regime. Turns out probably didn't make that much difference, either way nobody was able to oust Pinochet until, you know, he got pressure to step down from other sources, but that was the, so these songs really come out of that particular group.

BARBARA: Yeah, that's important to keep in mind because the MIR, well I guess it's all been said

JEFF: Next one is the Haitian record 1031.

BARBARA: Okay. Well there are large quantities, large numbers of Haitian refugees living in New York. They blend somewhat in the landscape into the large quantity of other Caribbean black who are living in Brooklyn, people from Jamaica and Trinidad but Brooklyn has a Carnival there that is as big, or bigger, than anything that happens in Trinidad in or in the Caribbean. And they bring up all the big stars and they just have a huge parade down the main drag. They sort of blend in there, but of course they're different. Their history is totally different, and their language, they're a little bit, well if you know anything about Haiti's conditions there, the economic conditions, it even a person with some means is poorer than anybody you know in the United States, you know. It's just tragically without resources, and so an exile is going to be starting real zero when they get to the States. So, however some of the people managed to have gotten some education. Not everybody gets more second or third grade, you know, but some people, and they, when they got to New York made up a little more, a sort of a Haitian middle class, you know, and from that group I guess could come the idea of a music group. And there are over two or three, I think, groups of exile musicians in New York operating that I know of, and some let's see, I'm trying to think.

At that time I made a real canvas trying to find who was around and really only found one or two records of Haitian political song, not musically very interesting but politically interesting. And anyway I was very anxious to put out a Haiti record because, you know, the situation there is always been so bad, and it's so close, and it's so important to, for Americans to understand something about Haiti since we're going to be mating and living with Haitian Americans, you know, for a while to come. And anyhow I met someone through, I think, through *The Guardian*. A guy whose name is Lionel Ligreau. That's the name I remember. Lionel was doing some writing for *The Guardian* and asked him about if there was a music group. So he put me onto this group, Artist Independent. Who turned out were really, you know musically very, very good, very interesting songs, and very politically, very together and very aware of what they wanted to say. And they had been long since ready to make a record but nobody'd asked them. So I got them into a studio right away and they made a really, really nice musically exquisite record.

And then we're talking about the booklet, you know, we, I wanted to make something that for them would be a real useful tool in their organizing work, and both inside the Haitian community and out. So we agreed that we'd try to put all the material in the book bilingually, you know, and but then how do you manage getting Haitian creole into type, because well it uses the same letters it's not spelled anything like French at all. It sounds like French, a lot of it, but it doesn't look like French. It's not in, a lot of the words of course of Haitian invention rather than French. And so I puzzled that for a while and when we decided, well one of their members offered to come over and type up all this stuff on a typewriter, at home we had a carbon ribbon typewriter. She typed all the creole material in a form, you know, that could be used and put into the booklet. So we had a bilingual booklet and they were thrilled because apparently very, very little in print any

where or at the time very little in print in creole. And so they were really excited about being able to, you know, offer that to the community. So that record actually sold very well. They really have constantly, you know, ordered. I think up until anybody could find what Paredon was, they were still ordering records.

IRWIN: But I think that was sold mostly by their

BARBARA: Through them.

IRWIN: Through the Haitian community.

BARBARA: Yeah.

IRWIN: It didn't have much of a market outside the Haitian community. Unfortunately. I mean that's...

BARBARA: Yeah outside the Haitian community unfortunately the American Left hasn't really taken up the question of Haiti so nobody was really running around buying Haitian records, but the day may still come when the Left has to really, I mean it's about here isn't it? If there was an American Left, were there any kind of organization right now Haiti would be on the agenda.

IRWIN: To the, see the separation between the movements of people who live in the United States but exiles from certain countries, and all of the Left themselves, and then the rest of the Left unique to Haiti, but Haiti being a French speaking creole country, it doesn't even fit in with that, easily with the other Latin American support organizations, that's central America, Chile and so on. Anyway, it's much more part of the Caribbean. It's ties are a lot with Jamaica and Trinidad, you know, that kind of tradition in any event.

JEFF: Next we have the Estrella Artua.

BARBARA: Estrella Artua. Yeah. Estrella is, a at the time that we got her to do this record she was one of the most powerful female performers I ever heard, really she just knocked everybody out. She had, was an actress to begin with, and then started sing and play the guitar and compose songs and make settings of other great poets, Mateo. And when I met her she was working, well we were on some performances together in New York, and she was working a lot with the, she's been on the same kind of programs as this group called *El Grupo* that was the PSP, the Puerto Rican Socialist Party's group. And she had various difficulties getting her work really appreciated and presented because she was a woman, because she was so powerful, and so I don't know. It was just in that culture, it's not very, people weren't used to that, you know. A woman with a real strong, not being flirtatious and cutesy on the stage or anything, people were, it was very hard even for even the Left men to accept that. So she had problems, and I think that there's also a strong sort of homophobic thing that goes in Latin culture. She was clearly a lesbian, and so she, I felt she was, you know, really up against a tough situation. So I was very anxious to make a record just so she, you know, have a little encouragement if

nothing else. And we were at a point where we kind of low on funds and everything, so I couldn't take her to the studio, but she was going to do a performance in a, over at Rutgers in New Jersey for some kind of Puerto Rican day or something. So we, I took my engineer over and recorded her there with a, it's smallish audience, it's not the kind thunderous sounding audience that I've had heard her with at some of the big PSP events, but she does a wonderful job. And I think it's quite possible this is her only record, because I had heard after a while that she went back to Puerto Rico and that was just having a lot problems doing her work, you know, and I haven't heard any, I haven't been to make contact with her. Nobody's told me any if having seen her. I am going to make some contact now because I want her to know this is happening with the Smithsonian, at least for you folks to have an address for her so you can contact her, you know. But I hope she's okay, I hope she's performing. She's really something special and that's probably everything else is self evident there in the notes.

JEFF: Irwin any comments on her?

IRWIN: Nope.

JEFF: Next one is 1033 which is *The Legacy of Ho Chi Minh*.

BARBARA: Well, as I'd said but back in the beginning of the Vietnamese records we put out I had really from the beginning of the label conception of trying to do something to make the Vietnamese struggle, the Vietnamese people, the whole idea of it more tangible, more human. Had put a human face on what, you know, a lot people here didn't have anyway of relating to except through the war news on the nightly television. And very, people here I think had any idea what the Vietnamese were fighting for, what made them so tenacious and what made them willing to sacrifice to the extent the length of years and the whole thing, you know. So I had really had mind for a long time to try and do something along the lines the record were did with Che with Ho Chi Minh's writings and so on. So finally I figured out how to do it. 'Cause I couldn't get any tapes of his voice really.

I finally managed to get a little snippet of a speech that he made in English, because he did speak some English, you know, Ho Chi Minh as a young man had taken a job, a seaman, so he traveled around the world working as just an ordinary seaman and busboy in restaurants and things. And apparently for a while he was a busboy in a restaurant in the States, I don't know exactly, I can't remember which city, Baltimore it might have been. So he, you know, apparently at some English and other languages, lived in France a long time too, anyway, I was able to get that little piece of tape. It took quite a bit of searching, but I got Ho Chi Minh in his own voice speaking to the American public toward the end of it. Any how, the idea that I come up with was to record selected pieces of his writing, his poetry was, quite a widely known as a poet too in his own right. Some of poems, some of his political writing, some of his prison diary, anything. So make a selection, record it in the voice, with the voice of one of the Vietnamese patriots who came to live in the States. Under the circumstances I described, you know, with those records as a student, then found that they wanted to identify themselves with the struggle

that was going on Vietnam rather than what their, well anyhow. Then I had to find the right voice. Any time I would meet with the Vietnamese groups and I was listening to how they spoke, how clear. Most people had pretty heavy accents because they hadn't been here very long, you know, or it was a little hard to understand.

Finally I heard a voice at rally that sounded, okay, this might possibly be the voice. It was an authoritative voice, clear pronunciation, and so I approached this man and he was delighted, absolutely thrilled to be voice of Ho Chi Minh on the record. So he was student in Boston at the time, and he made special period of time set aside, and he came down to New York, and we, the selection of material was made, oh, between, I've forgotten the man's name now. It's in the booklet, but someone who was very familiar with all of his writings agreed to do the no, not in here. It's in the booklet itself. But had to, agreed to make the selection. Because I was very familiar with all of his writings, and I think he made an excellent selection because what he emphasized in the contours of the whole thing, he emphasized Ho Chi Minh's discovery of the ideas, you know, that brought him to the point of thinking that this, something had to be done about his country's situation. And he connected with it, describes in the record, as you listen to it you can trace how he got connected with the Left in France and the communist international and he came to Marxism and how he discovers Lenin, Lenin's writing about the Party. And became, he says in his letters something about how he was sitting in his room all alone reading this and he says I had to shout even though I was there all alone. This is what I need, this is what my country needs. This is what will free us. And so how he took it up, developed the Vietnamese Party, Worker's Party it was called, and all the rest is history, you know.

So the interesting, though after the speeches, after the man read all the speeches as he was reading all the speeches it hadn't dawned on me before, because he didn't demonstrate it when he was speaking on a platform, that he had a really bad stammer and probably because of speaking a second language, whatever. But it was marked and so the engineer afterward had to spend hours, you know, cutting out all the stammers and making it sound smooth. What you hear is very smooth, and it's a just another footnote in history this big difficulty. But then I wanted to mix in a lot of music. It incorporates a lot of music and poetry and music under speeches the same way that, I think I played you a little bit of the Che record, you have some idea it's musically very, it's as a just regular program per se. If want to think of it that way it's like a little docudrama. I like it. I think it came out very well. We got a lot of help from different people with, that's all documented with the booklet, with studio time 'cause this painstaking work to take all these little bits and pieces of source material and put it all together, and it has to be done like a radio. We should've, anybody doing it today would've gone out to get somebody to fund it and would a budget of thousands of dollars to produce this thing. But this was done basically by people who just thought it was important and so put in some time with the old ...and tape volunteering studio time. We did do it at a commercial studio because we couldn't have afforded to that we, I recorded all of the voice part at home on probably something like this, and then took that to the studio with all these bits and pieces. But not a commercial studio, a friend in New York whose name is Ed Woodard and he has a place called, what was it? It's a studio. What he basically does is mass tape duplication and does it for museum guides, you know, when you pick up a museum guide on tape?

Acoustic guide it's called. Right. Acoustic guide. That's how he makes his living, but he wanted to see this project happen and so he gave us free use of the studio and tape materials and all that. So this is the way a lot of Paredon things get done, and in this particular case incorporated the work of a lot of people so, and unfortunately it came out after the enthusiasm the anti-war struggle and everything had faded because I guess the end of the war came, and it came just a little, if it'd come out just a couple years earlier I think we would've sold a lot of these records. But it came out just a little bit post

JEFF: '76 and the war ended in '75.

BARBARA: Just a little bit too late, but there was no way to get it done sooner. It just didn't all come together sooner.

JEFF: I was ... 19 or 20 years old the year it ended so I was paying attention.

BARBARA: You were paying attention?

JEFF: I was. 19/20 right at that time.

BARBARA: Okay.

JEFF: Yeah.

BARBARA: Want to add something to what you knew then? Alright, what's next?

JEFF: 1034 *Ecuador*.

BARBARA: Okay, *Jatari* is the name of that group. Yeah. Well that I can't tell you a lot about because it was made at a time when I was traveling and I'd delegated to someone else get the group in the studio and all of that. All I know is those notes, so all I know is it was Ecuadorian group that came and spent some time performing in the New York area, and from what I can tell looking at all the materials we have it's a group like that is they started out from the same idea that a lot people did in a lot of different countries at that time around in third world countries where people were

Tape 7, Side A

JEFF: Continue with discussion of 1034.

BARBARA: Yeah 1034 *Jatari*. Yeah I was saying the, you know, young students studying music or any other cultural stuff would be aware, right around that time were becoming aware if they're third world that their culture was under attack, in danger of losing a lot of the essential, just the same as our's was. I mean we had folk boom, you know, young people doing folk investigations and putting out books and learning the songs and trying to keep it alive. It happened here so we should have idea what the impulse is when you're in a country which is economically under duress, and even

militarily maybe outsiders and so forth. You suddenly realize that oh my god it's all going down the tube if we don't rescue it now. So these people, by all I can judge, were hard at work doing that, you know, dedicating time to try and through their own possibilities of learning the songs and learning the styles, and as young, you know, keep going with the older people, had to create. And it's a good album. Anyway, that's about all I can tell you about.

JEFF: Any comments on that one Irwin?

IRWIN: Which one are you talking about?

BARBARA: Ecuador.

IRWIN: No.

JEFF: *1035 Vivo Puerto Rico Libre.*

BARBARA: Well that record. That's an anthology of, my concept was we need an anthology of the best and the most important songs of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement because the movement was quite strong, about as strong as it's ever been right at that period of time. And lot of artists were writing songs about it, and some of the artists were working directly with political movements, and some were commercialized who were writing songs about the independence movement or with that spirit. And so I thought an anthology, you know, which would put all those things together, all the different elements together was what was needed. Because there had been this label called Disco Libre, I think that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party founded, and then they put out a few things with Roy Brown, with Orlandes their *Grupo Tayonet*. But it was limited, and then their resources were limited and they eventually just sort of faded out, and so I knew that they were songs in that catalogue that I wanted to put in here. And then to get the rest of it, especially the commercially produced stuff, took a lot of beating the bushes, you know. Took a couple of trips to Puerto Rico, and Irwin was there a couple times with some other, he went to some conventions of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, I think didn't you once or twice?

IRWIN: Yep.

BARBARA: And after that he developed relations with the people who could get us the material from their, from Disco Libre. And well, fact Nina and I went down one time to get material, go around and listen to more things and try and figure out what material was needed, and I think we really succeeded in putting together the most important songs in that time in that record. So I don't know what else needs to be said about it except that it's a, if anybody's going to, interested in this other independence of Puerto Rico, well we have it all on one record.

IRWIN: Well everything I have to say about it when we talked about Pepe and Flora album, you know, the why the Puerto Rican issue became so important on the left at that time you know, etcetera, so that all applies.

JEFF: Okay. Next is the Rosselson and Bailey record 1035, 6.

BARBARA: Okay. Oh I should say the Puerto Rican, that anthology the cover was made by a friend of Nina's. You know we were pretty well advanced in our ability to draft friends, relatives, and people stopping by.

JEFF: It always helps to have artistic friends around to help you on things...you know.

BARBARA: That's right, no that's really it. What was the next one?

JEFF: Rosselson and Bailey.

BARBARA: Oh Rosselson and Bailey. Okay well Leon Rosselson, boy he's such a great artist and now people know about him, but at that time he wasn't well at the time I first knew about himself I realized that, you know, he didn't have a way to get records out over here yet, and he wasn't doing much. He came over and did one little tour for handful of people here and there, but now he, you know, people who follow this kind of music are well aware of Leon Rosselson. He's an extraordinary artist. He's really, well there's a little phrase, catch phrase, some writer called him the Noel Coward of the Left or something. He's very, his work is very poetically, it's ironic and funny and touching and very is, and his melodies, he writes mostly all of his own music and his melodies are beautiful and musical. And his playing is great, and everything is great about what he does. And I think he got some correspondence in the file that sort of details how we worked out the getting the record. It had come out in England and he was anxious that, have something come out over here, and we offered to do it. Well he cooperated very whole-heartedly so there we have it. It also, with Roy Bailey his partner, in doing, while Bailey has a similar sounding voice, but not exactly the same of course, and is also appears on the record. So I guess that's about all I need to say about that.

JEFF: Okay. Irwin?

IRWIN: Well it's actually unusual record for Paredon in the sense that it's not directly connected to any social movement, political current or anything like that, but in that sense on the surface it's not quite in keeping with the rest of Paredon catalogue. But on the other hand our judgment was that it was very much in keeping, a very significant intellectual current in England then and continuing to now. Sort of a large swath of people who were reflecting on the fact that they were living in the remnants of an empire and that it's culture reflected, the fact that they were surrounded by mementos of past glory which were totally hollow. And once you, you know, went below that surface you could see all of dissipation and the decadence of what was once a very powerful, you know, the single mightiest empire on earth. Not that they had any use for that empire, but now it was, so a lot of this music, and not just music, it's in theatre and movies and

etcetera, etcetera. It's sort of in the way of wry comments on how the mighty have fallen, and sort of the dilemma that faces the ordinary British working person living in whatever the stage is past the twilight of Empire, but where else can you go. And in that sense there's a kind of a, it's a sardonic quality to a lot of the material, and I think that's where the Noel Coward comparison came. Sort of Noel Coward with a very intense social outlook. Rosselson himself comes out of the British folk revival but the British folk revival, unlike some of the currents that took place in the United States where amongst some folks there was a tendency to say well the folk thing is on side and the topical is on another, although, you know, we had plenty of topical singers, but then don't call yourself a folk singer. I think Ewan MacColl's influence in the British folk revival was very helpful. Ewan was a very committed writer and singer but he also, in my view anyway, he pretended to make a distinction between the traditional and the political and stuck to it. He had, not objections, he could sing both songs in the same program, but he felt the tradition was an important thing to preserve in it's own right and he, I think he tried to portray is an authentic a way as he could. And then the topical political, that was just as legitimate, and he had no compunctions about doing that material. And Rosselson was schooled, I mean most of the people in the British folk revival were profoundly influenced by Ewan, and I think Leon was in the circle of people around Ewan back in the Fifties and Sixties .

BARBARA: I don't know but I know he in the folk revival before he started writing his own.

IRWIN: But in any event, so he himself I think he comments on this strange phenomenon in the booklet of, you know, people think of you as folk music and so on, but anyway he is what he is and for want of a better term I guess he gets categorized as a folk singer but it's ...obvious not appropriate in any kind of strict definition of it. He's a terrific poet musician whose forte is social commentary done in a, you know, really artistic way.

BARBARA: Yeah and I think it, you know, I was thinking as I listened to you talk why wasn't it that we put out Ewan and Peggy on the label, for example, but they already had an outlet so that's right, and he didn't at this point have, and far as I know no commercial label's taken him up since here.

IRWIN: Moe's ...anything Ewan and Peggy did so there's no.

BARBARA: Right.

JEFF: There's some label I used to get in the store that had like three of his albums I think.

BARBARA: From England. Topic.

JEFF: Was it Topic?

BARBARA: No not Topic. Maybe it's self published. I'm not sure, but, yeah there were

JEFF: Small label, real small.

IRWIN: Well ..you had

BARBARA: But they were inputs

IRWIN: Stuff on the old Stinson album. Now maybe somebody had bought up the rights to that and reissued it.

BARBARA: Ewan. No I'm talking about Rosselson.

IRWIN: Oh Rosselson.

JEFF: Yeah.

IRWIN: Oh. Probably and an Input.

BARBARA: He has a lot of records out, but he when he comes on tour here he brings them but

JEFF: Sure.

BARBARA: And he distributes them where ever he can. But as far as some label here taking it up nobody's that I know of done to this day.

JEFF: Actually it's ...Peggy's expressed some interest in having us do the same sort of thing with Blackthorn, is that the label they have other there? Taking some of the tapes and making like we're talking about now. Well anyway. 1038 is ...*And Ain't I a Woman*.

BARBARA: ...*And Ain't I a Woman*. Yeah. Okay, well I was very anxious that we have some representation of this, what was then being called Women's Music Field, and I'm still willing to debate the question of whether there's a thing such strictly women's music. I guess there is. Probably is.

IRWIN: There is now. There was a movement so some

BARBARA: True, true. So anyhow passing around for who would be the logical the idea really preceded, I mean I'm trying to think now whether Olivia had started or hadn't started, but Olivia at one point they did call me up. They did call me up and asked me how do you start a record label, and I said well, or they, no they said how do start a record studio or a record label. What their idea was you had to have a studio, and I said no, that's the last thing in the world you need. If you want to be a label don't be a studio, you know. But I think they actually did do both because they wanted, their idea was also training women in all categories of, you know, in engineering and everything else in the

process of getting, but then their whole was always basically certain stars, you know, of women's music, and it was pretty defined by in separatist type terms, and I didn't want to put out a separatist women's record. I wasn't interested in that at all, but I did want to a women's statement, a women's, you know, view of the world. And so I think was Tim Patterson brought these people to our attention. He was living in Boston, friend of ours who was very instrumental in getting the thing done, and he is also a singer songwriter and appears on one of the *What Now People*, Tim Patterson in a group called Country Diction which is a play on word of contradiction.

JEFF: Yeah I figured that out.

BARBARA: Oh good alright. Country Diction. So this group though is right on the mark of what would suit our catalogue because they were not only just singing about from direct experience what it was like for, you know, there weren't just, I don't know how to explain it. But it's one of them had grown up in a mining town and she wrote how, you know, it felt to live in that town. Another one writes about how it was to be a waitress or something, or how, you know, different personal experiences. But the other thing that was clear, they hadn't just been singing for the women's movement quote unquote but also singing for the general, what was then called the anti-imperialist movement, you know. They would perform, you know, for on Vietnam days or for anti-racist meetings or this or that. They were very generally active in the community around Boston as a group, and that appealed to me too because, as I say, I wasn't interested in the strictly separatist statement, and so they combined both the, you know, a pretty deep concern for all these women's issues and for general appreciation of all the struggles going on in the world. So that's why we got those folks to do our, they don't think they exist anymore now as a group but are still active around the northeast as individuals.

JEFF: Perform once in a while...

BARBARA: You got anything to add Irwin?

IRWIN: You might want to make note of one interesting insight into their approach. They, you'll find Woody's "Union's Maid" on the album. A lot women's groups object to this song especially because its third verse, well you know, "you girls who want to be freed take a tip from me, find your man, a union man, and join the levees auxiliary." So but they sing it that way but then they wrote their own new verse at the ending which goes, "we modern union maids are also not afraid to walk the line, leave jobs behind, and we're not just a lady's aid. We fight for equal pay, and we'll have our say, we're workers too the same as you and fight the union way." So, and they comment on that, so it's very self conscious thing, and it is interesting because it's not, they don't just deal with women's issues in the pure sense. I think that's the point that you were trying to make. They have a women's consciousness when they deal with all the other questions, but they deal with labor with racism, you know, all these different kinds of things as well as explicitly women's issues.

JEFF: Okay.

IRWIN: And for me it was in a way it was eye-opener and a kind of a confirmation of a fact that there was such a thing as a women's movement and not just being talked about because I could see it in who was buying the records. And I noticed the phenomenon that there are now bookshops springing up that are women's bookshops that I hadn't even realized before this was, but whenever it came out about 1978 and so, and then we began to get the catalogues and I could see this was a whole, I'd been through this before with other subjects and other focuses and now I could see this happening with the women's movement, and you could, it was very interesting to see the way it spread.

JEFF: Yeah.

BARBARA: Alright.

JEFF: The next one it 1039 *Ireland the Final Struggle*.

BARBARA: Right. Okay. Well this one, I think I, the background for the group I don't ...again you've got again plenty of information and I think does the descriptive catalogue have material about the how we? I remember talking about this lately. I guess I didn't talk on the tape about it though. Well anyway. About how it had the second tape we got, let me just take a second glance well

JEFF: ...both at the same time.

BARBARA: Yeah you may have all this information on the other tape already but I'll give you a brief version of it just in case it isn't. This was well ...initial contacted this group through Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger and we didn't know their right names or how to get directly in touch with them. We, in fact, we sent the money to make the tape to Ewan and Peggy who then forward it on to them, so that so one of these another case of this clandestinely made thing. By the time it got to the second, I'd thought it was time to do the second one 'cause the situation, you know, it kind of evolved in Ireland and since I had made a little bit of a, well anyway, we wrote them and asked them for another tape. And they said fine they were really ready and bubbling over with new songs but now they had a woman in the group 'cause I had complained how come you don't have any women in this group after it was I that thought of naming them the Men of No Property. But that, see that's a very famous phrase in Irish political language and comes from old, old times, and everybody knows what that means. It refers to the poor Irish peasants who didn't have any land. So anyway they said they would like to do a record, so they sent it, and it had now I look at the thing I see oh gee, it's got kind of like a adventurous streak, I guess is the way I'd put it, that I was uncomfortable with. 'Cause it had, I don't know if it was one or two songs about, one about a blowing up some something or other, and one was a kidnapping, and I wasn't very comfortable, I didn't want to put that stuff out the way I wanted to put the rest of the stuff out. Also, I realized we made some mistake with the first record in a political sense and that we had never been in touch with the Irish groups in New York or in the States, you know, beforehand and gotten their input into how it was going to look and feel and so on.

So I made a point of getting in touch with this Irish Republican clubs in New York. Turns out that they're the political grouping that seemed closest to my own way of looking at things was Sinn Féin the Worker's Party which had a basic tenant that the, you know, this is a not a sectarian struggle. It's not a question of the Catholics and the Protestants and all that which has been drummed into our heads or into everybody else's heads for decades. What it's, in reality just a way of splitting the working class and we don't want to do that. We want to unite the working Irish people and make some gains here by doing so, so that their goals were always that, and that seemed to me the right way to. So I took it over to them, and they looked it over, and gave me an opinion, and they said that they thought that the those couple songs were an indication that the, probably the singers had more ties the Provo branch or IRA than with the regulars, you know.

And I said well gee and all let's see what we can do, if we took those out what about the rest of the material? Is that all? So they thought everything else was fine but those couple songs so we just took those and put those on the side, maybe still on the master tapes or on the outtakes wherever they are. But we just didn't put them on the record, and then we decided to look for a picture on the cover that was a nonsectarian picture that was emphasizing the working class there, and it's workers coming out a factory, and there people at the Sinn Féin office said that they were definitely mostly protestants in this crowd coming out of the factory, the faces. I said how do you know? Well we can just tell, I don't know, by the way they're dressed and where they're working and whatever it is. They knew so I was proud of the fact that we were able to kind of figure out ways that would not really, you know, be, I hoped and apparently we didn't violate any of the sensibilities of the people who made the record, but yet made it a more universally acceptable to the Irish movement at large package. So I think it worked okay. So that's about it. I think you got everything else there.

JEFF: Yeah. 1040 is Puerto Rico. The Andres Jimenez.

BARBARA: Okay Andres Jimenez in my estimation is a real phenomenon because he is one, the only if you heard just singing in a folk festival someplace you would assume that this, you know, last of a dying breed from the mountains of Puerto Rico, *jibaro* or hilly billy singer, and that's what he was born to be. But his experiences of going off to, he was drafted and sent off to Fort Hood there subject to all the usually discrimination against people who don't speak the language and so on. And yet he had to be in the United States army. So he had a terrible time there, and any way by the time he got through his army experience got back to Puerto Rico the student movement was happening, and he, you know, got involved with the cultural wing of that and began to write songs about the present time. So he still continues, this is whatever, ten, fifteen, twenty years later, and he's still writing songs along the same lines. So he combines in my estimation the ideal, you know, somebody really from the roots with a very contemporary and keen political sense and dedicated to preserving Puerto Rican culture. At the same time he's not afraid to talk about whatever he needs to talk about in those forms, and I think this record, actually he made some other records since this is I believe his first record album. And we, that's why when we made arrangements with him to put

out something I wanted this one because it's in the most musically, it's the most clearly Puerto Rican and everything. And later on he made some other records where he wanted to try and be a little more sort of in the Roy Brown mode or Silvio Rodríguez, more in the *Nueva Canción*, you know, adding more instrumentation and different kinds of musical influences. But I think he found that that didn't go over as well as, you know, hanging in with his roots. So but he's still very active, he was just here in the Bay area a couple weeks ago, and I couldn't go to the event because I had another thing that I had to do, but I know he still he lives in Puerto Rico, back still in the old family, whatever he was born, and you could find him there. Want to say anything Jimenez? Okay.

JEFF: Next is the Angola, second Angola record, *People's Power*.

BARBARA: Why don't you talk about that. I'm tired.

IRWIN: What, talk about the record?

BARBARA: Talk about the record, huh? Well, okay we wanted, in the descriptive notes I describe, put down the fact that we, you know, we originally, one of first records we ever put out was this Angola record because the situation was brewing at a clip. And finally then they succeeded and they got the Portuguese out Angola, and then there's this other internal, well the South Africans and the U.S. sponsoring different groups, and the Chinese sponsoring, I don't know everybody's sponsoring rival gorilla groups, trying to knock down the accomplishments of the revolutionary group that had begun to try and reconstruct the country. And so we thought it'd be good to have an album that, you know, represented the post-victory period. Post-victory over the Europeans, but, you know, it turned out to be right at the same time as the during the middle of this other terrible problem. And so anyway this was made in, I believe it was made in, as I recall it was made in Rwanda but issued by a sort of Angola support group in Holland, I think it was Amsterdam I believe. Yeah, it's all in the photo. Anyway, we had to do a lot of back and forth to try and get the thing together, but it represents that period. I guess that's the best thing to say about, and that it's, I guess none of us can image what it would be like to be an artist trying to function in a country like Angola, you know, where it's been under having this long, long, long, long military situation going on there. Very little chance to develop the country, the poverty is unbelievable, has been even though it's a rich country, you know. It's got oil. It's got all these different things but it's, an artist would have a terrible time getting anything done. So I guess it's quite an accomplishment for them to have made this record. Anyway.

IRWIN: This is, it's like a political footnote, and because Paredon was so much a record label of and for the Left, not exclusively so but of course that was a big part of our audience, the controversy in the Left around Angola at the time when this record came out shortly before and then afterwards was probably hard for people outside the Left to believe. On the surface it looks pretty straightforward. Here's the liberation movement, they win their victory, they're going to construct the, reconstruct the country. And they need support internationally but given at that time the huge, the conflict between the Soviet Union and China within the communist movement had reached it, the height of its

antagonisms, and the Angolan struggle was rescued actually by Cuban troops who never could've gotten there or supported themselves without a lot of Soviet aid. So the Maoist wing of the communist movement made it into ...they cited Angola as an example of Soviet Imperialism or what they called Soviet social imperialism. And this was a big controversy on the Left. I got involved in it and made a national speaking tour in a dozen or more cities because *The Guardian* I was working for at the time came out in support of the MPLA. And as a matter of fact we had had pretty cordial relations with the People's Republic of China, which had been very valuable to us because we had organized tours to China that earned us a lot of money, enabled us to meet up our deficits. And in fact at one point the Chinese took out subscriptions to *The Guardian* in thousands of copies which they distributed in libraries throughout the country. But because of the stand that we took around Angola, which was directly contrary to the Chinese position, they cut us off. We could no longer do trips. We were denounced, they canceled their subscriptions and all that kind of thing, and we got really viciously attacked by a lot the pro-China groups in the United States. So I made this speaking tour and became a sort of an expert on the whole situation, and then I think this was a factor in our knowing this whole controversy which we were both deeply involved, and especially because of Cuba's interest involvement and our ties with Cuba we were particularly anxious to do something, and that's part of the history of this record too. So, ready to go on?

JEFF: 1042 that Thailand.

BARBARA: Yeah, well this came to us through some people who had been, there was an American who went to work in Thailand for some reason and there met a Thai woman, got married, and they were operating something called a Thai translation service or something of that nature, and had come back to the States. And I guess they got in touch with us, by this time, you know, in the latter stages we, people knew that they could find us at *The Guardian*, or through *The Guardian*, or someplace, or through our own mailing address. People in other countries who didn't know how to find us, you know, would get wind of us through, I think through *The Guardian*, don't you know?

IRWIN: A lot of it.

BARBARA: And I didn't know much about Thailand myself, you know, except that it was, you know, a heavy duty staging area for the Vietnam war and everything. But these folks called attention to the fact that there was a, you know, student movement there that there had been a heavy repressive government and so on. So they brought, basically brought this whole thing in, brought the tape and got us in contact with the people, and there were, this is all. A lot of it's unclear because the way, this is again another one of these clandestine situations. The group had gone out of Thailand at the, when crack down came, and when they were, we don't know where, somewhere in mountains someplace, and they were communicating through some film company, I think film group that went to do some kind of a documentary or not sure.

And so all of our, we never communicated directly with the group, was always through intermediaries, but it was all because of the way it happened. It was clearly there was a

whole network of people who had some connection with Thailand who really had a strong interest in seeing something like this be available to people in the States. Some knowledge of the movement that was going and all that. And you know, so many Americans went through Thailand, through, you know, in the military that I'm sure most of them never had the slightest idea was Thailand itself, or what was going on there, what the people were dealing with people around them as usual happens, sort of pass through ...and you haven't the slightest idea what kind suffering that you're witnessing as you pass through the area.

And so I thought from those reasons, you know, that it was, 'cause I don't, the thing we didn't have adequate way of connecting with that kind of a public for the record, in other words the very people who ought to understand what this is about but probably never buy a record like this, but still we'll make the record happen and maybe somehow it connects with somebody, and it was another case where the movement of Thai patriots in the United States was so small and invisible that they didn't really have the capacity to get the record around or do much with it. And so in some senses it was economically totally nuts to put the record out, but I just thought it was important to do it, you know, so there it is. I think it's very interesting as a document. It's actually musically interesting too because see how influenced they were by a lot of the music currents in the world, you know, at large in their notes they say something about how, you know, they were influenced by Dylan, Baez, this one and that one.

JEFF: That sounds interesting.

BARBARA: Yeah. I have no idea what's happened to those young people who made that record or what, I don't know what the situation is there.

IRWIN: This record came out of the time when the Left and revolutionary movement in Thailand was sort of at a peak, and it was Maoist dominated which is not unusual. I mean you have, there's China who's the most powerful nation in that part of the world, and so even though nominally communists did not believe in spheres of influence they operate in real life none the less, so that a lot of the Left movements in the general area surrounding China were very strongly influenced by the Chinese communist party. In fact that was a source of contention with the Vietnamese because the Vietnamese communist party had a very independent history from the Chinese communist party and were always concerned about being independent from the Chinese, but in countries like Thailand the Philippines and so on, these were very powerful currents. But when the Vietnamese went into Cambodia at the end of 1978 it triggered off a huge crisis in the Left in Thailand, which split down the middle, some going with the Vietnamese and some going with the Chinese. And what had been a kind of united front of the Left in the opposition to the dictatorship fractured, and I'm sure there were other factors as well, but this was an important one. But the long and the short of it was the Thai Left was decimated, and so when Barbara says we don't know what happened to Caravan nobody does, but I mean it's not untypical. It's not just Caravan. I mean it was the fracturing of the Thai Left which so far there were a number of articles I remember at the time, the early Eighties, shortly after this record came out in the *Far East Economic Review* talking about the

dilemma of the Thai communists and so on. You can, they never recovered from it, and the Left hasn't been the same in Thailand ever since. So this is in a sense a document of a particular moment, but that moment has gone, and now there's probably something else brewing but that moment is gone.

BARBARA: Well there, apparently there was a two year space between, you know, sort of a window of democracy.

IRWIN: That has to do with the internal dynamics of Thailand, but I'm talking about the external thing that fractured the Left.

BARBARA: I'm going to eat something. I'm really hungry.

IRWIN: Go on. It's the home stretch.

JEFF: 1045, Cuba: *Tail of a Tornado*, Silvio Rodríguez record.

BARBARA: So Silvio Rodríguez really doesn't need a lot of explanation because he's, I guess he's, if you had to point to, you know, one number one of all the singer song writers to come out of the new song movement or the wave of, how do we put this, I don't want to reduce to him being just a political singer. He's not just that, not a protest singer, he's not a folk singer. He's a creator of something entirely new, a synthesis of what they call a *nueva trova*, new troubadour based on the old troubadour tradition, and yet a man with great knowledge of world poetry and certainly of Cuban and Latin American poetry, and musically very sophisticated and utterly committed to the Cuban revolution. So he's been one of the people instrumental in the development of the whole that type of music all over the world of basing on your national patrimony something new, using new technology and new forms, and combining excellent poetry with excellent music and still being very popular, being able to writing in such a, I mean every little kid in Cuba knows all of Silvio's songs.

I remember being quite astounded when I first happen hearing in an audience, you know, little kids singing along very complex, very sophisticated poetry that he had written for a given period. It's really something, and singing melodies that are, you know, not just the lowest common denominator type of melodies. So it generally raises the whole standard of the culture because it, you know, the pop culture all the way down to the level of the little kid who's learning songs off the radio. It's very high quality aiming at a high standard, not catering to, you know, just the easy thing, thinking about sells or anything as vulgar as that, you know. And so there's just lot of reasons why his work and others, but I mean we're talking about him because this is his record but, and others now have come along trying to do the same thing, and it's among the most important things musical creators can be doing now in my estimation. Silvio has never, I think he's done one concert in New York a long time ago, didn't he do one with Center with Cuban Studies sponsored him coming to New York, maybe twenty years ago? I think my tortilla's burning up.

So due the somewhat, well I don't want to characterize him, anyway, the whims of the American State Department, we are not able to completely know the world's culture because a lot of people can't get in here to perform, and especially Cubans haven't been able to share with us the contemporary Cuban sensibility in music. So you don't know about Silvio Rodríguez if you're an American but everybody else in the world knows about him. So, you know, it's just the way the world is working now, and that's why we thought it's very important to have one of Silvio's records in our catalogue, so that if something per chance some American got interested by having traveled abroad and heard about this fabulous person they could find it somewhere in the United States. So you want to say something?

IRWIN: Well in a way I think artists like Silvio Rodríguez and several others from Cuba in different genres represent a verification of the fact the Cuban revolution had and has a mass social base. In other words, that the revolutionary society was not imposed upon the Cuban masses, much you might say it happened in Eastern Europe where the regimes did not grow out of a mass demand and sentiment for that type of a government and system. But you can see this in a number of Cuban films, music, and Silvio certainly is one of the best in that area, and other forms where Cuban, not just Cuba, the Cuban revolution has produced world class art and artists. Silvio was born of the representatives of that so, you know, Cuba is having a tremendous number of difficulties because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eastern Europe countries, which is such an important part of their support. But they're not, whatever difficulties they have and who knows how it's going to turn out, they're not going to collapse the way the countries of Eastern Europe did simply because of that kind of a, the way the revolution has seeped into the country as a whole. And Silvio, to me his popularity, and he's a child of the revolution, I mean he was how old was he when the revolution took place? He was a child, literally. So he's been shaped by the revolution, and when you have a world class artist like that it does give a kind of an insight into the stability of the revolutionary sentiment among the Cuban people.

BARBARA: Silvio just gave us the record to put, he knew there was no way to sell the record to a commercial record label because of the blockade. He certainly was interested in having his work come out wherever. He feels like it should come out wherever anybody wants it. So he, it was just a handshake deal put the record out. It's been the only record of his available in this country for many years. I think only last year or this year somebody issued another record of his through, because they have that company. I forgot who it is has roots in or could put it out in Europe, and I don't know, it's done in such a way nobody's going to sue them for giving money to a Cuban or something like that. That record was reviewed, I think it's on Mongo or Island or somebody that was reviewed, and in the review, the review of it that came out in Cuban, anyway somebody was saying isn't, aren't you thrilled that somebody got

Tape 7, Side B

BARBARA: Yeah so Silvio, you know, wanted as late as this year to make sure people realized that we'd gone out on a limb and put his record out even though he probably, you know, didn't stand a chance covering our costs. And this particular one is interesting

in its time too because it was the song, the title song is “*Rabo de Nube*” which is “Tail of a Cyclone,” or “Tail of a Tornado,” and the song talks about the, if I could have a wish. If they ask me to make a wish I’d wish for storm to come down and sweep all bad away and just leave behind our dreams, leave our hope behind. But it’s written right around the time of the exodus of people at Mariel and, you know, all that stuff. So anyway that’s about it I guess. Great record.

JEFF: Okay, next record 1046, this is your record, *When We Make it Through*.

BARBARA: Yeah well, you know, this from a musical standpoint is interesting because you know it’s me and my stuff, but it’s recorded in Cuba with Cuban musicians, and why? So and that was because at that point Paredon couldn’t afford to have me go in a studio and record with, you know, world class musicians, and all the paying all the fees and what have you. And I didn’t have a way of really, I mean those things cost a lot to produce. So I was in Cuba on a visit, and my son has quite a bit of, well I pointed out that he produced those albums of the *Grupo de Experimentación Sonora*. One of which is *Cuba Va*, and he has a lot of connection with the Cuban record industry ever since and now has heads up one of the most successful bands, rock bands of the Cuban rock scene. It’s called Mezcla and, you know, he’s can produce a record, and he plays guitar of all sorts, and plays really good harmonica, and he’s used to accompanying his mom in all kinds of situations in the past. And now, anyhow, he proposed why don’t we try to do a record here, and he says I’ll just do, somethings were done with him playing one guitar, and then over dubbing a second guitar, and then putting some harmonica on it, and me singing most of it, though has. Well, what he did is he got in touch with the ministry culture, that the cultural minister, well I’ve got this notoriety that goes back from Sixty-six visit that down there people know my name and, you know, I’m not a mystery to them. And so he proposed that to the cultural minister that, you know, ask if they could give us studio time, and they did because they’ve done this as they’ve done with Daniel Villetti and other people in the past, you know, who passing through artists who couldn’t make a record in their own country. So they gave them some studio time and a little budget to hire the musicians. So Pablo picked out some excellent musicians, and we did it, and the interesting thing is they were required to plays blues and play, you know, all sorts of styles of music they’re not, that doesn’t sound like a Cuban record musically. It demonstrates the breadth of the knowledge of the young Cuban musicians. So I guess that’s one of the interesting parts about it. Okay.

IRWIN: This is really, it’s a co-production. The Cuban record label issued the same record in Cuba.

JEFF: Oh okay.

IRWIN: And distributed it. You could buy it Eastern Europe and Soviet Union at the time because they shipped the stuff there. So that was part of the deal. In other words, she would give them the, in effect, the rights in the socialist world and we had the right to do it in the U.S. and by implication, you know, anywhere else we could sell it. So they got something out of it from that point of view, they had a record.

BARBARA: Oh yeah. When I was in the Soviet Union, back when I went to the, not with you but the other trip about five years ago or so

IRWIN: Yeah.

BARBARA: Somebody came running up to me with an album to sign, one of these Cuban issued one, and they had, apparently the Soviets bought, I heard they bought about twenty thousands records or something like that to distribute it in Soviet Union, so more than I've sold here in a long time.

IRWIN: Right.

JEFF: Okay. Next record is *Khalife: Promises of the Storm*.

IRWIN: ...talk about it.

BARBARA: Well I went to sing for, there's a large contingent, there was a large contingent of Palestinian students in Cuba at a certain time. So when I was down there I was invited to sing at a special event they were having, and they were all excited to get some North American, you know, who would come and sing something in solidarity with their cause was an unusual event. And after the performance, and spent some time talking with some of the students. And one of them, well you just got to hear some of this music, and he made me go into his little room and showed me his tape collection which was half a dozen home made, you know, copied tapes, all of this one artist Marcel Khalife. And he said he's the one, he's the one, he's our main, you know, source of inspiration and strength. They're as exiles in a foreign place and, you know, imagine how bewildering it is to be young person who speaks Arabic and all of a sudden you're in a Spanish speaking country, and whole different set of rules, and you're in this kind of chaotic situation, maybe of, you know, in the Middle East and then you come to this very orderly place in Cuba.

And anyway they really clung to the Marcel Khalife material as a an important, just a sustaining thing to have with them as young exiles. And so he insisted, absolutely insisted that I take these tapes, I'll get some more but I think it's more important that you take these with you and listen to them, and get to know this singer, and try to put, get a hold of something put out on our record label. And I said I'll certainly try to do that. So when I got home I listened to all the tapes and everything and the, I started asking around and trying to find a contact, how do I contact this guy and where do I, anyway it eventually turned out that there was a record on Chante du Monde. And what now? The next steps are a little bit vague to me because it was right around then that I was beginning to tune out from Paredon because I was stretched pretty thin in all the rest of my work. But I got, somehow got hold of that record, and then tried to get a hold of him, and I think there was some period that I was, oh yeah, I got a hold of somebody here. It was a Lebanese woman here in the Bay area who was, translated some of the songs for me, told me what the song material was about and all that. And then she helped try and figure out how to

call, that's the only way we could figure out 'cause we had no mail address, call to Lebanon to Beirut to try and find a number. 'Cause she knew a group in Beirut that would know how to reach Marcel Khalife and how to, so spent, I remember spending a whole lot of time on the long distance telephone trying to call through to Beirut. But that was the time when Beirut was in total chaos, you know, and it was very hard, so we couldn't get anything. And then seems to me we got to some political groups here and tried to find out what to do. Anyway, eventually he came here sponsored by some Palestinian group.

IRWIN: ...community who....

BARBARA: Yeah. And so he came here, and we were able to meet with him, say look we want to put out this record that you did on Chante du Monde, we want to put it out over here. Can we do it? Made all the arrangements, and so then he thought was a good idea, and we were able to proceed with it, and I pretty much bowed out of it at that point so I don't know from then on what happened.

JEFF: ...Chante du Monde...kind of arrangement did you have with them. Did you trade anything? Traded things that one time.

IRWIN: I'm not sure.

BARBARA: Well they had gone out of business then. I think they're back in business now but

IRWIN: ...Marcel Khalife gave us the permission because he probably didn't give them world rights or something...but he was willing to work with us.

BARBARA: Yeah.

JEFF: Yeah. Good....

BARBARA: So we can probably dig up somebody here who's in touch with him, you know, somehow can verify that.

IRWIN: But I would proceed on the assumption that there's no problem with it.

JEFF: Okay.

BARBARA: And he, as an artist he's the kind of person who's mainly interested in being a link between his, you know, his part of the world and all those problems with it and the rest of the world, trying to get people to, and the material on there is very, very important. It's poetry by Mohammad Darwish. Darwish is the most influential poet of Palestinian cause. He's a fantastic poet. I mean he's like, if you like of Neruda in Latin America, you know, and Gian of Cuba, whatever, but he's, Darwish's the one in the Middle East. And so most of the songs are musicalized versions of his poetry, and this is a solo album.

Actually it's just Khalife and his oud. He's a very exquisite oud player, and on other occasions though when he comes here he did come with his whole group and performed in the Palace of Fine Arts. It was a great evening. But this is his solo album. So.

JEFF: 1048 is *Songs of the New Nicaragua Luis Enrique Mejia*.

BARBARA: Mejia Godoy.

JEFF: Okay.

BARBARA: Well I think I told you a lot of stuff in those notes. Getting this record from the conception to the final getting it out was a hell of an odyssey and I don't even remember all the steps in the in it. I was instrumental in the beginning of it of making initial contacts, and then my daughter Nina was down there, once there and got talked to them. And then later on a couple other people went down there and talked to them, and eventually everything was worked out and a record was made. I guess I wasn't as much connected with that at the end of it because once it, I saw it through some of the stages of getting the booklet material together and translating and so forth, but eventually toward the end of it, it was taken over by a group of people, and they kind of, I guess had to final word on what went into the booklet. And the Nicaraguan, they have a San Francisco presence, so those people had to do with it too, make sure that everything was the way they wanted it. And let's see what else can I say.

IRWIN: Well I mean this now it's a bit of history. It's the music of the Sandanista Revolution and recorded at the time when the Sandanista still had power. Sort of gives you an insight into the cultural and ideological values that moved the revolution. I mean this was the most popular musical group in Nicaragua, at the time they represented Nicaragua traveling abroad. I mean if you wanted one Nicaragua group to represent it, they were the right ones. So that's why they're on the record.

JEFF: 1050 is *El Salvador Songs of the Salvadorian Liberation Struggle*.

BARBARA: Well I, you know more than I do about it.

IRWIN: ...This is a record that, this record was initiated and produced, this is the one, the thing that the people who were operating Paredon while we took a stand back from it did completely on their own. I think the contact was made through one of the constituent groups of the FMLN in El Salvador. I don't remember which one. 'Cause you know each of those groups maintained their separate identity, and one of them had a very strong cultural inclination and their own performing group. So this, it was associated one of the constituent groups of the FMLN, but it's taken as kind of broader representation of the FMLN and the democratic struggle in El Salvador. And the group actually came to the states and did a tour at some point which these folks helped to promote. Beyond that I think it's, you know, whatever it says in the notes will tell you about it. I mean, you know, the history of the Salvadorian struggle is a very lengthy complex one and still very much alive. You just pick up the newspapers. Again it's one of these things where the

music and the general facts demonstrate that this is not a struggle just of handful of revolutionaries but has a very important social base in the country.

JEFF: This brings us on to the series of *What Now People* series, 2001 through 3.

BARBARA: Yeah, boy. If I had had another couple of lives to lead that would be going on. It was a great idea but it would take at least, you know, one enthusiastic to be center it, and then a group of people, a little staff of people to make it a real coming out thing, you know, could come out something like that, could come out every couple of months easily. There's enough material around but you, okay the concept of it was that it would be a song magazine on a record. That you would be able to gather up after, you know, develop a whole kind of network of contacts around the country and everything, that you would beginning to have stuff sent to you. But first you would have to, you know, all the first ones we did that we had to kind of, I combed through all my different contacts and my awareness of who was doing what in different parts of the country, and wrote to people and pulled it together.

But then it, by the third one it had just begun to happen where we were getting submitted material, but the idea that it would be timely material as it came out, you know, as it came a long covering people singing songs to cover issues, that each issues, in my view, was going to try and be as broad as possible. In other words, be from different parts of the country, be different sectors of the population, course always keeping an eye on having plenty of women represented because this was underrepresented as a rule. Try to keep an eye on, you know, the fact well there's always at any given moment a lot going on in this country, and some of the things that don't, some of the things that don't get out of a given area are very important for the rest of the country to know but they don't actually hit the newspapers or, I mean, like I don't know, like the Coors boycott and the Coors strike. Just take that for an example. There's a song in one of the issues about that. But a lot of people know, didn't realize that there was this terrible long struggle there, and there was a boycott and a lot of people who would've definitely participated in the boycott never even knew that it existed and didn't know that they were drinking scab beer and were contributing to, you know, people being bashed over the head out of the gates Adolf Coor's little fiefdom.

So the idea was to try and find those little pockets of activity, and find out what song told a story and get it in there, just like a newspaper would do, you know. And boy I tell you I think these first and only three issues really represent what the possibilities are because it is, I was doing this at a time when people were saying, well, you know, the sort of folk music movement is dead and there's no the political singers or the topical songwriters. There's not much happening and, you know, in fact there was a lot happening. And my contention is that at any given time there's a lot happening along those lines. It's just that this is a country where, you know, if the press starts to write about it two, three articles come out. A couple of radio commentators come out. Even if it doesn't exist then it becomes real, you know. And then when that dies, even though it may be very real by then, it's dead, so that it can't go by what's known by everybody who reads *People Magazine*. You have to look beyond that and find out what's going on in the country.

So I thought this would be a real service in that sense that it would, and then, you know, the format allows for you could have somebody who just sit down and record a song on their own, if they had some decent equipment, send that in. Or you could use some prerecorded thing that, let's suppose in some of the instances there are songs that came out on somebody's forty-five. One of them came from when mine strike, the big really contentious mine strike few years ago happened this guy wrote a song that was on the juke boxes all through the mining country but you never would've heard that in New York, you know. It's a real good song, and the guy's a professional singer, but still you wouldn't know his name and you wouldn't know his song either because of the regional quality. But there it is, you know, so you could, the format could incorporate all that. Every. It would sort of something that would ordinarily be lost because it would be on a, say on a forty-five when we were making forty-fives, and it would, that would come out, be made and sold, that's it. Nobody's documented it, nobody's archived it. It's gone. You know, so you could grab it and put in on an anthology like this, and it would have, it would live.

So anyway it really was starting to take off and I thought great possibilities, but that was right at a time when I personally was feeling very, very pressed in a lifetime sense. I was feeling like, well let's see how old was I? Was already at about 50 or 49 or 50, right around in there. I was feeling, god, if I'm not going to, I was able to sing less and less because I was spending more and more time with Paredon Records and all these different projects. And while those were very important to me, it was also, I had a spent a lifetime learning to be a singer. I didn't want to just not do it. I thought I better back off and try and emphasize the singing work for a while, and so I just kind of, I just, I don't know, I didn't really come as a rational decision, I want to do this, but it by attrition, it happened. I began to get further and further behind in my mail and this and that, and I just, eventually I had to recognize the fact that I couldn't do it. And so Paredon, at least there are those three records of *What Now People* to show you what was possible.

JEFF: Any comments on those?

IRWIN: No. I don't think so.

JEFF: Okay, last but not least the 2501 is Campos.

BARBARA: Yes Don Pedro Albizu Campos. Si. Sort of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, whatever, of well, he never got to be president or was it general of anything, but he's the most important figure of the Puerto Rican independence movement, and this is a very significant speech that he made. Pepe Sanchez, who is part of the Pepe and Flora team of the earliest records, had access to a tape of that, and the independence movement was really on the rise in New York, and so Pepe issued it himself and distributed it a little bit. But he was over his head to kind of continue that, so he made a little agreement with us. Well I think what it was we loaned him the money to actually to put out his version of it.

IRWIN: There's a letter about that...

BARBARA: And then out of that, because of that loan, and then we were entitled to buy back pressings. So the pressings were done from his, you know, from his stampers.

IRWIN: We made our own booklet.

BARBARA: Yeah we made our own package, and our package of course was designed for to be bilingual, and so we've got this whole speech and pretty well, it's a interesting speech 'cause this guy Albizu Campos was in prison in the United States quite a, two or three times I think, and eventually died in prison. He was one of the people who was, who suffered most for the cause of independence for Puerto Rico, and yet of course the American school child is not taught about him. So it's important from that point of view that this record was made. And remains available and it was, you know, at a particular moment of their history that it was, I think I summed it up in those notes in there, I talked about what the general, the gist of the speech, and what the impact or what the importance of that speech. You got anything?

IRWIN: Well the first time that Puerto Rico was declared a republic was in 1868 and it was in the town of Larus, it's a mountain town, and that was the beginning of the rebellion against Spain so and that day, I think it's September 23rd yeah September 23rd 1868 became like a national day for the Puerto Rican movement.

BARBARA: ...

IRWIN: And so every year there would be some kind of commemoration, usually at the time of Larus.

BARBARA: That's the most important National Day of Puerto Rico.

IRWIN: Right. And that's when the speech was delivered in the town of Larus in 1950. It was in that year that the nationalist movement proclaimed, again proclaimed the republic like they had done in 1868, and it was suppressed in the United States by military force, and Albizu Campos went to jail again and so on. It was a very turbulent period. Time around that time is when a group of Puerto Rican nationalist tried to assassinate President Truman, invaded the halls of Congress and so on. Here anyway, Campos, he was the president of the nationalist party, and this speech is probably, you know, well known everywhere in Puerto Rico. So it's a great historic document. And Pepe put it out. We wanted to also issue it. We didn't like his packaging. It wasn't suitable for our audience.

BARBARA: It wasn't that we didn't like. It wasn't suitable.

IRWIN: It wasn't suitable. So we bought records from him, and made up these booklets, and made up a new cover until he ran out of his records, at which point we began pressing the records ourselves. That's the story of it.

JEFF: What was the story, that one thing? SFN or LSN was it, was an African record that we had downstairs.

IRWIN: Well just, we had nothing to do with producing it, we just added it to the catalogue, it was a while.

JEFF: You sold it for somebody else?

IRWIN: Yeah, we were like distributors for it.

BARBARA: Yeah, but Irwin, what do you think that

IRWIN: But I don't think that we have any rights to it, do we?

BARBARA: I don't know. Was there anything in the folder there? This was...

IRWIN: With LSN?

BARBARA: With, through this Paredon collector made the arrangements. Liberations...that's the same people what got us the Angola record. I'm sure they don't care about, they'd rather have it be in existence than not but.

IRWIN: But I don't think we have the right to...

BARBARA: No you'd have to..

IRWIN: It's not ours to give away. If you want to call her up it's fine but...

JEFF: Okay whatever...the next thing would be the foreign licensed records you brought up there.

BARBARA: ..right.

JEFF: Now we're talking about Paredon records that have been licensed and put out overseas.

BARBARA: No, there are three different categories. Idiseo Sodayako. It was Editoriali Seasia. That's this group of political song record people over there.

JEFF: Over there being?

BARBARA: Italy. Milan. The address is on the back of the record. It's via G. Brodolini 20089 Rozzano, and then parenthesis Milano. So I guess it's, so this was a kind of an anthology that they made, and they put, they took some of the things from the, let me just hold on a second. Here, wait a minute. This might, I think this is basically is P1001,

maybe, hold on a minute. Yeah, so this album that they call *Corporation Man*, *Multinational Corporation Man* is actually P2001 *What Now People 1* and they

IRWIN: ...see I have ...here. Probably ...over there...

JEFF: So these were license fees, folks sort of just gave them the right to put it out or

IRWIN: This record was sold...

BARBARA: Okay the same people they call it Z, the label is Idischi Dellolsedaiko. This is the Haitian record exactly. And they used, they put out the notes on the back here or something in English and Italian. Maybe you want to answer that.

[Phone ringing]

IRWIN: It's for you.

BARBARA: It's the Haitian record, and the Angolan, the first one the songs of the NPLA, and they put notes in English for me on the on back and translated them into Italian. So those are the ones that and there's another one. They put out Argentina, they put out Bernardo Polango's record. So that makes four for them. Now here comes five, *Cuba Va* P1010. They put that out. Here's my photo on the back. Well what the hell. Okay so that's what that label put out. Irwin will have to tell you when he comes back what that means. He was the one who, I know he did this arrangement. Then a label in Spain called Gimbaro, which doesn't exist anymore, I don't know by the way is Shasi I think Shasa.

IRWIN: ...what does...

BARBARA: Shasa is this, see is the parent outfit and I think they have several marks.

JEFF: I see. Okay.

BARBARA: And that's, and I think they're some kind of an outgrowth of that, he's thinking of Idischi Sola, but it wasn't them. This is some of the same people I think, but with Idisichi a Sola, a collective but it was started by this man Johnny Bosa. I think I talked to you about, but then he died, I think some of the people started a commercial enterprise, political song records can be commercial in Italy, at least they were in those days. Okay so there were two records that came out on the Gimbarda label. Gimbarda doesn't exist anymore as far as I know. I have an old address somewhere for them if you want get it. But they put out my *Hate the Capitalist System* record and they, you know, just repackaged it with you know the booklet's translated and everything into Spanish. And then put out Andrez Jimenez's record. And that's it. No address on there either. I'm sure I have an address somewhere. They put out those two, and this is another this is on Superphone which is put out a Czech national record label. It's an anthology, it's got something from the Haitian record three things from the Haitian record. Want the titles?

JEFF:No.

BARBARA: ..marcher, *Un Joue Com Ca*, “a day like this,” *Qui Ca pun fait*, those three then it’s got ...*Senor en Ver*....oh I see they’ve got, looks like they have some of the, somethings from the Pepe and Flora record maybe, and somethings from the Anthology on Puerto Rico. And three songs of Suni Paz and one of Daniel Valdez. Dani Valdez, you know, Luiz Valdez’s brother in the Teatro Campesino. Where did they get that from? Anyway, and then they’ve got Pablo Milanés taken from one of our records someplace. And, oh the, couple from the, from our, the record from the Dominican Republic people. Exprecion Joven.

So anyway what looks like what happened, I believe what happened was I sent a bunch of records, and they picked what they wanted from each one, oh here it says artist independent Pepe and Flora, Suni Paz, Exprecion Joven, that they’ve taken from those four sources. But it’s all in Czech so I can’t say more than that. And they did it in 1980, and the man who was running the record, the Superphone label was someone who I met in 1947 at the World Youth Festival and then later renewed acquaintance with in the Sixties ‘cause I went to Germany to sing for the antinuclear movement, and they brought some people from all over Europe to sing, and we were all in a bus riding around all around Germany for about a month together performing for the German peace movement. And among the people was this man who heads that record label in Prague and who had a group then called the Spiritual, the Prague Spiritual quintet singing American spirituals with Czech accents.

But anyway that’s what that contact came from, that Gimbarda label came, that came from the fact that I went to sing in Spain invited by, I made several trips there, but this time it was a party that had formed by disaffected people from the communist party, Spanish Communist Party and some Spanish Maoists who were disaffected or didn’t like Maoism anymore. But they, anyway, they were trying to bring these two currents together, make a new party, and they had a big convention and invited a whole lot of people from all over the world. That’s also where I met, oh well, other singers there, I was going to record an things but this Gimbaro label was just getting started. This was just immediately post-Franco so there were a lot of new cultural developments in Spain and these people were one represented, one of them, and they thought there was a great future ahead for Spanish political song label, and apparently they only lasted a short while. And then Irwin would have to tell you about the other ones what.

JEFF:...

BARBARA: The Gimbarda thing, I think, was financially, I don’t know what happened. I think it was just like an exchange or something, I think what did I put out? Didn’t put out anything of theirs so it could’ve have been a trade. I don’t’ know what, they must’ve just paid us some something for rights to do that. Well that’s about all I could remember.