In February, C.F.M.S. Director, Barbara Cass-Beggs visited with Dr. Joseph Caesar Pullicino in the village of Balzan on the island of Malta. Following is a brief report of her meeting with the famous Maltese folklorist.

Dr. Pullicino said that he had been worried about the state of Maltese folk music, and in order to encourage its continuity he had organised a folk festival-competition where prizes would be given for the best Gthana (improvised folk song) Gthana-tal-fatt (ballad folksong) and Bagpipe solo (for bagpipes seem to be the Maltese equivalent of the Quebec fiddles). He said he had to insist that those who sang Gthanas avoided politics and religion, otherwise the police would make trouble, so he suggested a number of "subjects" and put them in a hat, and each competitor had to pick one.

This festival-competition became very popular and records were made and radio programs initiated, and it continued until about four or five years ago. He felt that by this time the young people were singing again and a number of performing folk song groups were established, so the festival was not so necessary. He said that the form of the improvised folk song was A.B.C.A.D. etc. The first singer makes up a four line stanza which is answered by the second singer, another new idea is added, and there is a return to the original four line stanza with more new material then following this. These songs are always made up by two singers.

I was impressed with Dr. Pullicino's interest and he has obviously done an excellent job for Maltese folksinging. He suggested a number of records and I was able to get two of these although they have no English translation. I told him about the C.F.M.S. and gave him our list of Canadian folk music and a membership form. Naturally I gave him a copy of my Lullaby book. As a civil servant he is kept busy but how nice it would be if the International Folk Music Society invited someone like him to attend the next conference.

Barbara Cass-Beggs' new book Your Baby Needs Music has just been published by Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver.