I Sing with the Steam

(Little Bedtime Song for the Young Stalinist Who Has Everything)

for
Soprano and Live Electronics

Jeff Borowiec [Text + Tune] and
Christina Butera & John Chittum [Electronics]

from Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*

The kulaks were peasants, the stubborn survivors of Stalin's revolution: of collectivization and famine, and very often of the Gulag. As a social class, the kulak (prosperous peasant) never really existed; the term was rather a Soviet classification that took on a political life of its own. The attempt to "liquidate the kulaks" during the first Five-Year Plan had killed a tremendous number of people, but it created rather than destroyed a class: those who had been stigmatized and repressed, but who had survived. The millions of people who were deported or who fled during collectivization were forever after regarded as kulaks, and sometimes accepted the classification. …

The kulaks sentenced later or to longer terms in the Gulag were still in exile in Siberia or Kazakhstan, in Soviet east or central Asia: might not such people support a Japanese invasion? …

Stalin…wanted "the direct physical liquidation of the entire counter-revolution," which meant the elimination of enemies "once and for all." The revised quotas were sent back down from Moscow to the regions as part of Order 00447, dated 30 July 1937, "On the Operations to Repress Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements." …By the end of 1938, the NKVD had executed some 386,798 Soviet citizens in fulfillment of Order 00447. …

In the end, however, mass killings could not preserve the Soviet Union from an attack that was not coming. …

Source:

Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands,* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 78-79, 80, 81, 105.

1
In dreams I am a tomato skin,
I hold the juice and the sweetness within,
    And yet fields of me
    Poison frogs and canaries
As one, as one in the wine-rising sun,
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.

2
In dreams my horizon calls out to the morning,
These funeral songs wave your sky like a storm,
    Now my gravity
    Brings you nowhere with me
To sleep, to sleep in the wine-clouded deep
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.

3
The Arrow brings me from the feathery sky,
I drip-drop-drip-drop on the wide riverside,
    And now roses will grow
    With the rust and the snow
We feast, we feast on these boots from the east
Singing Gu-la-la Gu-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
    Go lullaby my machine.
Sing Gu-la-la Gu-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la
    Go lullaby my machine.

4
In skin I am a tomato's dream,
I roll through Manchukuo and sing with the steam,
    And when work is done
    We sink with the sun
To sleep, to sleep while the wine-rivers weep
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.
Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la
    Come lullaby my machine.

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Lyrics under the staves:

In dreams I am a tom at o skin, I hold the juice and the sweet ness with in, And yet fields of me pois on frogs and can ar___ ies As one, as one in the wine-ris ing sun, Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la - la-la-la-la-la Come lull a by my mach ine. Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la Come lull a by my___ mach ine.___ (About 10") In dreams my hor i zon calls out to the morn ing,___ These fun er al songs wave your sky like a storm, Now my grav it y brings you no where with me To sleep, to sleep in the wine-cloud ed deep Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la - la-la-la-la-la Come lull a by my mach ine. Sing

Performance markings: [Toy Xylophone], [Slight reverb.], [Lingering resonance], [Drone emerges], [Drone begins responding to melody]

2

Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-la Come lull a by my mach ine. (About 15") The

[Drone and spectral delay]

arr ow brings me from the feath er y sky, I drip-drop-drip-drop on the

[Drone becomes counterpoint]

wide riv er side, And now ros es will grow with the rust and the snow We

feast we feast on these boots from the east Sing ing Gu-la-la Gu-la-la - la-la-la-la-la Go

lull a by my mach ine. Sing Gu-la-la Gu-la-la Gu-la-la-la-la Go lull a by my mach

ine. (About 20") In skin I am a tom at o's dream, I

[Denser drone and spectral delay with feedback]

[Emerging harmonies, electonics begin to take on a life of their own]

roll through Man chu kuo and sing with the steam, And when work is done we

sink with the sun To sleep to sleep while the wine-riv ers weep Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-

la-la-la-la-la Come lull a by my mach ine. Sing Ku-la-la Ku-la-la Ku-la-la-la-al Come

[Resynthesis: the computer begins to sing]

p

lull a by my____ mach ine. (About 30")

Ku-la-la-la-la____ Ku-la-la-la-

la____ La-la-la-la La-la-la La-la-la-la-la-la____

(Repeat between 2-5x)

[The machine takes over from here...]

(About 4 min.)