s.hanga with Jacoby

NORTON

Yelena Khanga with Susan Jacoby

Soul

JOUL

A Black Russian American Family 1865-1992

Copyright © 1992 by LDY, Inc.

Excerpt from Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro American Communist.

Copyright © 1978 by Liberator Press. Reprinted by permission of
Liberator Press, distributed by Lake View Press, Chicago. "Harlem Night
Song" from Selected Poems by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1926 by
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and renewed 1954 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted
by permission of the publisher. Excerpt from "Good Morning
Revolution" by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1973 by Faith Berry.
Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates, Inc. "Distorted
shadows fell" from Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak. Copyright © 1958
by William Collins and Co. Ltd. Copyright © 1958 by Pantheon Books,
Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random
House, Inc.

All rights reserved Printed in the United States of America

The text of this book is composed in Bembo,
with the display set in Bodoni.
Composition and manufacturing by the Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.
Book design by Guenet Abraham.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Khanga, Yelena.

Soul to Soul: a Black Russian American family, 1865–1992 / Yelena Khanga with Susan Jacoby.

p. cm.

I. Khanga, Yelena. 2. Afro-Americans—Soviet
Union—Biography. 3. Blacks—Soviet Union—Biography. I.

Jacoby, Susan. II. Title.

DK34.B53K48 1992 947'.0049607302—dc20

[B] 92-7043

ISBN 0-393-03404-6

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd.

10 Coptic Steet, London WC1A 1PU

234567890

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Q

I. DISTANT WORLDS

17

2. SOUTH TOWARD HOME

30

3. BERTHA AND OLIVER

52

4. THE SOVIET JOURNEY: ADVENTURE AND ANGUISH

72

5. NO-NONSENSE WOMEN

95

6. GROWING UP SOVIET

121

7. MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

145

8. COMING OF AGE IN BLACK AND WHITE 156

9. BLACK BEAUTY 182

IO. A NEW WORLD

II. THE MOSCOW-NEW YORK SHUTTLE 222

12. O MY AMERICA! 241

13. AFRICAN INTERLUDE 263

14. GRAY ZONES *273*

15. BELONGING 289

EPILOGUE 299

> INDEX 303

Illustrations appear following pages 128 and 224.

OOUL TO OOUL

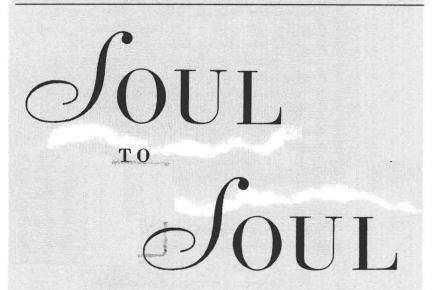
2 8 7 7 4

3

113

a.

Yelena Khanga with Susan Jacoby



A Black Russian American Family 1865-1992

Copyright © 1992 by LDY, Inc.

Excerpt from Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro American Communist.

Copyright © 1978 by Liberator Press. Reprinted by permission of
Liberator Press, distributed by Lake View Press, Chicago. "Harlem Night
Song" from Selected Poems by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1926 by
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and renewed 1954 by Langston Hughes. Reprinted
by permission of the publisher. Excerpt from "Good Morning
Revolution" by Langston Hughes. Copyright © 1973 by Faith Berry.
Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates, Inc. "Distorted
shadows fell" from Doctor Zhivago by Boris Pasternak. Copyright © 1958
by William Collins and Co. Ltd. Copyright © 1958 by Pantheon Books,
Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books, a division of Random
House, Inc.

All rights reserved Printed in the United States of America

The text of this book is composed in Bembo,
with the display set in Bodoni.

Composition and manufacturing by the Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.
Book design by Guenet Abraham.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Khanga, Yelena.

Soul to Soul: a Black Russian American family, 1865–1992 / Yelena Khanga with Susan Jacoby.

p. cm.

Khanga, Yelena.
 Afro-Americans—Soviet
 Union—Biography.
 Blacks—Soviet Union—Biography.
 Jacoby, Susan.
 Title.
 DK34.B53K48
 1992
 947'.0049607302—dc20

[B] 92-7043

ISBN 0-393-03404-6

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd.

10 Coptic Steet, London WC1A 1PU

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

To Lily Golden, my mother

In memory of Oliver Golden and Bertha Bialek Golden, my grandparents

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Q

I. DISTANT WORLDS

17

2. SOUTH TOWARD HOME

30

3. BERTHA AND OLIVER

52

4. THE SOVIET JOURNEY: ADVENTURE AND ANGUISH

72

5. NO-NONSENSE WOMEN

95

6. GROWING UP SOVIET

121

7. MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

145

8. COMING OF AGE IN BLACK AND WHITE

156

9. BLACK BEAUTY

182

10. A NEW WORLD

195

II. THE MOSCOW-NEW YORK SHUTTLE

222

12. O MY AMERICA!

241

13. AFRICAN INTERLUDE

263

14. GRAY ZONES

273

15. BELONGING

289

EPILOGUE

299

INDEX

303

Illustrations appear following pages 128 and 224.

Acknowledgments

My mother, Lily Golden, helped me at every stage of this work. Her private memories and her perspective as a historian were equally indispensable.

I am indebted to the Rockefeller Foundation and its president, Peter Goldmark, for the Warren Weaver fellowship that enabled me to complete most of the research on my family. Frank Karel, the foundation's vice-president for communications, steered me in the right direction more times than I can count.

Lee and Maureen Young gave me their love, faith, and wise counsel.

This book could not have been written without the late Mamie Golden, my grandfather's niece, and Pearl Steinhardt, the only person living who knew my grandmother as a young woman. Both gave generously of their time and prodigious memories.

Other relatives who provided invaluable assistance include: Albert, Eugene, Mark, Irving, Minnie, and Sheila S. Bialek, Delores Harris, Ollie Morris, Gerald and Jacqui Robinson.

For information about my father, I wish to thank Oscar Kambona, former minister of foreign affairs and defense of Tanganyika; Ibrahim nur Sharif, Bimkubwa Hanga, and Anthony M. Astrachan.

In Mississippi, I could not have traced the Golden family without the

help of Linda Crawford, head librarian of the B. S. Ricks Memorial Library in Yazoo City, and Darlene Johnson, assistant librarian, as well as JoAnn Prichard, Willie Morris, and George Penick, president of the Mid-South Foundation.

Joseph Roane and Percy Sutton filled in important details about the lives of black Americans in Uzbekistan.

Gennadi Gerasimov gave me my professional start when he hired me to work at *Moscow News*; Yegor Yakovlev, who succeded Gerasimov as the newspaper's editor, taught me how to be a real reporter.

In America, Kay Fanning became my "role model" of a professional woman.

David Crosson was the first person who believed in this book—and who made me believe I could finish it.

I also wish to thank my collaborator, Susan Jacoby, for helping me find a voice in the English language—and for the exchange of ideas from several cultures needed to tell my family's story.

Finally, I'm indebted to my editor, Ed Barber.

-Yelena Khanga

To acknowledge our ancestors means we are aware that we did not make ourselves, that the line stretches all the way back, perhaps, to God; or to Gods. We remember them because it is an easy thing to forget: that we are not the first to suffer, rebel, fight, love and die. The grace with which we embrace life, in spite of the pain, the sorrows, is always a measure of what has gone before.

-Alice Walker

Russia . . . where I had learned to love and weep And where my heart lies buried deep.

—Alexander Pushkin Evgeny Onegin