

STARTING

a New Life

in AMERICA



March 20, 1992

I can't believe this is my last night in Tashkent. It's been home for my entire life. Soon home will be America. I keep whispering the word over and over again. As I listen to my parents chattering through the old apartment walls, I think about my day. As usual, I had taken my afternoon walk through the marketplace. First, I waited in line for my turn to drink *kvass* out of the merchant's cup. *Kvass* is a little sour, but I like it. While I waited, I talked to the people around me. It hit me that soon I'd be speaking English instead of Russian! I'll miss moments like these. After I had my turn to drink, I bought my favorite treat. My heart sank as I thought about tearing off pieces of the crisp, warm bread. I'd probably never be able to find it in America. It's baked in a special clay oven called a *tandoor*. They can't have those in America, can they? I already miss home, and I haven't even left.

—Gera

October 16, 1992

I've been living in New York City for six months. My English is getting better. As it turns out, many Russian immigrants live in my community in Queens. Some are even from Tashkent! I have found the best places to get my special bread (they do have *tandoors* here!) and even *kvass*. There is so much other great food in America, though—like pizza. I miss Tashkent, but I'm really starting to feel at home here.

—George

Gera's Journey to America



The writer of this passage and his family moved to the United States from Tashkent, Uzbekistan in March 1992. First, they took an airplane to Moscow, Russia. Then they flew to New York City. While Gera grew up, Uzbekistan was a part of the Soviet Union—a large empire that began in Russia. The system of government there was called Communism. It controlled all parts of its citizens' lives from religion to travel. Gera's family wanted to escape and experience freedom in America. The Soviet Union broke apart in December 1991 as the family waited for permission to move to the U.S.