

# **BULGARIANS**

**Johanna Granville**

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**The Bulgarians, or Bulgars, belonged to the Turco-Altai language group and originated from Western Siberia, along the valley of the Irtysh River. During the first and second centuries AD they migrated in the direction of Eastern Europe and settled in the region north of the Caucasus. There the proto-Bulgarians mingled with local native tribes of Iranian origin, whose cultural achievements and social hierarchy had a substantial impact on their further development. The proto-Bulgarians were called Bulgars for the first time by a Roman chronographer in 354 AD. In the seventh century, A.D., they merged with the Slavic tribes inhabiting the territory bordering the Black Sea, between Romania and Turkey, in Southeastern Europe, which is present-day Bulgaria. The Bulgarians took over their Slavic language. The Turkish conquest of Bulgaria in 1396 hampered the development of the Bulgarian language for several centuries, but after the Bulgarians achieved independence in 1878, a modern literary language based on the vernacular emerged. Modern Bulgarian, which is generally said to date from the 16th century, borrowed words from Greek, Turkish, Russian, French, and German. Although it resembles Slavic languages, Bulgarian has a definite article and has almost completely**

**dropped the numerous case forms of the noun. It uses position and prepositions (like English) to indicate grammatical relationships in a sentence instead of cases (like Russian).**

**Once an independent kingdom, Bulgaria was dominated by the Communist Party from 1946 until 1990, when a multiparty system was adopted. During the Communist period, when Bulgaria was under the control of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the once dominant agricultural sector was overtaken by manufacturing. After World War II , all industrial enterprises were nationalized and operated under a series of five-year economic plans, modeled after the Soviet system, with financial aid from the USSR. Bulgaria enjoyed one of the most prosperous economies of the Soviet bloc. The transition from the old command economy to a democratic, market-oriented economy, initiated after the collapse of the communist regime, has been slow. Mass privatization of state-owned industry was sluggish, although privatization of small-scale industry, particularly in the retail and service sectors, accelerated. Under Communism Bulgarians became accustomed to free health services; Bulgaria's post-Communist governments have not had the financial resources to maintain these services. Today 52% of the population is employed in services, 36% in industry, and 12% in agriculture.**

**Most Bulgarians (85%) are Bulgarian Orthodox, while 13% are Muslim, .8% Jewish, .5% Roman Catholic, and .2% are Uniate Catholic. The rest (.5%) worship in Protestant, Gregorian-Armenian, and other faiths.**

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