

## Chuvash

### Profile

According to the 2002 national census, there are 1,637,094 Chuvash in the Russian Federation. Chuvash are descended from Volga Bulgars who assimilated local Finnic and Turkic peoples. Chuvash live, primarily, in the Chuvash Republic (pop. 1,346,300: Chuvash 67.7 per cent, Russians 26.5 per cent, others 5.8 per cent) as well as in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

The Chuvash language is from the Turkic branch of the Uralo-Altai language family. Chuvash are Eastern Orthodox in religion.

### Historical context

The Chuvash are descended from that part of the Volga Bolgar population that did not convert to Islam in the tenth century. Previously part of the Kazan Khanate, Chuvashia became part of Russia in 1551.

The Chuvash AO was established in June 1920 and became an ASSR on 25 April 1925. The republic has the lowest concentration of Russians in the region. Traditions of nationalism have never been strong among the Chuvash compared to some other Turkic groups in the Russian Federation, yet the Chuvash language and culture underwent a revival in the 1990s. Chuvash law requires the republic's president to be a Chuvash-speaker.

The Chuvash National Congress (CNC) is reportedly an influential force in the republic, yet commands only up to 10 per cent of the electorate according to reports. The CNC expressed protest at the announcement of President Putin's plans to terminate the election of regional governors in 2004, which would allow the federal centre to ignore language requirements of republican leaders envisioned in Chuvash law.

### Current issues

According to Russian newspaper reports in April 2005 the reorganization of the All-Russian State Television and Radio Company led to a reduction in non-Russian language programming, including Chuvash. According to reports, the reorganization led to the end of Chuvash language broadcasting in the Chuvash republic. Chuvash President Nikolai Fedorov reportedly announced that he would try to organize an independent broadcasting agency in Chuvashia despite the absence of funds in the republican budget for such an enterprise.