



# Domachevo

*A Short History of a Town near Boug*

*By Alexander Avdeyuk*

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The history of this small town is not as old as that of Slovatyche, across the Boug River, which is 300 years longer, or of the town of Kodon, that is the Old town of Berestyie bound – 400 years older. Anyway, we've also got something to be said about our native lands, about the history of ours.

Just like other authors did, who described the history of their native villages and towns, we can start with the words that the territory where Domachevo is at the moment, people were settling since ancient times. And flint tools found by the author of the article near the town can testify to that. Archeological surveys on these territories have not been carried out here yet (*all amateurs should remember that personal surveys carried out without any corresponding permission are prohibited by the State and can be punished according to the Law*). So, it's hard now to put it accurately when people commenced to settle here. We know, though, that the bank of the Western Boug River had all the favorable conditions for living here for that time – i.e., proximity to water, fish, animals in the forests, etc. Probably, archeologists will add their word in our history.

When we jump over the ancient times and take a closer look at the not-so-distant past, that is the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D., we can follow the opinion of many scientists and say that this area belonged to the Volynians and BUzhans settlements (which are mentioned in the “Chronicles of the passed times”). Our area is not Polesye any more, although some authors and scientists made attempts to generalize and extend this naming in relation to Boug and even further.

Then, at the time of Dukedoms of the 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries this area (the so-called Berestje land) belonged to different Dukedoms. And, probably, our regions didn't always belong to one and the same Dukedom that Brest itself did. Initially (approximately until the 11<sup>th</sup> century) it was part of the Volodimir land, and after that of the Berestje land as a vassal subordinate of the Kiev Dukedom. Still it was the time when hardly any concrete villages or towns first appeared. There were no recollections about any settlements at that time.

In the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, our land (along with the Podlasye land across the Boug River) already belonged to the territory of the Great Dukedom of Lithuania. This was the time of active development of small towns and villages. Especially it was important along Boug, next to which an important way laid, which united Berestje with the old Helm, the center of the Helm land. Due to it Kodon (initially, Toden) appeared. It is northbound from Domachevo. Slavatyche appeared similarly – the initially older neighbor of our town, as well as Hanna and Vlodava – due south from it. Our territory lies approximately in the middle of this way. There are many settlements such as Priluki, Stradcha (Stradichi), Zbunin, CHersk (which is, in fact, a bit in a distance from this way) on 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century maps (for instance, the Great Dukedom of Lithuania map of 1613). German settlements can be dated back to have appeared at this time, namely of Augsburg confession Christians, on both banks of Boug, which, as it seems to be played the principal part in Domachevo history as an independent settlement later. However, most likely, there was little or no information about our town at that time so far.

Domachevo appeared on maps of the 18<sup>th</sup> century only and gradually it was getting more and more weight. Especially it became noticeable after the railway was constructed, which, similarly to the old “near-Boug” way, joined Berestje with Helm. This was, in fact, the greatest historical rise of Domachevo, that is unlikely to happen again soon. Finally, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Domachevo turned out to be the center of the volost.

Before 1939, being a part of Poland, Domachevo was quite a large cultural and multiconfessional town, we can even say, a resort, since its sanatorium (pure nature and pine-tree woods) hosted many Polish people from many parts of their former State. Domachevo was even mentioned at that time in Warsaw press. At that time we could observe the unique situation when people of various nationalities and confessions lived in one place in peace and serenity. There were Germans-lutheranians (the so-called, Olenders), who had their own church, Jews with their synagogue right in the center of Domachevo, Roman Catholics with their church as well. One should mention that some issues, concerning the transition from the Orthodox confession to the United Church and vice versa, were touched upon in Domachevo as well. There were protestants-Baptists there as well, who had their own prayer house. These differences didn't hinder people to live and work together so that Domachevo could flourish and turn beautiful and respectable. If we go deeper into the events, we'll see that the history of Domachevo till then was the history of confessions and their co-action. Therefore, most likely, we are going to consider this period in this way, when a more detailed story will follow.

The situation like that had lasted until 1939, when the state border of the Belarusian Soviet Socialistic Republic was moved. At that time, many Polish people moved deeper into Poland, not willing to enter the Socialistic Republic, and the majority of the Germans left the area even earlier at the time of the first relocation to Siberia where they live until now. The population decreased considerably then.

Since 1940, being a part of the USSR, Domachevo became the administrative center of the Domachevo region. The former Lutheran Church was reconstructed into staff building of frontier

armies. The fact explains why during the first days of the war, on June 22, 1941, when Domachevo was occupied, the Lutheran Church due to combat actions of the 24<sup>th</sup> tank corps was demolished. The destruction of the Jewish Community of Domachevo along with the synagogue is connected with the war times. In Domachevo itself there appeared a Jewish ghetto, where a couple of thousand Jews got killed. The children of the Domachevo orphan asylum, in the number of 54, were shot nearby. In total, taking into account the town area and the region 3,800 persons were killed (as the encrypt, made soon after Domachevo was liberated on the former German prison, testifies; it remained till now). War memorials, erected at the locations of the events, let us remember these days.

Domachevo was freed on June 23, 1944. After all those trials, it failed to regain the former power and weight. In the 1960s Domachevo region was liquidated and entered Brest region, and the ex-center started to lead a peaceful and quiet life of a small border town, as many other Soviet Union towns did. The situation like that lasted until the newest history days.

USSR collapse, the independence of the Republic of Belarus, new, unknown freedoms – freedom of will, travel, mass media, business – it all belonged to the 1990s. People going poor, loss of money in the Bank of Savings, empty store shelves, talons, coupons for shopping items, enormous lines in stores, unemployment, personal belongings for sale – was also an attribute of those times. People started to go depressed and look for peace in alcohol or started to search new methods of moneymaking, even if it wasn't really lawful. The customs opening encouraged it even more. Cheap alcohol and rapid earnings “on the border line” involved many people, but never helped to develop the culture in Domachevo. Therefore, these times brought up the new generation which the future of our small town depended a lot on. However it was, it doesn't look that sad as it seems to be at all. Domachevo lives on and gradually cures its wounds. The Orthodox Church came back to its normal activity (it was active at the Soviet times as well but in a very hard condition), and old Catholic Church was re-established too, where at Soviet times there was a cinema. The School continues to work, just like the Library, hospital and post office does.

What's going to be further – it all depends on us. Will Domachevo be on maps of Belarus in 50-100 years? Or it'll become a deep countryside with a street of 20 huts? Or will it find itself in the list of “left settlements”? Or, on the contrary, will it fix itself and flourish, as a, let it be, small, but a cultural center? It all depends on us and only on us, since we are to live here, this is our land our small Motherland.

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