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The Steel Heart of Russia Left Behind by History

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Built from scratch in the southern Urals as the centerpiece of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan in 1931, Magnitogorsk is colloquially known as the "steel heart of Russia."

The city is dominated by the huge Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel Works (MMK) — a sprawling industrial complex employing 38 percent of the city's residents and taking up almost half of its territory on the Asian side of the Ural River.

But locals express a strained mix of pride and resentment towards the all-encompassing industrial conglomerate that consumes their city.

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