

# Labor in Exile: Evacuated Workers and Wartime Production in Tomsk, 1941-1945



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# Background and Goals

At the beginning of World War II, the Soviet Union began evacuating factories away from the path of the German army to places like Siberia and Central Asia. I wanted to study how this extraordinary process took place, so I decided to look at the evacuation from the perspective of one city: Tomsk, in western Siberia. I planned to go to Russian archives in Tomsk and in Moscow to find newspaper articles, government documents, and anything else that would help me understand how such an incredible effort took place, and what the consequences were for the people involved.



# Results

In the archives I found all kinds of information: newspaper articles, minutes of local party meetings, and proclamations from workers. Some documents concerned the big issues of supplying wartime goods for the front, while others lamented the poor living conditions of the evacuees. All in all, the documents I found in those Russian archives paint a picture of a city in chaos, without enough supplies or facilities to care for all its needs, but also a city that remained constantly focused on the goal of defending its country. Traveling to Russia was absolutely essential for acquiring a well-rounded understanding of life in Siberia during World War II.