

# Medicine in the Gulag Archipelago

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

*Yes, I was a privileged person. Dr. Petukhov really did save my life – dear Dr. Petukhov – when he took me on as a member of the medical staff. May he forget that such a place as Kolyma ever existed!*

**Eugenia Ginzburg**

This project explores how planners organised healthcare facilities for the Gulag as it developed in the 1930s, and how modernisation and ideology contributed to these arrangements. 'Socialist' ideology committed authorities to 're-education through labour' and medical investment appeared to support the idea of redemption. Gulag medicine made a major contribution to the forced colonisation of remote regions of the Soviet Union by sustaining a population in extreme conditions. Yet it did this in the face of brutalization and extremes of terror that periodically threatened to overwhelm this economic mission.



## SURVIVORS OF THE GULAG

*The work we did there at Ozerlag was all for food only; you worked for your piece of bread and for a bowl of porridge, or some kind of soup. ... All you got was your ration. But of course the norm was very high; ... physically I was a scrawny person, naturally I was no farm boy, no muscleman and so I always ended up with a very low output and the brigadier always wrote me down as a "mimum", and I very quickly ...started to become a 'goner' – an emaciated prisoner on the edge of death.*

**Yury Fidelgolts, imprisoned 1948-1956 for 'conspiracy', interviewed in Moscow, March 2009**

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