Russian Prison – Inmate description.

“In a Russian prison, there would be one cooked meal a day, typically meat stew and pickled cabbage, with a piece of bread no bigger than a pack of cards.

The inmates were all housed in two big army-style barracks - there were anywhere between 50 and 100 people in each one.

The barracks were built in the Soviet times - around the 1920s.

All you've got inside are rows of bunkbeds, a night stand and a stool.

There is also a toilet but you cannot use it as there is no central sewage system. We used to go outside to the so-called 'hole', sometimes when it was -20C in the winter.

In general, the climate in that remote swampy place surrounded by forest was just awful - cold winters and midges in the summer. In addition, there was a nuclear facility about 70km [44 miles] away from our camps.

The administration was very strict with us - rumours of beatings circled around the colony, although I didn't witness any personally. More often there were fights between the inmates themselves.

Mass beatings are usually a feature of male camps.

There was no torture in FGU IK-14, but anyone disobeying the prison rules would be punished by getting sent to "shiza" [Russian abbreviation for schizophrenia] - a solitary cell.

The daily routine was also strict - they would wake us up at 06:00, and we would have morning exercises five minutes later. We had breakfast at 07:00, then work until 13:00 when we would have lunch. There was more work after that until 16:00, followed by dinner. Lights out was at 22:00."