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Features

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Potempkin prisons: inside the Museum of the Gulag

by [Jonathan Brent](#)

On Russia's continuing inability to confront its Stalinist past.

“Do you think Stalin can be rehabilitated?” I asked an officer of the FSB (one of the successor agencies to the KGB) not long ago in Moscow. He looked at me with genuine astonishment and said, “No. That would be like rehabilitating Hitler.” This FSB officer is researching a book on the history of the Great Terror for Yale University Press for which he has privileged access to Presidential archives, KGB archives, and the so-called Personal Archive of Josef Stalin that has recently been transferred to the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow. And yet wherever one looks, whether on boxes of chocolates to be found in Sheremetyevo Airport’s duty free shops, matchbook covers dedicated to “Political Placards of th ...

Jonathan Brent's most recent book is *Inside the Stalin Archives* (Atlas & Co).

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