

Kirov? amasses a vast array of circumstantial evidence to indict Stalin for the murder. Knight, a respected historian of the Soviet secret police and its postcommunist incarnations, provides ample motive. Kirov, she shows, was not the mindless loyalist of earlier portraits. A former journalist for a left-liberal paper in pre-Bolshevik Russia, he was better educated and arguably more complex than the rest of Stalin's camarilla. While toeing the party line, he repeatedly voiced reservations about specific policies, including the campaigns of terror against the Kulaks. "The Boss," as underlings called Stalin, distrusted dissenters, especially those who, like Kirov, were so popular with the party rank and file as to constitute potential challengers to his rule. So Stalin, even as he pretended to love Kirov, plotted against him.

In addition to ridding himself of a potential rival, Stalin was pursuing a second goal. By blaming the murder on former intraparty factionalists, he could justify the total mobilization that he deemed essential for totalitarian socialism to survive. Mass, unpredictable terror was intrinsic to his rule, Knight shows, and his obsession with traitors and capitulators was more than personal paranoia. Kirov's murder became the rationale for completely replacing the party bureaucracy, eliminating anyone who had the vaguest recollection of party history, and promoting sycophants who owed their careers to Stalin. Knight's book is both a lucid analysis of a pivotal event in Soviet history and a bitter reminder of the dark Stalin era.

—Vladimir Tismaneanu

THE OXFORD BOOK OF WORK.

Edited by Keith Thomas. Oxford Univ. Press. 656 pp. \$35

The Oxford Book of Work is splendid but for one great flaw—it's not a book. Certainly it meets the dictionary definition: "a long written or printed work, usu. on sheets of paper fastened or bound together with covers." What's missing is narrative. This is a

volume for dipping into, not for reading straight through. I mention this because I'm a credulous shopper and often deceived.

Thomas, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, has created an anthology—really, a grab bag—of most anything toothsome ever written about work. With the notable exception of rock 'n' roll lyrics, nary a stone has been left unturned. Economics, philosophy, poetry, fiction, drama—all have been mined, and with happy results.

Take, for instance, this, from a letter written to a friend by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1858: "It has always been because my mind was uncomfortable at home that it sallied abroad to obtain, at any sacrifice, the relief of hard intellectual work. This is the case now. I have no child to enjoy the little noise that my name may make. I do not believe that in such times as these the slightest influence can be obtained by such writings as mine, or even by any writings except by the bad novels, which try to make us still more immoral and ill-conditioned than we are. Yet I rise at five, and sit for six hours before my paper, and often leave it still white. Sometimes I find what I am looking for, but find it painfully and imperfectly; sometimes I am in despair at not finding it at all."

I choose that excerpt not only because I love it, but because it is characteristic. Thomas wields a generous knife, and so even this slightly trimmed sample has Tocqueville on writing, childlessness, the wretched state of publishing, and the absence of Prozac. Unfortunately, this letter appears not in the section on writing but under the heading "Compensations and Rewards," which brings me to my last gripe: a volume so clearly intended as a reference should be more precisely indexed.

As with any collection of maxims, there are contradictions on work and its rewards. From Noel Coward we hear that "work is much more fun than fun," while C. Wright Mills reports: "Each day men sell little



Hammering Man at No. 3302537,
by Jonathan Borofsky

pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night and weekend with the coin of 'fun'." Still, the book is cleverly constructed, starting with original sin and clos-

ing with an Oxford don who said of retirement: "It's not too bad, but I rather miss the vacations."

—Benjamin Cheever

CONTRIBUTORS

Anthony Aveni, a professor of astronomy and anthropology at Colgate University, is the author of *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks, and Cultures* (1989). **Steven Bach**, who teaches film and literature at Bennington College, is completing a biography of the playwright and director Moss Hart. **Stephen Bates** is literary editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*. **J. Bottum** is books and arts editor of the *Weekly Standard*. **Benjamin Cheever**, the author of three novels, is writing a book about work. **Clive Davis** writes for the *Times* and the *Sunday Times* of London. **A. J. Hewat** is associate editor at the *Litchfield County Times* in New Milford, Conn. **Larry L. King's** 13th book, *A Writer's Life in Letters, Or, Reflections in a Bloodshot Eye*, has just been published. **Perri Klass**, the author of two memoirs and three books of fiction, is a pediatrician practicing in Boston. **James Morris** is director of publications at the American Enterprise Institute. **Alvin H. Rosenfeld**, director of Jewish studies at Indiana University, is editor of *Thinking about the Holocaust* (1997). **Vladimir Tismaneanu**, professor of politics at the University of Maryland, College Park, is the author of *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (1998). **Benjamin Wittes** is an editorial writer for the *Washington Post*.

Credits: Cover, p. 35, *Magical Thinking*, by Bo Bartlett, Courtesy of P.P.O.W. Gallery, New York, N.Y.; p. 10, Courtesy Lennox International and The History Factory; p. 11, Corbis/Ralph White; p. 12, Corbis/Digital Art; p. 15, *Capital Growth* (1997), by Martin Langford, 20" x 17"; p. 17, *The Cost of Progress*, United Nations Environment Programme, Photo by Bhudev Bhagat/Topham Picturepoint; pp. 20, 23, Reproduced from *Le Diable à Paris, 1845–6*; pp. 24, 28, 87, Reproduced from the Collections of the Library of Congress; p. 26, Reproduced from *Political Buttons, Book III, 1789–1916*, by Theodore L. Hake, Hake's Americana & Collectibles Press, Copyright © 1978; pp. 27, 33, Archive Photos; p. 29, Courtesy of General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations; p. 30, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; p. 37, *The Choice* (1998), by Marlene Baron Summers, 50" x 60"; p. 38, *The Building Blocks of Life* (1985), by John Fekner, 8' x 12', Courtesy of John Fekner Archives; p. 42, *After School* (1984), by Kathryn Freeman, 48" x 60"; pp. 44–45, *School Scene, Pennsylvania* (ca. 1920), by J. C. Huntington, National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C./Hemphill Collection, Art Resource, N.Y.; p. 49, *Playground* (1986), by P. J. Crook, 46" x 52", Collection of Professor and Mrs. Ken Simmonds; p. 51, Photograph copyright © 1998 by Nicholas Nixon, from *School*, by Robert Coles and Nicholas Nixon. Copyright © 1998 by Robert Coles. By permission of Little, Brown and Company, Inc.; p. 53, 4-B (1937), by Louise Emerson Rönnebeck, 34" x 50", oil on masonite, private collection, reproduced by permission of the artist's estate; p. 55, *Robert Gaudio, English Teacher, Hazleton Senior High School, Hazleton, Pa.* (1992), Copyright © Judith Joy Ross, Courtesy of Pace MacGill Gallery; p. 59, *Possibilities and Pragmatics* (1990), by Vivian Torrence, 12" x 9", watercolor collage; p. 61, *Spring* (1986), by Stasys Eidrigevicius, reprinted by permission; p. 63, *False Ceiling* (1995), by Richard Wentworth, Installation, books and steel cable, dimensions variable, Lisson Gallery, Photo by John Ridly, London; p. 68, *An Unusual Period of Company* (1997), by Maysey Craddock, 38 1/2" x 28", Ledbetter Lusk Gallery, Memphis, Tenn.; p. 71, *Political Descent '96* (1996), by Edward Sorel, *The Nation* (cover illustration) November 4, 1996, 24" x 19", Private Collection, Copyright © by Edward Sorel; pp. 75, 82, Corbis-Bettmann; pp. 85, 101, Associated Press/AP; p. 92, Courtesy of Morris Library, University of Delaware, Newark; p. 96, Corbis/Patrick Ward; p. 98, left, Corbis/Hulton-Deutsch Collection, right, Copyright © Hulton Getty/Liaison Agency; p. 103, Cartoon by Bunte, Photo by Hatzinger, from *Der Spiegel*, Reprinted by permission; p. 105, Cartoon by Ahumada for *La Jornada*, Reprinted by permission; p. 109, Reproduced courtesy of the Special Collections Division, Jackson Library, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Randall Jarrell Collection, 1929–1969; p. 112, Corinthian *olpē* (the Chigi vase). Rome, Villa Giulia 22679. (After *Anrike Donkmäler* II. pls. 44–5); p. 116, Courtesy of Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, N.Y.; p. 119, Corbis/Layne Kennedy; p. 122, Scala/Art Resource, N.Y., Detail from *Dante and His Poem*, by Domenico di Michelino; p. 125, Copyright © Hulton Getty/ Liaison Agency; p. 126, *Hammering Man at No. 3302537*, by Jonathan Borofsky, 144" x 69" x 3", Copyright © 1990, Jonathan Borofsky/Gemini G.E.L.