

Young characterizes as “politics without policies.” Yet her latent detestation of the welfare state was recognized by the powerful Tory politician Sir Keith Joseph, who backed her and then helped her wrench party leadership away from the ineffectual Edward Heath in 1975.

In 1979, the Labour Government was undermined by strikes and inflationary demands from the trade unions it represented, and Thatcher appealed to a middle class threatened by social upheaval, immigration, and economic decline. She was elected prime minister that year, even though few knew what to expect or think of her, except that she was obviously an anomaly: a woman in a man’s world (though unsympathetic herself to other women’s aspirations); a *petite bourgeoisie* dominating a party known for its aristocratic associations.

Thatcher’s personal style soon became unmistakable—hard-working, strong, and (according to her supporters) straightforward and honest or (in her opponents’ view) bullying and unwilling to compromise. Far from winning the hearts of her countrymen, though, her popularity has often remained remarkably low: Her almost certain electoral defeats were avoided only at the last moment—as a result of the Falklands War in 1982 and of the wars within the Labour opposition in 1987.

But has there been a “Thatcherite revolution”? Young makes clear that on key matters her legacy, if not exactly lady-like, may well be set in iron: Her curbing of trade-union power (her greatest accomplishment, Young judges) and her denationalization of much of industry are policies almost impossible to reverse.

Yet Thatcher has hardly dismantled the big-spending state: Government spending as a percentage of GNP has actually risen during her decade in office. And the rate of economic growth has fared no better than it did during 1968–73, the worst years of what she considers the welfare-state nightmare. Her critics argue that her overly simplistic remedies of free enterprise and a supposedly minimalist state have worked about as well as two as-



pirins. Now it is time to call for a real doctor. Thatcher, however, is not ready to step aside; having outlasted two U.S. presidents, three Russian leaders, and four French prime ministers, she plans, she says, to keep “going on and on and on and on.”

HOW OLD ARE YOU? Age Consciousness in American Culture. By Howard P. Chudacoff. Princeton. 232 pp. \$19.95

Either we try to hide it, or we celebrate it. Ah, age. Sometimes it signals wondrous gains: old enough to go to school (or to get into day care); old enough to wear make-up; old enough to drive, to drink, to vote, to marry. It also signals loss: mid-life crisis, too old to have children, too old to keep working, too old to live alone. Is this preoccupation with age a modern American creation, or has it been in our genes all along?

Chudacoff, a professor of history at Brown University, observes that before 1850, “age distinctions in the United States were blurred . . . Americans had certain concepts about stages of life—youth, adulthood, old age . . . but demarcations between stages were neither distinct nor universally recognized.” People in their 30s were often considered youths, and folks worked until they were physically unable to continue. During the 1820s and 1830s, the American family was an individual’s primary economic, social, and educational reality. People rarely lived alone, and “intergenerational association prevailed over peer-group socialization,” notes Chudacoff in his dry social-science prose. Birthdays were rarely celebrated, and some people had no idea when they were born or how old they were.

Starting in the mid-1800s, however, Americans began to see age as an increasingly indispensable measure of their fellow kind. Chudacoff relates the origins of this preoccupation to the impersonal norms and objective classifications which modern societies implement as they industrialize. American theorists such as Samuel Harrison and Henry Barnard shaped a growing consciousness that the needs of children, adults, and the elderly are not the same. And studies such as psychologist Granville Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence: Its Psychology*

and *Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (1904) led ultimately to assigning expectations to all life stages and prescriptions about what individuals "could and should be doing at specific ages."

By the start of the 20th century, young people were attending age-graded schools with highly specialized curricula, and pediatrics had become a vital new field of medicine. As the importance of youth development and education grew, says the author, so too did the belief that growing old meant degeneration: The aging lost status, needed attention, and "no longer command[ed] respect as repositories of wisdom and experience."

Peer groupings have now expanded from schools to the workplace and to free-time activities. When Americans retire, they often move to retirement communities. While many believe that age grading has been bad, Chudacoff thinks that "tinkering with or removing these standards" would be difficult. After all, age, along with sex, "has considerable practical advantages as an administrative and normative gauge. It is easily measured . . . cannot be readily manipulated" and meets America's craving for organization. Age grading is here to stay, he concludes. But improved health care and decreasing birth rates may force a re-thinking of age stereotypes in the 21st century.

ROCK AROUND THE BLOC: A History of Rock Music in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. By Timothy W. Ryback. Oxford. 272 pp. \$21.95

The scale of recent change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has caused scholars to search for hidden cracks within the Soviet system—for elements that did not fit into the Marxist-Leninist framework. Ryback, a Harvard lecturer in history and literature, focuses on popular music. Following Frederick Starr's *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union 1917–1980* (1983), Ryback argues that, despite government attempts to dominate every aspect of social life, popular culture in postwar Eastern Europe has been largely shaped by foreign (and mostly American) models.

From Russia to Hungary, from Poland to Bul-



garia, in all the countries Ryback discusses, the story is roughly the same: An alienated younger generation embraces Western music—first rock, then heavy metal, and finally punk—while the cultural apparatchiks reject it as "decadent," "immoral," and a "poisonous" export of Western imperialists. The struggle of Lenin versus Lennon for the hearts and minds of the younger generation has many turns. Outright bans on nightclubs, concerts, and musicians only forced the rock scene underground; communist regimes then tried more subtly to co-opt the least objectionable rock bands and make rock serve socialism. In return for cutting their hair, lowering the decibels, and submitting their lyrics to the censor, state-sponsored bands such as the Happy Guys (Russia) and the Free Sailing Band (Bulgaria) were provided with state-of-the-art musical equipment and all the "perks" of Western rock stars. But the public was not easily gulled: It eventually rejected most state bands, preferring the more radical groups such as Plastic People of the Universe (Czechoslovakia), Coitus Punk Group (Hungary), and Lady Pank (Poland)—all untainted by collaboration with the hated establishment.

Ryback describes the triumph of rock and roll in the Soviet bloc as "the realization of a democratic process." He considers his young heroes—less interested in heroic dreams of world revolution than in sex, rock and roll, and occasionally drugs—to be in fact the real revolutionaries. Yet Ryback never shows his rock revolutionaries involved in actual political events. (Plastic People's support for, and from, Václav Havel's Charter 77, for example, is never mentioned.) One can only infer the conclusion that Ryback never explicitly reaches: The rock revolution, and the notion that an individual's private life can be created independently of the state, have played a crucial, if incalculable, role in the breakup of the Stalinist system. Despite its flaws, *Rock Around the Bloc* helps dispel the assumption, made by cold warriors as well as orthodox Marxists, that a communist society can totally and effectively control its population.