

their jobs and be out on the street, and that extremists are trying to seize power and so on.

"When people are frightened that does tend to move them to the right. Historically that was true in Germany and Italy in the '20s and '30s, and what we need now is a dose of hope."

Is he saying that British politics of the 1980s are a reflection of Europe in the '30s? "Thatcherism really is the policy of Mussolini," he said. "If you read the life of Mussolini — I'm talking now of Italy in the 'twenties — all the speeches that Mrs. Thatcher makes are in that early form of Italian fascism."

"I know the word fascism has come to mean gas chambers and all that, but I'm talking about the structure of the state — the crushing of trade unions, the crushing of democracy, the very, very strong anti-Soviet policies, the development of military control; all these things are reappearing."

David Greason

Benn's challenge underlines a poor year for Labour since its demoralising third defeat at the polls last June — and particularly for the "dream ticket" of Neil Kinnock and deputy leader Roy Hattersley. Kinnock is under no serious threat, but Hattersley is being challenged for the deputy's spot by the soft left's John Prescott, as well as the fundamentalist Eric Heffer — an indication of Labour's continued factional fragmentation.

On the one hand, the "soft left" — the Tribune Group and Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) [as well as the CP's journal *Marxism Today*] — has divided over how to cope with the current "revisionist" drift in Labour policy. Former LCC chair Peter Hain argued publicly last year for a mending of fences with the "hard left" to lead an assault on the right and, by implication, the leadership. And he accused much of the soft left of accommodating itself to Kinnock's "rightward drift".

Meanwhile, Benn's candidacy has dismayed many in his own hard left constituency, the Campaign

Group, with Campaign Group MP Clare Short eschewing the "macho" politics of the futile challenge. It has now to be wondered whether the Grand Old Man is not at the end of the line.

All of this has accentuated Labour's navel-gazing, and attempts by the likes of *Marxism Today* and, to some extent, the *New Statesman* to turn the debate outwards have so far borne little fruit. Part of the problem lies in Labour's continued refusal to countenance any sort of electoral pact with the centrist Democrats (as the LSDP, the merged SDP and Liberals, tends to be known). In the absence of such a pact, Thatcherism seems assured of continued power until perhaps the end of the century — something which is progressively eroding the morale of an already decimated left. Indeed, Eric Hobsbawm has argued that Thatcherism has now become (in the PM's own slip of the tongue), a "regime". And Thatcher herself has hardened her already chilling political vision with the observation that there is "no such thing" as society — "only individuals and families".

More recently, Kinnock's position — a year ago apparently unassailable — has been weakened dramatically by a gaffe in July when he appeared to repudiate the party's (to the left almost sacred) unilateralist defence policy; and then rapidly reversed his views. Shadow defence spokesperson Denzil Davies (not a member of the left by any means) resigned in a blaze of publicity, citing lack of consultation. If change to the defence policy was what Kinnock had intended, it is now further away than ever.

In the absence of internal solutions to the party's problems, the easiest outlet for the left's frustrations is undoubtedly to undermine Kinnock. However, without a credible successor, this would only further weaken Labour's poor showing in the polls. Clearly, Labour's long night is still far from over.

David Burchell

DAVID GREASON is a journalist on *The Age*. DAVID BURCHELL is ALR's co-ordinator.

Professional Foul

The Bicentennial Gold Cup of Soccer in mid-July was the stage of Australia's greatest soccer feat, the defeat of world champions, Argentina. It told us a lot about both the state of the sport and the complex of nationalist logic and illogic which underpins the celebration of white invasion.

Association Football's ruling international body, FIFA, insists that competitions sanctioned as "Gold Cups" must involve at least two former World Cup-winning national teams. This marginalises countries which have been major donors of soccer-playing migrants to Australia (e.g. Greece, Malta, Yugoslavia and Hungary). And various glamorous sides (England,

Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany) which were both former winners and local donors were over-committed after the recently completed European championships.

So who should join Australia in the Cup? The current world champions, Argentina, and former winners Brazil were obvious choices, despite their comparative lack of an Australian cultural link. But Saudi Arabia as the fourth and final nation? Of course: because of the oil money made available to an allegedly bankrupt Australian Soccer Federation.

What of the federation itself? The ASF's long and dearly-held claim that soccer is the most played football code in Australia has never

shown any correlation with crowd attendance. The game remains a participant sport in this country, not a spectator one.

So, before the competition began, it was already denied a natural migrant constituency by a combination of FIFA rules, timing and the politics of FIFA finances. Then, just as the event was about to commence, the Australian players — all semi-professionals — threatened industrial action if they were not given a wage increase. The team captain even revealed that his side had “a large proportion of dole bludgers” (sic). The same tactic had proved successful on the eve of Australia’s only appearance in the World Cup Finals in 1974. Again, the struggle was resolved, as it had to be, in the players’ favour.

The competition had difficulty attracting local corporate sponsorship, but money was readily available from overseas. Like many a Bicentennial event, the Gold Cup, in fact, drew much of its local prestige from its “otherness”, from how others at the cultural and business metropolis viewed activities on the periphery. “Australia” became important because non-Australians perceived “it”.

The only Australian body that gave financial sponsorship to the Cup was “Sport 88”, an arm of the Australian Bicentennial Authority which handed over \$100,000. But the organisers then reneged on their promise of advertising for the Authority at Gold Cup venues, on the grounds that “you are not a sponsor, you just gave us a government grant”. (The ABA revealed all in a somewhat splenetic press release.)

These political issues were given little or no public circulation outside specialist soccer gossip columns. The mainstream media concentrated on anxieties over the status of the competition itself. The Argentinian captain, Diego Maradona, the world’s most famous player, elected not to come. Was it all to be a farce? Officials and sports writers strove valiantly to prove that the South American teams were serious about the Cup, that it really mattered to

them. Again, a need to assert Australia’s significance within a system of global, not local, symbols.

The question of media coverage itself became a centre of controversy. The ABC was chosen to televise the games, allegedly because the ASF saw no hope of securing much-prized commercial interest. (Rumours proliferated that personal/business rivalries got in the way of any such possibility.) Further bitterness then surfaced over both ticket prices (\$15 to sit on the grass without any cover for just 90 minutes of action) and the fact that the ABC was permitted to telecast major games live in the city of origin *after* costly advance tickets had already been sold.

Nevertheless, great rejoicing followed Australia’s 4-1 defeat of Argentina in the semi-final and consequent qualification to meet Brazil for the trophy. In the same week the Australian Rugby League team lost its first domestic Test against Great Britain since the Whitlam years. The powers seemed to be shifting.

The final between Australia and Brazil summoned up all of these disparate ideological elements. Commentators typified the locals as fit, willing and rugged; the Brazilians as brilliant, charismatic and individualistic. (“Of course, there is a culture gap between these two countries in the game, but the Australians should not be too worried about skills.”) Even the sending-off of a Brazilian for unfair (and quite brutal) play could not work against these stereotypes. Throughout the match, there were constant references by the chief commentator — an Englishman imported for the event by the ABC — to how this truly international game might now take its deserved place locally.

Former Australian team captain Johnny Warren was presented simply as an expert commentator. But he was presumably acting also in his unacknowledged role as media consultant to the Cup’s organisers. He said after the match that all that was needed now was an overhaul of

Soccer stereotypes. Australia (in the green corner) vs Brazil.



the structure of Australian soccer administration. It had to become a matter of "management" instead of "politics". Prime Minister Hawke also appeared, marking an important development in his knowledge of the sport. He was able to sanction the event as an exemplar of Bicentennial masculinity: "it's no game for softies".

That Australia lost the final 2-0 meant nothing. Australian soccer's new success was emblazoned on the front pages. That it had been achieved against a background of possible strike action, bungled media sales and ticket prices, anxiety about

the authenticity of the competition and public apathy mattered not. This was a representation of "Australia" succeeding in a "Bicentennial Event". This was the rich mix of ethnic groupings that could come together in a multicultural society to compete healthily and successfully with foreigners.

The reality was that a sport which has depended on an amalgam of collaboration and mutual antipathy between various migrant groupings had one week of success at a national level. Any change to the temporary status of that success will require professionalisation at all

levels: in other words a commodification of soccer as both work and spectacle, with teams franchised and probably playing over summer to avoid competition with other codes. This process would have to be decidedly political as well as managerial, for it would erode existing migrant and regional bases for the sport. But at least it would be in keeping with the "spirit" of the Bicentenary.

Toby Miller

TOBY MILLER teaches in Humanities at Griffith University.

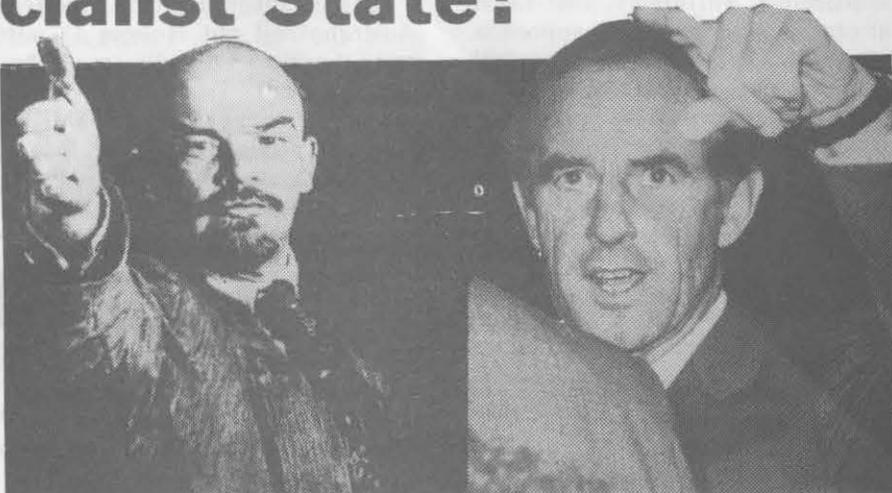
Victoria: Socialist State?

It was Joseph Stalin who invented the notion of "socialism in one country": not perhaps its best advertisement. Have John Cain and his government now invented "socialism in one state"?

Perhaps not, but, on the positive side, Victoria's Economic Strategy does favour government intervention in the economy as a means of encouraging economic activity and employment growth in certain strategic areas. There is a recognition that markets don't work effectively in restructuring industries, and that government planning and co-ordination can provide a catalyst for change.

Also on the positive side, the Victorian government and its instrumentalities (such as the Victorian Investment Corporation, Aluvic, and the Victorian Economic Development Corporation) have demonstrated a willingness to take equity in ventures such as the Portland aluminium smelter, and a range of high technology investments such as computer software, medical products and biotechnology. On the negative side, the preferred strategy is to work closely with private sector partners, take a back seat on equity, and sell out when new ventures become profitable.

All this is good social democratic stuff. Key strategic



From the NEP to the Victorian Economic Strategy? Perhaps not.

sectors of the economy are identified. Private investors are approached and unions consulted. But the final decisions are made by the private sector.

As a model, the Victorian economic strategy compares favourably with many international examples, where the push for deregulation and small government has weakened the impact of active industry policies. In Australia, industry policy federally has increasingly come to mean tariff reductions to bring in the "winds of competition". The assumption is that markets, left to themselves, operate efficiently, and government intervention leads to inefficiency. Victoria doesn't share these illusions.

There are a number of perfectly conventional economic arguments for such an approach. First, the public sector has a vast amount of data and information on the way economies operate, and can influence the direction of employment growth by direct and indirect involvement in particular sectors. Again, the private sector has demonstrated an inability to accelerate investment in areas of technological and economic opportunity because of perceptions of high risk. The intervention of the state can minimise risks. Third, private industry in this country is relatively weak. Our industrial structure nationally is split between multinationals, who confine their local activities to supplying local