GRAMSCI'S VIEW of the role of the socialist party in preparing for the revolution was quite novel. This was to be expected given his novel view of marxism and of the tasks of socialists in advanced capitalist countries. This point has had so far been made at the same time because other writers from both the communist party and outside have maintained that Gramsci, on party questions, was in the Leninist tradition.1 They have had both ideological and scholarly reasons for asserting this. The P.C.I. has itself, to the best of my knowledge, not given up democratic centralism, although factional activity is quite open to its ranks, and therefore has emphasized the continuity in Gramsci's writings between the 'Online Nuovo' period and the 'Prison Notebooks' period. The second period has been seen in the light of the former. Thus it is maintained that what Gramsci wrote while in prison constituted only a revision of earlier ideas which were strongly democratic centralist and inspired by Leninism.2 The same interpretation has been made for scholarly reasons by non-communist writers who view Gramsci's theories as the party in 1919-20 and 1925-37 together and extract a synthesis.3 Presumably, though this is not stated by the writers, they are not prepared to risk assertions that this or that part of Gramsci constitutes the essence of his work. In refusing to do so they are avoiding a cardinal point of Gramscian methodology which was brought out in the third article in this series; always to seek for the essence of the writings of a man is to disregard other dicta and writings not only the product of his own thought but borrowed from somewhere else. Since Gramsci himself emphasized the need to do this they are being unjust to him by ignoring his own directions on how to interpret philosophy.

This article assumes that there is a major disjunction between the thought on the party which he held before he went to jail and that which he evolved while in prison which corresponds with the dislocation between his understanding of marxism before he went to prison and after. Essentially what Gramsci had said in

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his prison treatment of Marxism was that in advanced capitalist systems with a long tradition of bourgeois rule, council of the proletariat and its allies did not rest on the asked representative government of the state and there was little class consciousness. Rather, it rested on the bourgeois hegemony of political consciousness that is, on the fact that in hundreds of different ways it had scored the adoption of its own world view by the whole populace. That had not been obtained without concessions by the bourgeoisie and rested on some extent on the absence of causes for resentment among the populace. In other words, in contradiction to the Leninist proposition advanced in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, that capitalism in advanced capitalist countries could “be the rule” (a term of approbation meaning convert) the top layer of the local proletariat, Gramsci maintained that capitalism could do so for nearly the whole populace. The conviction rested not so much on conceding economic conditions of a high level but rather on the incapacity of the masses to formulate an alternative world view for themselves. They were, after all, faced in the absence of intellectuals of their own and a sophisticated set of values offered to others by the bourgeoisie. Not that this was a conscious activity on the part of the bourgeoisie on all occasions. Rather, it was the inevitable result of the nature of society. In sum, in capitalist societies with long established cultural and political structures, the bourgeoisie had maintained a monopoly of moral values and in the last analysis socialism is concerned with inculcating new moral values (i.e., the creation of a new way). 

Hence flowed Gramsci’s view of the task of a socialist party in such an environment. He drew an analogy with Machiavellian theory, understanding that in his Prince, Machiavelli intended to educate politically ‘those who don’t know’ on an education which is not negative, to hate tyrants... but positive, to recognize certain determined means, even tyrannical, because you want certain ends.” Gramsci did not accept the view that what Machiavelli was preaching was some sort of political amorality, but rather addressing an edification to the man who must educate the whole people to the need for a new society. What was needed politically in the era of capitalism and an advanced sort was a “modern prince”. But the “modern prince” could not be a concrete individual it had to be an organization, the political party. This was so because of the complexity of modern society. Great king philosophers were no longer possible. However, the party had a role essentially the same as that of Machiavelli’s educative prince. He wrote:

*The prince of Machiavelli was a distinguished collective will, but a determined political end, it conducted not through personal constitutions and elaborations of principles and criterions for a number of actions, but as a quality characteristic...*
Of course the distinction between those who know and those who don't know sounds rather platonic and is difficult in this series. It is not likely to appeal to the populist dominant members of the Australian labour movement both because of the implied hierarchy of value and because of the damaging egalitarianism (levelling down; disrespect for achievement of any kind) present in the whole of Australian society. It is going to be difficult for the worker who believes or has had it drummed into his head that he is as good as everybody else and that the deprecate him and his potential for leadership. Only in the countries where the prevailing notion is not merely that there is a division of social functions but also a hierarchy of social functions, like Italy, is such a notion not outrageous to democratic sentiment.

Another distinction between Lenin's party and that of Gramsci concerned size, organization and discipline as distinct from purpose. While recognizing the changing qualities of the bolsheviks in the USSR, the fact remains that his party was tightly organized and disciplined and composed of a small section of the population. Gramsci had a quite different view of the party. The party he talked about was the 'organic' party, understanding party more in 18th century sense as a grouping of those with similar interests and a similar world view.

"One can observe in the modern world, in many countries, the organic and fundamental parties, for the necessity of struggle assumes the name of 'party' and even of independent party. Often for that reason, the intellectual headquarters of the organic party belongs to no fraction and operates as if it were a directing force of its own, above the parties and sometimes even beloved by the public. One can study this function with greater precision if one starts from the view that a paper or a group of papers or a journal (or group of journals) are also parties or 'fractions of a party' or 'functions of a determined party'. Think of the function of The Times in England."

Quite clearly this party would not function as a monolith and would not be subjective to tight discipline (there are some moves to create something like it being contemplated by Amendola in Italy today). Such a party would have three levels of organization: (1) A diffuse element of average men whose participation is through discipline and loyalty and not through creative and organising functions; (2) A principal cohesive group, "the captains," who are most important since they can form an army whereas an army cannot run without them; (3) A middle element that articulates the first element with the second, putting them not only into physical but moral and intellectual contact. While this appears a variation of the leaders, cadre, rank and file system of bolshevik parties, it has significant differences. First, there is no pseudo-democratic assertion that it is the first group which is most important. The captains are the most important for "without them any discussion is empty". It is not really clear in me what role the communist party proper would play in it.

It appears that any sectarianism would be abhorred and that it would be expected to work with other members of a splintered labour movement (the organic party). Which fraction would play the leading role would depend where the leading theories were. In the case of Italy, Gramsci clearly believed that the PCI would provide the leadership, something even more logical today than when he was writing.

Another major distinction was that Gramsci's party would consider national interests of primary importance in motivating its activity. He wrote, "Certainly the development is towards internationalism but the point of beginning is national" and it is from the point of beginning that one must start." This was because hegemony expressed itself nationally (in specific national forms) and because national proletarians thought within national frameworks. Internationalism of the Comintern's sort was evidently wrong. It had led to passivism and then to 'napoleonicism'. World revolution was a variety of mechanistic maximalism for which Gramsci had no time.

The party had to make a detailed investigation of the national character of the people it was dealing with in order to discover how to reach them. This did not mean that the party should become populist in its orientation. On the other hand Gramsci denied that the theory of the party could ever be in contradiction with the desires of the populace, at least at a level which was qualitative. Australians faced with the fact that the Australian worker is the worst enemy of socialism, in many if not most cases, may find this a trifle optimistic. But it must be remembered that Gramsci regarded all that existed as rational, that is, having or having had its purpose and this included the scintilla of "common sense" which could be developed on. It was merely a matter of working slowly on little things and not looking to the finishing post with the blindness of the man who does not see the hurdles.

To conclude, Gramsci's party had the following task: to propagate and popularize a new world view. But, the populace..."
"Change comes with great difficulty, and never by accepting change in the "pure" form to be spoken, but always in some equivocal expression, senselessly logical, oxymoronic, coming-the-morning-after. All these are important, as far from decisive in dealing with people. Of course, it can be because a second-hand, old, of the opinion and a slightly in a state of intellectual crisis, has just faith in the old, and is wavering between the old and the new."

This would be so in almost all circumstances.

So philosophy can only be lived as a faith by the masses. "The important element is without doubt irrational, faith." The change to a new world view can only come for social and political reasons [not economic]. Hence certain tasks can be decided (1) not to tire in repeating your own arguments (varying the verbal forms); repetition is the pedagogic method most appropriate for acting on the minds of the populace; (2) To work incisively to raise the intellectual level of all greater sections of the population. This can only develop the groups of intellects of a new type, who rise directly from the people and yet remain in contact with them forming as it were, the highest crossing the mass. This second necessity, if fulfilled, is what really modifies the "ideological panorama" of an epoch. Nor, furthermore, can this be without a hierarchicalization of authority and intellectual competence taking place in their midst, which may culminate in a great individual philosopher, if this person is capable of living in a concrete way the demands of the same ideological community, of understanding that it cannot have the narrowness of a movement of his own individual mind and who thus succeeds in elucidating the formal collective doctrine, in the way which is closest and most appropriate to the modes of thought of a collective thinker [the party]."1

3 "Onde Nuove," p. 153. See also the first two articles in this issue.
4 All, Feb.-March, April-May 1964.
5 See also the first two articles in this issue.
6 See for example Tarone, op. cit.
9 Ibid., p. 113.
10 J. Hall, p. 112.
11 "Prose e Poesie," p. 56.
12 "Materialismo storico," p. 17.