Translated from the Greek language, the word ‘anarchy’ means ‘without any ruler’. Anarchists, therefore, are people who strive for the kind of social order in which there will be neither rulers nor coercion, only the reign of total freedom.

Well then, a reader will ask, do Bolshevik-communists really think that life with coercion, regardless of its source, is better than total freedom?

No, reply the communists. Total freedom for the person and for human society is better than a life in which freedom is curtailed or anyone is coerced to act against his own will. But if one were to ask a bourgeois liberal, for example, what is the ultimate ideal of the liberal party, the liberal would also say that total freedom of the person and of all mankind is the most precious goal for which to struggle. In terms of the wish for ‘total freedom’, it seems that there is no way of distinguishing between a communist and an anarchist; indeed, the bourgeois liberal would have to be added to the same group, along with any other people, whether or not they belong to a party, who have a sound understanding of the benefits of freedom as compared with necessity and coercion.

This means we have to look elsewhere to find the main difference between anarchists and communists.

1. [Preobrazhensky 1918b.]
We might begin with the fact that anarchists are continuously repeating in their brochures, newspapers and speeches that they oppose any and all coercion along with any state-power as an organ of violence. If we accept this statement, then we have to ask the anarchist this question: What if the toiling masses are in control of state-power and use it to suppress their enemies? Are you also against that kind of power?

In this case, we will get different answers from the anarchists themselves. Some will say: 'We do not oppose such power as long as it fulfils tasks that benefit the toiling masses'. Others will reply: 'We are against all rulers and all authority, and we seek to destroy it in all circumstances'.

Here, we have a fundamental difference between Bolshevik-communists and anarchists concerning the attitude towards the state – not so much towards the state in general, as we shall see later, but towards the commune-state and rule by the workers and peasants.

We have to consider just what the state is and how it is regarded by communists. That the state is an organ of force and coercion is obvious to everyone who has faced the tax-collector, to every peasant whose samovar and cow have been sold for non-payment of taxes, and to every worker who has been locked up or shot for striking against capital. Even the bourgeoisie, whose banks, luxurious homes, factories and capital have been taken against their will by the Soviet authorities – even they, to their misfortune, now know that the state is an organ of compulsion.

The whole question is: Whose interests are served by organised force? Who controls these organs of compulsion? And how does it happen that not only all counter-revolutionaries and the entire bourgeoisie oppose the state-power of the workers and peasants, but also the anarchists, who, in this respect, turn out to be their allies?

**The autocratic-landlord state**

At one time, there was no state. That was a time when there were also no classes, when people were not divided into rich and poor, into those who lived by their own labour and those who exploited the labour of others. It is no coincidence that there was no state when people were not yet separated into classes. When, out of the primitive agricultural commune, in which all were equal, there began to emerge an upper stratum of the well-to-do; when this upper stratum headed the community’s armed forces in time of war against its neighbours and was able to expand its possessions by plundering defeated peoples and then by plundering its own people – that is when the ground was prepared for the emergence of a state. The esteemed barons, counts and princes, as military leaders of the