

## THE SETTLEMENT

This is the most concise summary of Landauer's belief in autonomous rural communities as the most promising way to socialism. Not to be confused with the third pamphlet of the Socialist Bund. In the Bund pamphlet, Landauer adds more thoughts on the questions of land and economic organization, while this essay has a stronger manifesto appeal. It was first published as "Die Siedlung" in *Der Sozialist*, July 15, 1909.

**P**EOPLE WHO ARE UNHAPPY WITH THEIR LIVES HAVE LEFT TOWNS to found settlements in the country for a very long time. This has happened in North America, Brazil, Australia, England, Switzerland, and elsewhere. It is not true that these attempts have always failed. Quite a few of these settlements exist to this day. Some live according to communist principles. Others produce goods for the capitalist market, for example handicrafts, and unite in sales cooperatives.

There is one aspect, however, that separates us from these people. Most of them were content to create a space for themselves, a community that pleases their souls. Some of them were successful. They gathered enough private means to leave the misery and ugliness of capitalist existence and to create their own happiness; a happiness that suits their desires and their hearts – but cares little about others. We want to care about others; and we want them to care about us. In the midst of our country, in the midst of our people, we want to plant a pole and tell everyone who can hear us: *Look, here is a signpost – follow it!*

Psychologically speaking, one could of course say that we do what we do for ourselves as well. Yes, it is for us, it is for our satisfaction. However, we will not be satisfied if we are isolated! We want to be with our people! "Our people" – this often means people who move against those who surround them; people who move away from those who remain helpless in their misery, who do not know what to do, and who often enough do not want to do anything. *Our people* are the *new people*; they are the people and

the culture that our spirit envisions. This also means that while, in a certain sense, we secede and precede for our own sake, we mainly do so for the sake of the *way*, for the sake of an ineradicable and deeply rooted desire, for the sake of what we have made the center of our being. We do not primarily separate for our *comfort* – we do it for *us*; in other words, for the revolution.

This word – “revolution” – truly helps to mark the line between us and the loners – those who do not aim at the whole and who do not understand that our movement must have a historical impact, that it must create a new spirit and new conditions; otherwise, it cannot be our movement. However, when we speak of revolution, we must also draw a line between ourselves and those who call themselves “revolutionaries,” even if they are dormant or only half-awake and never do more than imagine and talk.

It can be of no great concern to us whether ten or fifty or one hundred and fifty men found a settlement, or how many new settlements will emerge in a given period of time. Our movement has centuries behind it, and now heads forward into future centuries. Some years here or there matter little. We are proud and secure enough to demand a new age; an age where people live in a beautiful and joyful world.

We want to directly link the production of consumer goods to the needs of the people. We want to create the basic form of a new, real, socialist, free, and stateless society, in other words, a *community*. However, we could use the help of everyone who desires socialism, even if they are not able to separate from the current social conditions as thoroughly as we are. They can find ways to support us even if they – at least for now – stay in their parties, unions, and cooperatives. They can help us create the example that we want to create. This will be a challenge and it will demand sacrifices.

We address in particular those who are our closest friends without knowing it: the peasants. We have to make them understand that we are not as peculiar as some of those people who call themselves socialists; we have to make it clear that we would never want to take away their land! What for? It is for them, and they already have it. If anything, they have too little of it. It seems that even the peasant associations have now forgotten something that has been repeatedly recalled since the Peasants’ War, most recently in 1848, namely that the peasants used to have much more land to work.

Peasants, your enemies are not the workers in the industrial centers! Your enemies have always been the aristocrats and the big landowners! Now we want to join you and struggle for land together – we want to

unite with you! You must have land, and we want it too! Once everyone – townspeople included – joins the struggle for land, and once the rally cry *Land and Freedom!* becomes the motto of the German people, there will be a cultural movement for a better life that is much stronger than anything the industrial workers have ever been able to create. It will be impossible for the rulers to withstand such a movement. They will be forced to implement far-reaching governmental measures to regulate the redistribution of land, as happened in France on August 4, 1789, when the king earned the title “Restorer of French Freedom”...<sup>1</sup> All this belongs to history, however. Let us stay with our own cultural beginnings...

The peasants will desire culture once we awaken their true being. Their intellect, their creativity, their liveliness, and their joy have all suffered tremendously under the reign of feudalism, aristocracy, the state, public servants, and especially the clergy. Today, peasants live between the extremes of dull, monotonous silence, and raw, uncontrolled wildness. This is why hardly anyone sees the depths of the soul, the profound understanding of the world resting inside these peasants; the beauty, passion, and determination that lies within their minds. Only those who can read people really well are able to detect the continuing greatness and refinement of the peasants of this country. All that is required is an awakening.

A difficult, yet rich and glorious task has been handed to us. No one so far has tried to bring love and spirit to the peasants. The spirit we speak of is a spirit of *realness*; a spirit that transforms, plows, and harvests both social conditions and humanity.

The peasants need people who support them; people who settle with them, who help them to work their fields, who join them in artisanry and industrial work during the winter months, who share practical skills with them, who loosen their stiffness, who rouse them from their fairy-tale sleep, and who show them how to stride and dance – and it will be a different kind of dance than the one practiced in the village inns today!

As far as tradition is concerned, it cannot be forgone completely if we want to create a beautiful settlement. We cannot create a beautiful settlement from ideas and theories alone. It is best to join an already existing village, where we can revive the old, almost forgotten communal institutions in a new kind of union.

The socialist village, with workshops and village factories, with meadows and fields and gardens, with cattle and flocks and chickens – you big

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city proletarians, get used to the idea, as alien and strange as it may at first seem! This is the only remaining way to begin the realization of socialism. Socialism is the return to natural labor; it is a natural, multi-faceted connection of all activities; it is the union of intellectual and manual labor, of artisanry and agriculture, of education and work, of play and work. Think about how your children grow up today! Think about the horror of child labor in capitalism! Think about how alienated today's schools are and how they produce empty hearts and barren minds! Think about how self-explanatory the union of work, recreation, and education – including the most advanced sciences – will be in rural settlements!

It is not only the urban proletariat that must get used to this idea before it will eventually turn into will and desire. There are also the artists, the scholars, the stay-at-homes, everyone who is doing pure intellectual labor. They are all separated from reality, from realization, from nature, from the use of all of their organs and muscles. However, they have not adopted the division of labor voluntarily; a division that leads to some people only working physically and losing their spirit, with others turning the highest that life has to offer – life's luxury, life's religion: knowledge, reflection, feeling – into a commodity, a daily job, a business. The latter are all "journalists," in other words: intellectual peons. It is much the same concerning those who remain outside the "brain market" – most of them are still alienated from reality and occupy nothing but their intellect, day and night.

There are many people today who see no alternative to the lives they live. This must change! Once the change has come, it will no longer be necessary to make your leisure hours as long as possible and haggle over every single one of them. Labor – and leisure – will become part of life's natural flow. Everyday life will be transformed. Your personalities will grow; like boulders, like mountains – high and strong! A new life will come. You will have hours to yourself, and you will share the hours that belong to everyone with the community. This community has to be created – for yourselves and for others. It does not mean that anyone will deprive you of your solitude, but that solitude will regain its rightful role: religion, ceasing to be what it has become today: a commodity.

You will find what has been said strange and confusing. Do not forget, however, that we have only begun to turn to you and to everyone else! Those who are part of us will hear what we have to say, and will descend into this new element, into the future life; they will fill our ideas with

their own experiences, their own desires and observations; they will think *beyond*; and they will finally recognize the natural as what it is, no matter how fantastic it might look at first; they will join us in our way; they will help us lay the ground for a new communal life – a ground from which beautiful and rich new individuals shall arise.

We have drawn a first sketch of the settlement that we must create, and of what we have to do. This sketch reveals the necessity of setting many things in motion in order to turn what is now in our spirits and hearts into reality. We are facing innumerable challenges. There is plenty of unfarmed, barren land. We have to start from nothing. No one has even attempted *to begin yet; to realize socialism*. This Herculean task evokes a feeling that I will describe with the following words: everything around us appears fallow, derelict, inactive; at the same time, we can sense how something in us is emerging, an insatiable desire: we want to transform, we want to realize, we want to be ten times the number that we are, we want to make each day last twice as long, we want a hundred arms to help everywhere. After all, we can hear the calls from across the land: *Seize, push, act! Make it a pleasure to live!*



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1. At a meeting of the National Constituent Assembly abolishing feudalism.