

ENTAILED LANDS. ESTATE POLICY AND NATIONALISM IN HUNGARY AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH–20TH CENTURIES¹

DÁNIEL BALLABÁS

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Entailed lands were estates that were, withdrawn from the free circulation of lands, inherited within a family in a predetermined order, mostly by first-born sons. These lands could not be divided or sold. The first entails were established around the middle of the 17th century in Hungary and were finally abolished three centuries later in 1949. Entails were considered negatively in the public discourse at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, since the peasantry's access to lands was hindered by them, and according to certain individuals, entails were the reasons for the emigration and demographic decline of the landless agrarian society. Others had different perspectives. The concerned landowners opposed all concepts that would have changed the estate system. The movement aimed at promoting the role of entails in support of “Hungarian national purposes”, indirectly, supported their interest. According to the concept of Gusztáv Beksics, journalist and member of parliament, entailed lands should be abolished in the country's internal area populated by ethnic Hungarians. This would solve the existential problem of the Hungarian peasantry. However, entailed lands should be established in forestry areas located in the peripheries of the country. Thus, entail owners excluded from the Great Plain would be compensated, and they could keep the Slovak and Romanian nationalities, who were not yet loyal enough to the “Hungarian state doctrine”, under close supervision.

Keywords: Entailed lands. Nobility. Dualist Hungary. Nation-building. Nationalism.

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Entailed lands were lands with special legal status – used to be labelled as bound or limited disposable lands - that could not be sold or divided after being established by royal permission. From that time on, estates were inherited within a family in a predetermined order set by the founder, mostly by first-born sons. Tenants were not holders but beneficiaries of entailed lands. They were obliged

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to transfer the lands to their successors in the same preserved conditions, as they were when they received them, without any value losses after their death.

The IX. Article of 1687 permitted – not without any precedents² – in Hungary, that magnates were allowed to establish entailed lands out of their properties by will, after the approval of the monarch, in order to “*restrain their usual attempt to alienate and so waste real estates*”. Pursuant of this Article, “*their heirs got no rights to alienate or pledge the estates inherited by will but they could receive benefits and incomes from these lands*”. In addition to this decree, entailed lands could be established by royal donation or agreement under L. Article of 1723, now for the gentry as well. The legal status of entailed lands had been represented by these two brief decrees for in the Corpus Juris for a long time. According to Aladár Erdélyi, common law included in royal charters contributes to the history of old Hungarian entailed land rights.³ The General Civil Code of Austria introduced in 1853 served as the legal basis of regulations after the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849. This regulation fundamentally changed the conditions of entailed land establishment, annulment and mortgaging, as well as the principles of inheritance, rights and duties of beneficiaries and their successors.⁴ The forced code in its entirety was applied in Hungary until 1861. However, the recognized compilation of laws, the Provisional Legislative Rules returned to the old Hungarian law of succession.⁵ In the case of entailed lands, it meant that the incomplete rules and flexible common law driven legal environment from the estates era became valid again. Franz Josef issued a transcript on 9 October 1862 to settle this unclear situation, in which he temporarily regulated the operation of entailed lands by “*His Supreme Royal and Judicial right*” in accordance with the regulations of the Austrian Civil Code.⁶ A decree issued by the Ministry of Justice on 7 April 1869 regulated the issues concerning the establishment and operation of entailed lands after the Compromise of 1867.⁷ The decree was also meant to be temporary, however it

2 PERES. *A családi hitbizományok megjelenése Magyarországon*. Pécs 2014, p. 54-60. According to the research of Zsuzsanna Peres, there had been attempts by certain families (Thurzó, Pálffy, Esterházy) to control the process of inheritance of their lands similar to the conditions of entailed lands before the decades of 1687. There were some examples for that process in the Austrian hereditary lands, where entailed lands already existed.

3 ERDÉLYI. *Régi magyar családi hitbizományok története és joga (1542–1852)*. I. kötet. Budapest 1912, p. 4, 7.

4 1852-diki november 29-kén kelt császári nyiltparancs... In *Magyarországot illető országos törvény- és kormánylap*, 1852, vol. 3, p. 487-497.

5 RÁTH. *Az országbírói értekezlet a törvénykezés tárgyában*. Első kötet. Pest 1861, p. 207-208.

6 KATONA. *A magyar családi hitbizomány*. Budapest 1894, p. 368–383.

7 A m. kir. igazságügyminiszernek 1869. évi apr. 7-én kelt rendelete a hitbizományi ügyekben követendő eljárás szabályozása tárgyában. In *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára*, 1869, vol. 3,

continued to be valid during the whole era of Dualism. A new regulation only came into force in 1918, though there had been multiple attempts to settle the issues of entailed lands.

The history of Hungarian entailed lands was finally ended by the land distribution of 1945, and the VII. Act of 1949.⁸ Prior to this, many arguments about the possible resolutions on the entailed lands' maintenance or abolition were under the crossfire of familial, individual and political interests and often sparked fierce discussions. The discourse on these issues had started in the Reform Age and remained on the agenda until the mid-20th century.⁹ This paper discusses the relation between debates on the matter of entailed lands and Magyarization processes at the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries. This relation served as an excellent reference point for those, who opposed the dissolution of the grand estate system and the liberalization of limited disposable lands.

What could contemporaries know about entailed lands?

The first statistical data were recorded in the Reform Age. The appendix of a paper published in 1847 included estates, their population and ownership broken down by counties. These data coming from an unknown source contains overlaps and inconsistent information, so unfortunately the record was inadequate for determining even the number of entailed lands.¹⁰ Károly Galgóczy could only state in his agricultural statistical work of 1855 that “*the number of these kind of lands is really small*”.¹¹ Károly Keleti published the first data on entailed lands derived from official sources in 1867. Based on his tax collection data gathered for the Ministry of Finance, he concluded that there were 463 thousand cadastral acres of entailed lands in the whole country. This represented 1% of the total agrarian lands of the time.¹² During the next two decades, the contemporary

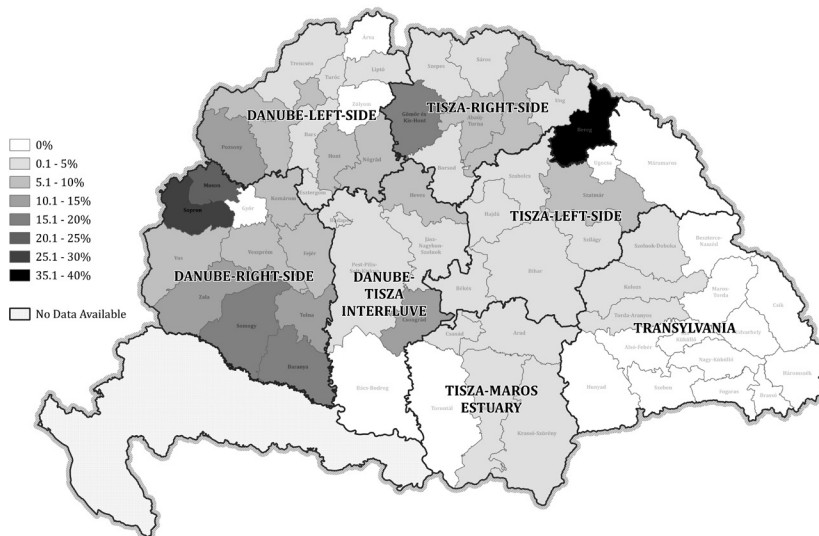
p. 301-307.

- 8 Usually not only lands, but also urban houses and other valuable assets belonged to entailed lands. The land distribution of 1945 deprived the owners of the former, so the conditions of the latter remained unsettled. That was reason for issuing the Act of 1949.
- 9 See: PÜSKI. Vélemények és adatok: Hitbizományok a két világháború közötti Magyarországon. In PAPP, et al., ed. *Kultúra, művelődés, agrárium. Tanulmányok ifj. Barta János 80. születésnapjára*. Debrecen 2020, p. 295-308; BALLABÁS. A hitbizományi földbirtokokról szóló közéleti diskurzus kezdetei a reformkorban. In *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 2021, vol. 62, no. 1-4, p. 181-194.
- 10 Áttekintése a hitbizományi javaknak. In *A magyarországi hitbizományok' átalakításáról*. Pest 1847, p. 267-269.
- 11 GALGÓCZI. *Magyarország, a Szerbvajdaság s Temesi bánóság mezőgazdasági statistikája*. Pest 1855, p. 92.
- 12 KELETI. *Hazánk és népe a közigazdaság és társadalmi statistika szempontjából*. Pest 1871, p. 144.

public recognized the increase in the number of entailed lands, or the growth in bound territories. Proper and accurate statistics on the Hungarian bound lands were only published during the years of 1893 and 1895 by the Ministry of Agriculture. This included the amount of land occupied by entails broken down by regions, counties and cultivating activities.¹³

Furthermore, the statistics listed all operating entails, the date of establishment, the name of owners and current beneficiaries. The Hungarian public could see for the first time that the approximate number of real estates separated from free circulation of lands was 17 million cadastral acres, which was more than one third of the total agricultural territories.¹⁴ Among these, 91 entails constituted 2.3 million cadastral acres in 1894, occupying the 4.72% of agricultural territories. There were huge differences beyond the national average. While there were no entailed land in 19 counties, they constituted 10% of the cultivated land in 10 counties, and 15% in 6 counties.¹⁵

Figure 1: The ratio of entailed lands against the given county's agricultural territories (1894)



13 *A korlátolt forgalmú birtokok kimutatása és Magyarország területének művelési ágak szerinti megoszlása.* Budapest 1893; *A hitbizományi valamint a községi és közbirtokossági birtokok területének és művelési ágak szerinti megoszlásának kimutatása.* Budapest 1894; *A kincstári, közalapítványi továbbá az egyházi és szerzetesi nagyobb birtokok területének és művelési ágak szerinti megoszlásának kimutatása.* Budapest 1895.

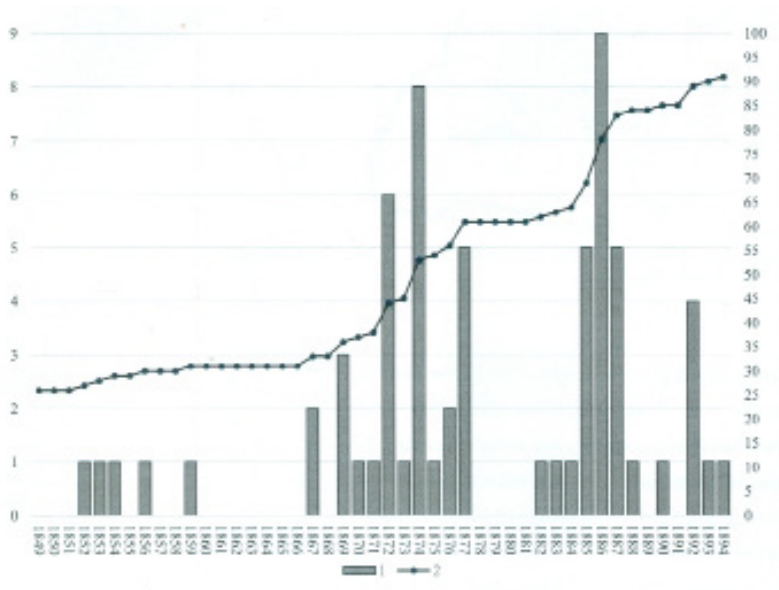
14 *A korlátolt,* p. 6. The limited disposable lands included treasury lands, lands of religious or public foundations, entailed lands, real estate of municipalities and gentry, associations, factories, territories of industrial companies and railways, church lands, estates of education funds.

15 *A hitbizományi,* p. 5, 29-31.

As the map shows, there was particularly high number of entails in the Danube-right-side statistical region, in other words, in the Trans-Danubian region. Here their ratio exceeded 10% of the agricultural lands in 6 counties, and entails occupied the 13.42% of the free circulation lands. Such a high ratio of entails was noticeable only in one or two counties in other statistical regions: including Pozsony (12.14%) on the left side of the Danube, Csongrád (12.9%) in the Danube-Tisza Interfluve, Bereg (36.61%) on the right side of the Tisza and Gömör-Kishont (18.27%) counties. And at the other extreme, the ratio of entails was only 0.4% in the Tisza-Maros Estuary and Transylvanian statistical regions.¹⁶

In comparison to the data recorded by Károly Keleti in 1871, the number of entailed lands increased almost by five times by 1894. This comes from the fact that the number of newly established entails significantly increased partly under the Neo-Absolutist Era, but especially after the Compromise. As there had been only 26 entailed lands at the end of the Estates Era in 1848, this number increased to 91 by 1894.¹⁷

Figure 2: The development of newly established and total number of entails between 1849 and 1894



1: number of new establishments (left axis)

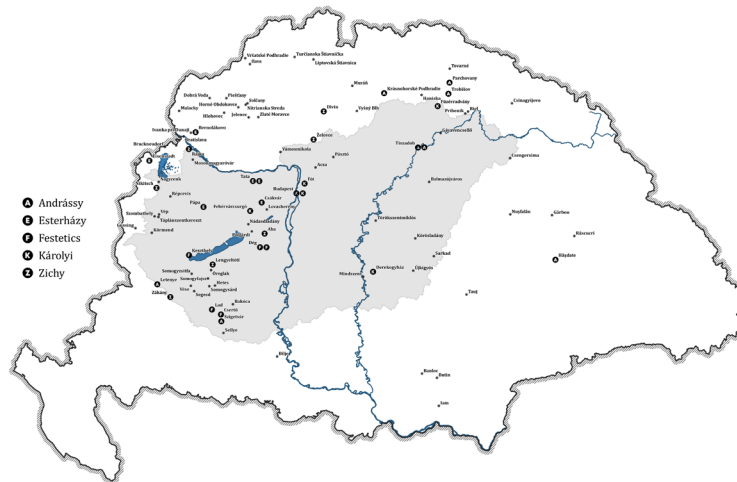
2: total number of entails (right axis)

¹⁶ *A hitbizományi*, p. 29-31.

¹⁷ *A hitbizományi*, p. 16-19.

According to the contemporaries of the time, the reason for the large-scale spread of entailed lands was due to the abolition of Entailment in 1848 (1852) because only in this way could they avoid the fragmentation of lands.¹⁸ However, this tendency halted in the mid-1890s, in parallel to the awakening of agrarian socialist movements.

Figure 3: Centres of entailed lands and families that owned the most entails (1894)



Social problems and poverty of the peasantry, or in general, the lowest segment of the agrarian society remained invisible for a long time, or they were exposed as local, marginal problems. These issues became apparent only in the first half of the 1890s, and became subjects of general discourse. The source of conflict was that more people wanted to be agrarians than agriculture could provide with livelihoods. Smallholders and landless agrarian proletariats could only get jobs for low wages because of the oversupply of labour in agriculture. Other sectors in agriculture were not able to deal effectively with this oversupply. Furthermore, the peasantry, compared with its relative number, owned only few lands due to the extremely disproportionate division of lands. Larger estates including entails were at the heart of discussions and they were scapegoated in this situation.¹⁹

18 *A hitbizományi*, p. 4. The meaning of the Entailment Act was that as long as landowners had at least one son the land could not get legally out of the family line. This worked as kind of a protection to keep the land within a family. The Act was abolished by the Article XV of 1848, and after the suppression of the revolution, by the patent of 29 November 1852 issued by the Emperor.

19 KAPOSÍ. A nagybirtok és az agrárszegénység kapcsolata Magyarországon. In GYARMATI

Due to this turmoil, the government approved the establishment of only 3 new entails between 1895 and 1918.²⁰

Nobles owned the entailed lands in Hungary. Out of the total 91 entailed lands in 1894, 8 belonged to the gentry, 80 to high nobles (barons, counts, dukes) and 3 to royal dynasties (Habsburg-Lorraine, Saxe-Coburg-Koháry). So, the entail was mainly an aristocratic institution. Some families accumulated a significant amount of such lands. The Andrassy family owned 8 entailed lands, the Esterházy, Károlyi and Zichy families each owned 6, the Festetics 5, the Almásy, Erdődy, Pálffy and Széchenyi 3 each.²¹

Public discourse on the “national role” of entails in the 1890s

There had been several pros and cons over time in the discourse started at the beginning of the 1830s on the continuation or abolition of entails. They scrutinized, for example, the impacts of entailed lands on the society and families, including the role of these lands in agriculture. On this basis, some people would have abolished them, whilst others argued for their continuation. Gusztáv Beksics, journalist and liberal member of parliament, tried to assess this long and diverse discourse in the 1890s. He, in the name of liberalism, had previously opposed the existence of entails as they played a central role in obstructing the free movement of lands.²² In his works, he became more flexible towards these from the late 1880s because he aimed to bring them into the service of “*Hungarian national interests*”.

Beksics, who used Atticus as his pen name, published his work in October 1889 titled “*The New Era and Its Political Programme*”. He intended to draft the “political work plan” of the Hungarian nation by assuming that PM Kálmán Tisza might leave his position. According to Beksics, “*Hungary’s national character only exists in its political sense; but it does not stand in terms of culture or society*”. If these conditions were to stand, Hungary would achieve great things within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. And even beyond it.

“Austria is not a united nation. An Austrian nation does not exist, so there are only Austrian nationalities. Each of these has its own agenda, but Austria does not have any single idea of a grand nation. It cannot be either German or Slavic.”

et al., ed. *Bűnbak minden időben. Bűnbakok a magyar és az egyetemes történelemben*. Pécs: Budapest 2013, p. 264-284.

20 A magyar családi hitbizományok jegyzéke az 1913. évi állapot szerint... In *Révai Nagy Lexikona X. kötet*. Budapest 1914, p. VI–VII.

21 *A hitbizományi*, p. 16-19.

22 BEKSICS. A gazdagylés... In *Ellenőr*, 1881, vol. 13, no. 226, p. 2.

In this situation, it seems probable that in the future the Monarchy's centre of gravity will shift to Hungary, or the Hungarians.²³ Beksics was not alone with this vision. The idea of the Hungarian empire was articulated in several ways at the turn of the century. Some authors with less ambitious aims only considered shifts in the balance of forces within the Monarchy, others with more vivid imagination envisioned the future Hungary as a Central European superpower of 30 million people.²⁴ Beksics aimed at providing an action plan for this achievement.²⁵ He was taking into account, in his gradually improved programme, the political agenda of the then ruling governments and the signs of societal crisis of the time: These included the destruction of noble rooted middle estates,²⁶ challenges posed by the agrarian socialist movements, rising emigration, the spread of the "one-child rule" among the peasantry, and the desire for expansion of the "Hungarian race"²⁷ at the expense of the nationalities. He also added ideas coming from others involved in the discussion of his concept. Some of these ideas originally did not come from him, but the public learnt about them from his work and associated them with him mostly because of his widely acknowledged fame. He

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- 23 ATTICUS [BEKSICS]. *Uj korszak és politikai programja*. Budapest 1889, p. 9-14, 36.; About the evolution of the idea of the nation, and a brief historiography on the study of nation and nationalism, see: GUSZMANN. Overview on Theories of Nationalism: Contemporary Shifts and Challenges. In *Pro & Contra*, 2017, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 5-11.
- 24 ROMSICS. A magyar birodalmi gondolat. In *Múltról a mának. Tanulmányok és esszék a magyar történelemről*. Budapest 2004, p. 138-144.
- 25 More about Beksics's views, see: L. NAGY. A „nemzeti állam” eszméje Beksics Gusztávnál. In *Századok*, 1963, vol. 97, no. 6, p. 1242-1278; SZABÓ. Népesedés, telepítés a századfordulón. Beksics Gusztáv nézetei. In *Századok*, 1992, vol. 126, no. 2, p. 227-258; FÁBIÁN. A belső gyarmatosítás ideológiája. In *Az értelem keresése*. Budapest 1994, p. 127-162; TURDA. Faj és nemzet. A nemzeti felsőbbrendűség a 19. század végi Magyarországon. In *2000*, 2004, vol. 16, no. June, p. 57-67; MÜLLER. *Beksics Gusztáv*. Budapest 2005.
- 26 Due to the peculiar circumstances of the execution of the abolition of serfdom and the slow compensation process, landowners only managed to endure with greater or lesser losses if they had sufficient liquidity reserves or acquired interest subsidy schemes for loans, and were able to recognize the requirements of the completely changed world and adapt to them. In the eyes of the liberal governments post 1867 Compromise, the impossible situation of noble landowners was a private matter, individual tragedy, which did not require any solutions coming from the state. This issue only became a more or less public affair when the influx of crops from the USA and Russia at the end of the 1870s brought prices down and caused existential threat to a larger section of landowners. See: VÁRI. *Urak és gazdászok. Arisztokrácia, agrárértelmiség és agrárius mozgalom Magyarországon 1821–1898*. Budapest 2009, p. 211-213, 224-227.
- 27 According to the contemporaneous terminology, the notion of the "Hungarian nation" included all Hungarian citizens regardless of their ethnicity. Who wanted to refer specifically to the Hungarian ethnicity in those times, a different notion instead of nation had to be chosen. So, the term "Hungarian race" is to be read "Hungarians".

forged all these views into a mostly coherent agenda. Entails played a major role in this, because Beksics wanted them to serve the “*national politics*”. According to his understanding, all these problems could be casually linked to entails, but they could be resolved by rethinking the institution of entail. The strenuously agitating author managed to give prominence to the public discourse on entails. Although almost none of his unrealistic ideas came to realization, his works remained reference points after his death in 1906 for those, who were discussing these topics.

Entails appeared as one of the elements of a major societal and institutional reform in Beksics’s programmatic work of 1889. According to him, the starting problem was that the reproduction of the “*Hungarian race*” lacked the opportunities to grow. The latifundia (large landed estates) maintained by entails played a major role in this because they prevented the peasantry getting lands. Beksics would rather abolish these, but he did not detect any political will to do that. So, for now, he would be pleased to maximize the size of these territories. New establishments could not be approved in the future, and the goal was to liberate the existing ones.²⁸

Beksics, in his above-mentioned work, based on his own research, published a table showing the number and size of the Hungarian entailed lands.²⁹ The Ministry of Agriculture published, as I have mentioned before, official and detailed land statistical works about the Hungarian bound lands a few years later. Endre György, an economic writer, reacted in a longer study, published by the Budapesti Szemle, to these statistics that would hopefully enable politicians to introduce a more realistic agrarian policy than that pursued until then. Thus, an appropriate decision could be made about the future of entails considering local conditions. The “*accumulation of entails had already caused severely ill conditions*” in the Trans-Danubian region populated mainly by Hungarians. In contrast to that, there “*should be more entails in Transylvania and Northern Hungary*”. The existence of operational entails would contribute positively to the economy of wooded peripheries, and from a political perspective, “*these bound lands would serve the Hungarians as strong bastions*” against the political and cultural ambitions of the nationalities.³⁰ Endre György was the first one, who associated the disproportionate spread of regional entails with nationality policy.

Gusztáv Beksics thought it was the time to publish again his so-called nation-saving ideas to the public in March 1896. The basic idea of his work titled “*The*

28 ATTICUS, Uj korszak, p. 134-139.

29 ATTICUS, Uj korszak, p. 126-133.

30 GYÖRGY. Kötött forgalmú földbirtok és agrárpolitikánk. In *Budapesti Szemle*, 1893, vol. 74, no. 197, p. 202-209.

Expansion of the Hungarian Race and Our National Consolidation. Concerning agriculture, land ownership and demography” included the need for an agrarian policy, in which “*the empowerment of our race, and with that our national consolidation*” were integrated. Furthermore, “*the right agrarian policy is when it is also our national policy*”. According to him, the current system of lands conserves abnormal conditions, which seem to be a disadvantage for the Hungarians who populate those lands. Due to Beksics’s expectations, the owners of entails and latifundia would recognize this situation and voluntarily relinquish their ownership rights in order to meet the “*grand national target*” for the sake of giving lands to the peasantry. In return, they would receive compensations and from that money, they could purchase lands in the periphery.

“Ideal and fortunate conditions would come when the large estates withdraw to the peripheries of the country. The owners of disintegrated large lands in the Trans-Danubian and the Great Plain region would receive beneficial compensation in form of lands in the Trans-Drava, Upper Hungary and Transylvania territories” by the end of this process.

This would also be favourable from the perspective of the nationality question, not to mention that the wooded peripheries were supposed to be suitable for establishing large estates.³¹ Beksics did not really participate in debates on entails during these years and his afore-mentioned works did not trigger any reactions either. However, he had been actively involved in these discussions since 1899 by publishing several articles and new pamphlets to popularize his views. From this point, he received wider publicity as well.

Emil Tomka was reflecting on the idea of settlement efforts³² in March 1899, in particular, how to provide enough lands for such project in the shortage of agricultural national lands. He offered a voluntary exchange for the owners of latifundia. According to his idea, in return for the concession of lands suitable for

31 BEKSICS. *A magyar faj terjeszkedése és nemzeti konszolidációnk, különös tekintettel a mezőgazdaságra, birtokviszonyokra*. Budapest 1896.

32 A larger group of beneficiaries – at least 150 families – could more successfully obtain housing and lands enough for making a living with soft loans within the framework of settlement schemes rather than making individual efforts or deals to acquire properties. The size of these land schemes was between 10 and 80 cadastral acres according to Article V of 1894. Settlement efforts were taking place in two regions after the implementation of the afore-mentioned law: the treasury lands in the Southern Territories and the state purchased lands in the Transylvanian Plain. These settlement schemes from the beginning had been associated with “*national purposes*” besides solutions for societal problems, so many expected them to strengthen the position of the Hungarians in the ethnic contact zones. See SZABÓ. A dualizmus kori nemzeti célú telepítések Magyarországon. In *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1987, vol. 29, no. 3-4, p. 300-316.

settlers, owners would be offered wooded treasury lands.³³ Supposedly, Tomka's suggestion inspired the popular idea of "asset exchange" raised by Bekšics. He drafted a concrete plan about the transfer of entails to the peripheries of the country in his paper published in early August. He immediately stressed that "the purpose of the agrarian action plan is to harmonize the relations between land ownerships and our national interests. The goal here is definitely not to stir up class differences or attack privileges, or private ownership". The whole operation is "reduced to the exchange of locations and assets". Entailed lands would be sold or subdivided in the Great Plain and in the Trans-Danubia inhabited by Hungarians, and in return, owners would be compensated with wooded lands at the same value in Transylvania and Northern Hungary. Most of the entail owners would also acquire capital, some of which could be invested in industrial developments. The most important aspect though is that entails would become homes and bastions of Hungarians settled in regions inhabited by nationalities.³⁴ A few days later, he was reflecting on the systematic regulation of land lease when he presented his thoughts on the relocation of entails.

He noted that "leasing matches the character of our nationalities. It is certainly more suitable for their attitude than for the nature of Hungarian peasantry. Most of the Tóts (Slovaks), Ruthenians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Oláhs (Romanians) are great material for leasing. And they would not demand the ownership right of the leased land after a while like the Hungarian peasants certainly would. They also would not turn into agrarian socialists, or become dissatisfied even when they remained excluded from ownership rights".

The establishment of a lease regime would only be successful in regions inhabited by nationalities. The smaller fields placed between the relocated entailed wooded lands would serve as excellent experimental projects because they were unfit to be operationally cultivated anyway.

"Not to mention that the pressure coming from the entails, sooner or later would force the Tót, Oláh and other inhabitants to become tenants in their own lands as well. This condition would even make the national achievements of relocations greater. [...] Who wouldn't like that image? Are there any more fortunate or terminal resolutions of the nationality question?"³⁵

33 A telepítés kérdése. In *Köztelek*, 1899, vol. 9, no. 26, p. 511-512.

34 BEKSICS. Értékkicserélés. In *Pesti Hírlap*, 1899, vol. 21, no. 212, p. 1-2. The term "subdividing lands" meant that larger estates were divided into smaller parts for sale.

35 BEKSICS. Bérlet. In *Pesti Hírlap*, 1899, vol. 21, no. 215, p. 1-2.

Beksics summarized his thoughts in a pamphlet in September 1899 titled “*New Foundations of Hungarian Politics. Concerning the Capability of the Hungarian Race’s Expansion and Land Ownership*”.³⁶ This development received – mostly – negative responses.

The *Budapesti Napló* perceived the pamphlet’s main argument as good, but it condemned that the author relied on the spontaneous action of the “*landowner class*”. According to them, this is a merely optimistic hope from the author, because this idea contradicts the traditions, feelings and interests of the landowners. In addition to that, they strongly doubted that the Parliament would ever approve such a proposal.³⁷

The author of *Hazánk*, the journal of the Hungarian Farmers’ Association³⁸, who reviewed Beksics’s work labelled it as the manifestation of “*theoretical liberalism*”. This draft could only be seen through by using force, but neither the government nor the legislation would support such action. However, there is the “*excellently organized socialist camp, which considers Beksics’s programme as their ultimate goal*”. An “*honest usury law would be better*” to ease the problems of the peasantry “*than such land division including relocations [...], even when this idea is decorated with patriotic and national slogans*”.³⁹

The social democratic *Népszava* assessed this concept “*as an attack against the political and nationality morals*”. But they also doubted the realization of the programme because the landowners “*do not care that much about the wellbeing of their own kin rather than the contents of their pocket. [...] They would never let Trans-Danubia or the Great Plain be taken out of their hands for any interest of the Hungarian race*”.

The abolition of entails “*will not happen according to the ideas of Beksics to serve their immoral aims, but the social democrats will be the ones, who will liberate the lands and not for the disadvantage of the nationalities, but for the good and wellbeing of the people including Hungarians and other races as well!*”⁴⁰

36 BEKSICS. *A magyar politika új alapjai, kapcsolatban a magyar faj terjeszkedő képességével és a földbirtok-viszonyokkal*. Budapest 1899.

37 Beksics könyve. In *Budapesti Napló*, 1899. vol. 4, no. 263, p. 1-2.

38 The National Hungarian Economic Association founded in the Reform Age was mainly an organization for the great estate owners. The Hungarian Farmers’ Association founded in January 1896 represented the political and economic interests of mid-size or small-size landowners. The association under the presidency of Sándor Károlyi, and then Ignác Darányi, integrated people with various political background in order to put pressure on the government. See: FEHÉR. *A származás kötelez. Gróf Károlyi Sándor 1831–1906*. Budapest 2019, p. 280-304.

39 Beksics elmélete. In *Hazánk*, 1899, vol. 6, no. 231, p. 2.

40 „A magyar politika új alapjai”. In *Népszava*, 1899, vol. 27, no. 87, p. 1-2.

According to a reader's opinion in the *Alkotmány*, journal of the Catholic People's Party, Beksics neglects the fact that both the Hungarian owners of entails and the peasantry living in Upper Hungary have close emotional ties to their motherland and they will not abandon it. Even if it happened, the concept would not resolve the demographic issues of peasants, because these are not caused by bound lands. This way the operation would end with the "*bankruptcy of the Hungarian magnates and they would be replaced by Jews*". In summary, "*all political novelties and combinations of this work belong to the land of utopia, as a curiosum without any practicalities*".⁴¹

Andor Löherer, economic writer, published a longer article in the *Hazánk* journal in which he had very low opinion of Beksics's work, he did not even understand "*how these nonsense ideas could ever be published*". He used statistical data to back his argument, just like the criticized author, but Löherer drew a very different conclusion. According to him, the statement that entails block the "*development of Hungarians*" is unfounded and comes from a selective choice of data. The opposite is true, "*the highest rate of reproduction can be spotted in counties full of entails*". So, the starting point is wrong as well as the conclusion. Löherer noted that "*the continuous assaults, abuses and outbursts against the entails and bound lands*" will not succeed, they only cause disturbances in the rule of law, and stir up class struggle.⁴²

After these reactions, the House of Representatives discussed the matter of entails during the plenary session on agricultural budget in 1900. Baron Artúr Feilitzsh (Liberal Party) admitted that "*entailed lands are atavistic and partly unjust institutions from the perspective of legal equity and social justice*". However, taking into consideration the conditions of nationalities, he added that "*the intense loathing and war against this institution recently have not been justified, and blaming entails for all economic and social problems is ungrounded*". As entails and bound lands in general "*now have a mission*". However, Gusztáv Beksics's idea of relocating them to the forestry peripheries cannot be done. The wooded lands under consideration are not profitable enough from an economic perspective, and the exchange would require serious sacrifices, so we cannot expect or command anyone to do so. In addition to that, owners of real estates possessed by nationalities would possibly drive up prices of lands, and "*it would only improve the financial situation of our enemies*".⁴³

Béla Komjáthy (Party of Independence and '48) did not agree with the last speaker and he would support the relocation of entails for national

41 *Hitbizományok vándorlása*. In *Alkotmány*, 1899, vol. 4, no. 233, p. 3.

42 Beksics támadása a birtokrend ellen. In *Hazánk*, 1899, vol. 6, no. 233, p. 9-13.

43 *Az 1896. évi november hó 23-ára hirdetett országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója. Huszonhetedik kötet*. Budapest 1900, p. 190-194 (12. 3. 1900).

purposes.⁴⁴ According to József Kristóffy (Liberal Party), the promotion of the expansion of the Hungarian people and a fairer distribution of lands are national interests, so these should, therefore, be supported. However, he does not believe in the success of voluntary exchanges, rather he suggests the establishment of settlements and the subdivision of entails in the “flatlands”.⁴⁵ Finally, István Tisza (Liberal Party) also shared his thoughts about the matter at hand. According to him, the shortage of lands required for settlements and subdivision can be gradually solved, with respect to property rights and without using any force by relocating entails. He supports this movement but he still does not agree with “most of” Beksic’s theoretical argument.⁴⁶

Ignác Darányi, Minister of Agriculture, also contributed to the budgetary debate.

He said that “entails do not fit in the modern legal system. Nevertheless, it is also important to take into consideration the national and state interests when discussing this question. The government did not suggest the establishment of new entails and did not intend to make such suggestion in the flatlands to His Majesty, or any place where social, economic and ownership problems may occur”.

*However, “for the sake of empowering the Hungarian state doctrine, the government does not exclude of making proposal to His Majesty for the approval of such entails strictly for wooded lands especially in Transylvania and in other exposed territories with similar conditions, where social, economic or ownership problems do not exist”.*⁴⁷

Gusztáv Beksic, who was a member of parliament as a Liberal Party representative, was absent from the debate due to illness but he followed the session and felt his views justified by the remarks. He read from Darányi’s speech that his idea about the restriction of new entail establishments became “a government programme”. István Tisza and other authority figures even supported his plan on asset-exchange, and it was also backed by Sándor Károlyi at an inquest on resettlement earlier in January.⁴⁸ Yet he noticed some unclear issues

44 *Az 1896. évi november*, p. 198-202 (13. 3. 1900).

45 *Az 1896. évi november*, p. 210-213 (13. 3. 1900).

46 *Az 1896. évi november*, p. 294-295 (17. 3. 1900).

47 *Az 1896. évi november*, p. 240 (13. 3. 1900).

48 BEKSICS. *Magyarország jövője az újabb nemzeti elhelyezkedés alapján*. Budapest 1900, p. 3-5, 15-17. The purpose of the meeting called by the Minister of Agriculture was to review the 1894 Settlement Act, and to encourage further discussions about how to improve the process. Sándor Károlyi published an extensive article in the *Hazánk* days preceding the meeting, in

needed to be addressed, and therefore he published several articles⁴⁹ in March 1900. Then, he published another pamphlet next month titled “*The Future and Novel National Positioning of Hungary*”. Here, on the one hand, he summarized the objectives and achieved results, on the other hand, he tried to clarify his concepts. He assured everyone that if Transylvania and Upper Hungary were not capable of accommodating entailed wooded lands, there would be other places for that like the Croatian-Slavonian forests. He does not understand why Hungarian magnates keep avoiding land purchases in the Trans-Drava territories, when it would give them a right to vote also in the Croatian Parliament.⁵⁰ He further refined his concept of asset-exchange by adding that “*hereditary lands*” and “*ancient palaces*” are not assets to be moved, the opposite is true, it would be desirable that families could keep their influence regionally in the Great Plain and Trans-Danubia. Other real estates, aside from the hereditary lands, would be excellent assets to exchange.

The main line of the family “*will be able to complete its societal and national mission without any topographical exchange. However, there will be separate task for the second and third generation males in nationality regions, where lands need to be purchased for them in order to establish entailed wooded lands. [...] By doing so, there will be free lands for subdivision in the flatlands, whilst nationality regions will be filled with entailed wooded lands, so as with a Hungarian society of second and third generations of high-ranking noble families*”.

Beksics seemed very optimistic about the success of these concepts. He thought that “*the familial, political and economic interests of the top thousands, namely, the aristocrats will demand to accelerate this process in time, although this now seems to be a rare phenomenon*”.⁵¹

Beksics’s latest work received reactions, which were followed by other responses. It is considered, without further discussing this correspondence, that the idea of relocating entails to the peripheries of the country at the expense of nationalities in order to ease social and demographic tensions caused by

which he noted that “*the exchange of entailed great fields for wooded or uphill lands at the same value should be transferred through free negotiations and not by using coercive measures. These exchanges could be supported and promoted by the state if they happened in certain predicted counties*”. See KÁROLYI. A telepítés kérdéséhez. In *Hazánk*, 1900, vol. 7, no. 12, p. 5.

49 BEKSICS. A hitbizományok új és nemzeti alapja. In *Magyar Nemzet*, 1900, vol. 19, no. 82, p. 17; BEKSICS. Újabb nemzeti elhelyezkedés. In *Magyar Nemzet*, 1900, vol. 19, no. 86, p. 17.

50 BEKSICS, G. Magyarország jövője, p. 48-49.

51 BEKSICS, G. Magyarország jövője, p.20-21.

these institutions instead of abolishing bound lands had taken root in the public discourse at the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries. Although not all speakers agreed with this plan for reasons of principle or impracticality, from that time on, the theory, relentlessly popularized by Gusztáv Beksics, served as a kind of reference point for further discourses on entailed lands.

Conclusion

The direction and the more and more aggressive tone of public debates on entails reflected the turn in the Hungarian nationality policy at the turn of the century. While the nationality law of 1868 placed the emphasis on civil equality and the moderately extensive language rights within the category of the Hungarian political community, after nearly three decades, the idea of creating a culturally and linguistically homogenous nation state was not that far from the agenda of the government and members of parliament. In addition, the Hungarian political public opinion even demanded them to make efforts toward national homogeneity. In this perspective, every political and economic means was allowed in order to promote Magyarization efforts and the interests and feelings of nationalities, without further ado, could be neglected.⁵² This can be considered as a kind of “domestic colonization”, in which the role of national land policy would have been emphasized. This procedure was learnt from the Prussian settlement law of 1886, which dedicated large funds to purchase Polish owned lands in West Prussia and Posen and transfer them to German speaking peasants and labourers.⁵³ The legislation adopted by the Hungarian House of Parliament in 1894, however, provided far less material conditions for settlements serving national purposes, so they failed to come up to expectations.⁵⁴ The demand to narrow the territorial space of the nationalities, and promote the expansion of ethnic Hungarians at the expense of the other nationalities was definitely present. However, the accomplishment of this goal without enough material conditions and serious governmental support was nothing but wishful thinking. This was often manifested in unrealistic ideas, which neglected the realities of practical conditions and human factors. The concept of relocating entailed lands of Gusztáv Beksics was one of these irrational ideas, which remained present in its thematic discourse until the collapse of the historic Kingdom of Hungary in 1918.

52 GYURGYÁK. *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok. A magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története.* Budapest 2007, p. 76-87.

53 SZÉCHENYI. *Telepítési törekvések Németországban.* Budapest 1893. p. 120.

54 SZABÓ, A *dualizmus*kori, p. 316.

About the author

Dr. Dániel Ballabás, PhD.

Eszterházy Károly Catholic University, Institute of History

3300 Eger, Eszterházy tér 1.

Hungary

e-mail: ballabas.daniel@uni-eszterhazy.hu

<https://aprogramozotortenesz.hu/>

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