

AN AMERICAN PROJECT PROPOSED AROUND THE MARSHALL PLAN: APPLYING THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY MODEL FOR THE DANUBE

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Abstract: *The April 1947 issue of the prestigious American journal Geographical Review published an article titled „TVA on the Danube?”. The author, George Kiss/Kish, was born in Hungary and became a refugee in the United States of America in 1939. Throughout his extensive scientific and academic career, primarily at the University of Michigan, he established himself as an outstanding geographer, specialising in political geography. Kiss/Kish's article is a laborious scientific study in the field that established him, while simultaneously serving as a comprehensive demonstration in support of an interesting and innovative project, even by today's standards: the establishment of a supranational agency or authority, following the American model of the Tennessee Valley Authority, to effectively utilise the resources of the Danube river for the benefit of the inhabitants of its extended river basin. The objective of this study is not to conduct a scientific review of Kiss/Kish's article; instead, it is more important to comprehend the motivations behind the proposal, as well as the international context that initially encouraged such a project that eventually led to its failure. At the same time, adopting an integrated approach to effectively exploiting the Danube would reopen the long-standing dispute between a state's sovereign rights over its territory against the international value of a navigable watercourse.*

Keywords: *George Kiss/Kish, political geography, Danube, Cold War, integrated exploitation of resources, regional unity, Marshall Plan.*

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prestigioasei reviste americane "Geographical Review" era publicat un articol, intitulat *TVA on the Danube?*. Autorul său, George Kiss/Kish, născut în Ungaria și refugiat în Statele Unite ale Americii din anul 1939, s-a afirmat în lunga sa carieră științifică și academică petrecută îndeosebi în cadrul Universității din Michigan ca un remarcabil geograf, cu predilecție în ramura geografiei politice. Articolul lui Kiss/Kish este un laborios studiu științific în domeniul care l-a consacrat, însă, în egală măsură, se constituie și într-o amplă demonstrație în vederea susținerii unui proiect interesant și inovator (chiar și astăzi): constituirea unei agenții sau autorități supranaționale, după modelul american Tennessee Valley Authority, care să exploateze într-o manieră integrată resursele pe care Dunărea le putea oferi locuitorilor din bazinul extins al fluviului. Scopul cercetării noastre nu este acela de a analiza în maniera unei recenzii științifice studiul lui Kiss/Kish, dimpotrivă considerăm că mult mai importantă ar fi înțelegerea rațiunii care a stat la baza propunerii, precum și a cadrului internațional ce, inițial, a încurajat un astfel de proiect și, mai târziu, a decis eșecul lui. Totodată, readucerea în actualitate a unei viziuni integrate de exploatare a Dunării ar redeschide mai vechea dispută dintre dreptul suveran al unui stat asupra propriului teritoriu și caracterul internațional al unui curs de apă navigabilă.

INTRODUCTION

On the 5th of June 1947, during his acceptance speech for an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws at Harvard University, American Secretary of State George Catlett Marshall set out the principles which would act as the basis for the ample post-war economic assistance program offered by the United States for the recovery of European economies affected by the consequences of the Second World War. The European Recovery Program (ERP), later known as the Marshall Plan, proposed non-reimbursable financial aid to all states on the continent, on condition that these countries cooperate.¹ Just two months before, in April 1947, in the American *Geographical Review*, George Kiss/Kish had advocated for applying the framework of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), a successful economic model, over the entire length of the Danube River. TVA was in fact a U.S. federal government agency, established in 1933 to coordinate actions for flood control, the improvement of navigation, the efficient use of water for irrigation, and electricity generation along the Tennessee River and its tributaries². Evidently,

¹ For George C. Marshall's biography, see Leonard Mosley, *Marshall. Hero for our times*, New York, Hearst Books, 1982; Thomas Parrish, *Roosevelt and Marshall. Partners in Politics and War*, New York, William Morrow and Company, 1989.

² For more details on the establishment and structure of this agency, see C. Herman Pritchett, *The Tennessee Valley Authority. A Study in Public Administration*, Chapel Hill,

such a project needed the full cooperation of all countries surrounding the extended basin of the Danube (including its tributary rivers)³.

This study seeks to re-emphasize the Danube cooperation initiative, as proposed by Kiss/Kish in 1947, which aspired to exploit the Danube's substantial hydrographic and economic potential for the advantage of the countries located along its banks. The organisational pattern proposed in 1947 can be reconsidered and adapted, given the current more favourable conditions for its application. Presently, the Danube basin, together with its tributaries, covers 18 countries⁴, including 11, officially recognised members of the European Union: Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Additionally, six other countries have obtained official candidate status: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. Furthermore, Switzerland is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA; AELS abbreviated in Romanian)⁵. In this sense, the element of novelty in this study is readily apparent.

Secondly, this study aims to determine *whether* and *to what extent* Kiss/Kish's project remained subordinate to the general framework of American foreign policy and the principles invoked and applied in the Marshall Plan. To draw the necessary conclusions, analyses were conducted on George Kiss/Kish's biography and the theoretical and conceptual framework of his scientific work, as well as the international circumstances that marked the period preceding the outbreak of the Cold War.

THE BIOGRAPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF GEORGE KISS/KISH

George Kish [native spelling Kiss] was born in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, on November 24, 1914. He achieved excellent academic performance in his own country, completing high school with outstanding results and emerging as the winner of a national geography competition. He pursued further

The University of North Carolina Press, 1943.

³ See George Kiss, *TVA on the Danube?* in "Geographical Review", Vol. 37, No. 2 (April), 1947, pp. 274-302.

⁴ The Danube River crosses the territories of 10 European states, namely Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, without including its tributaries.

⁵ For more details, see Arthur-Viorel Tuluș, *Dunărea de Jos. Scurt istoric / The Lower Danube. A Brief History*, Brăila, Istros Publishing House, 2018, pp. 15-18, 79-82.

studies in France, earning a bachelor's degree in sciences from the École Libre des Sciences Politiques in 1935 and a master's degree in arts from the Sorbonne in 1937. However, his intellectual pursuits focused on political science, geography, and history. He returned to Hungary where and obtained another master's degree in economics from the University of Budapest in 1938, and a doctorate in sciences in 1939⁶. He held a series of positions in his home country, starting as an assistant within the Hungarian Bureau of Tariff Policy, then as assistant secretary of the Association of Hungarian Textile Industries, and finally as secretary for the Association of Hungarian Master Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers⁷.

In 1939, George Kiss/Kish moved to the United States to pursue further education in Geography⁸. From 1940 until he died in 1989, he held positions of researcher and professor at the University of Michigan. Initially, he worked as a research assistant in geography and in 1943 was appointed to the position of geography instructor. He obtained his PhD title in geography from the same university in 1945. Additionally, he served as curator of maps in Clements Library from 1944 to 1946. George Kiss/Kish worked as a research analyst in the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, specifically focusing on translating Hungarian publications and documents. His role and contributions during the war earned him American citizenship in March 1948. As a result, he chose to change his surname to Kish, which better reflects the Hungarian pronunciation of his

⁶ The University of Michigan Library holds a fund of *George Kish papers, 1932-1989*, including a biography. See <https://findingaids.lib.umich.edu/catalog/umich-bhl-90123> (accessed on 20.03.24). Furthermore, see Mary S. Pedley, *George Kish (1914–1989)*, in “Imago Mundi”, Vol. 43, 1991, pp. 100–101 for an in-memorial biography of the geographer George Kish.

⁷ According to a short biography of the author, included at the bottom of the first page of one of his articles. See George Kish, *India, Africa and 'Point Four'*, in “Quarterly Review of the Michigan Alumnus”, Vol. 56, No. 14, 4 March 1950, p. 132.

⁸ Given his professional position in Hungary, it is questionable whether George Kiss/Kish left Hungary for the United States solely to „further his studies in geography”. The anti-Semitic atmosphere in Europe and his Jewish heritage may have played a great role in his decision, however, no evidence to support such claims can be found in the aforementioned biographies. The only reference in this sense is Peter Barber, *'I draw a line here and open a new chapter': The Bagrow-Almagià Correspondence 1947-1955*, in “Imago Mundi”, Vol. 66. *People, Places, and Ideas in the History of Cartography: Supplement* (2014), pp. 70-82. It says “(...) *George Kish, a Jewish-Hungarian emigre in the United States who was befriended by Almagià (...) from the early 1950s*”. Roberto Almagià (1884–1962) was an Italian geographer and historian of cartography.

name. After the war, he resumed his various teaching and research positions at the University of Michigan. He was promoted to professor in 1956⁹.

George Kiss/Kish acquired recognition as a renowned geographer and cartographer, especially in the subfield of political geography. He held membership in several honorary societies such as the Association of American Geographers, the Research Club, the American Geophysical Union, the American Council - Institute of Pacific Relations, the Arctic Institute of North America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and the Hungarian Geographical Society. As a recognized expert in his field, he collaborated (as visiting professor or associate professor) with other institutions or associations, such as Northwestern University, Oxford University, London School of Economics, Cambridge University United Nations Association, Stockholm School of Economics, University of Tel-Aviv, the Academy of Universities in Rome, Florence, Naples, Bari (he was a Fulbright Research Professor in Italy in 1951-1952 and again in 1963), the University of Liège, the Universities and Academies of Sciences of both Poland and Hungary.

Kiss/Kish's many awards included the Andrée Plaque for Polar Studies from the Swedish Geographical Society, the Greater Linnaeus Silver Medal from the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, The University of Michigan's Henry Russel Lectureship, and the Honors Award from the Association of American Geographers. In 1981, he received the Jornard Prize from the Paris Society of Geography, which is awarded once a decade. He was also a Commander in the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity. Over time, he actively supported and participated in the academic life of the University of Michigan; he continued to teach there even after his retirement in 1984 until he passed away on July 11th, 1989. The stability of his family life greatly contributed to this long-lasting academic relationship. Kiss/Kish married Elvina Anger, a Canadian physicist, in 1949; the couple had a daughter and set their permanent residence in Ann Arbor, where the University of Michigan is located¹⁰.

In his long career, George Kiss/Kish authored several monographs¹¹ and

⁹ See <https://findingaids.lib.umich.edu/catalog/umich-bhl-90123> (accessed on 20.03.24); Mary S. Pedley, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–101.

¹⁰ See <https://findingaids.lib.umich.edu/catalog/umich-bhl-90123> (accessed on 20.03.24); Mary S. Pedley, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–101; George Kish, *India, Africa and 'Point Four'*, p. 132.

¹¹ A few authored monographies: George Kish, *Economic Atlas of the Soviet Union*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1960; Idem, *La Carte. Image des civilisations*, Paris, Seuil, 1980; Idem, *To the Heart of Asia: The Life of Sven Hedin*, Ann Arbor, University of

published over 140 articles in English, French, German, Italian, and Hungarian; a significant part of these articles appeared in the prestigious *Geographical Review*¹² and *Imago Mundi*¹³ journals.

To reflect on the conceptual framework of George Kiss/Kish's thinking at the time he elaborated and proposed his Danube cooperation project in the *Geographical Review*, research was conducted on what he wrote during and immediately after the Second World War, when he was still using his Hungarian surname, *Kiss*. His scientific interests were diverse, ranging from the use of old maps to more recent aspects, such as the economic development of South-Eastern Europe, communication and transport in the Balkans, Italian borders, etc¹⁴. However, his publications focusing on combating Nazi German geopolitics won him great academic acclaim; this degree of reputation would not be equalled, even with his later work. The study he published in 1942 – *Political Geography into Geopolitics: Recent Trends in Germany*¹⁵ – has been used in almost all critical analyses of Nazi geopolitics, at least as interpreted by Karl Haushofer and the followers of his journal, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*. Accused of complicity with Nazism and the authoritarian regimes of Italy and Japan, geopolitics became, in the early postwar period, an academic concept best avoided by most geographers in the United States and Europe¹⁶. Despite the distortion of geography into geopolitics, used to serve ideology and ambitions of territorial expansion, George Kiss/Kish campaigned for the establishment and support of a scientific political

Michigan Press, 1984.

¹² The oldest journal in the United States solely dedicated to geography and one of the most important international publications in this field. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographical_Review (accessed on 22.03.24).

¹³ A scientific publication dedicated exclusively to cartography and map history. For more details, see <https://www.jstor.org/journal/imagomundi> (accessed on 22.03.24).

¹⁴ See George Kiss, *Some Aspects of the Political Geography of the Hungarian Basin*, in "Journal of Geography", Vol. 41, No. 2, 1942, pp. 69-72; Idem, *Italian Boundary Problems: A Review*, in "Geographical Review", Vol. 37, No. 1, 1947, pp. 137-141; Idem, *Quelques Notes sur les Communications dans les Balkans: Principales lignes ferroviaires; ponts sur le Danube; issue a la Mer Egee by Lubin Bochkoff*, in "Geographical Review", Vol. 37, No. 1, 1947, pp. 167-168; Idem, *TVA on the Danube?*, pp. 274-302; Idem, *The Correspondence of Continental Mapmakers of the 1770's and 80's with a London Firm*, in "Imago Mundi", Vol. 4, 1947, pp. 75-77.

¹⁵ Idem, *Political Geography into Geopolitics: Recent Trends in Germany*, in "Geographical Review", Vol. 32, No. 4, 1942, pp. 632-645.

¹⁶ Klaus Dodds, Merje Kuus, Joanne Sharp, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics*, London - New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 3-4.

geography¹⁷. Moreover, he delved into history to uncover when and where the distortion or contamination of the domain originated. He claims that the great German philosopher Hegel is responsible for the beginnings of German geopolitics. In response to Prussia's humiliation after being defeated by Napoleon Bonaparte, he allegedly preached to his fellow countrymen that „Germany's eternal mission was one of conquest and domination”¹⁸. The unanimous conclusion was that Political Geography existed in the Free World, just as Geopolitics had been present in the Unfree World, although in an altered form of Political Geography that was used to serve the state (and thus subjective) interests¹⁹.

Therefore, when George Kiss/Kish publicly proposed the project for cooperation on the Danube in April 1947, he was both a connoisseur of the problems in South-Eastern Europe, implicitly those of the Danube basin, and a declared enemy of geopolitics, defined as political geography in service of subjective or imperial interests.

GEORGE KISS/KISH'S PROJECT: TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY ON THE DANUBE

Kiss/Kish's article, *TVA on the Danube*, consisted of a technically extensive and extremely well-documented approach regarding the integrated development of the resources that the Danube could offer to the inhabitants of its extensive river basin²⁰. „A river valley may be a logical regional unit and as such a means for realising common purposes which require that state boundaries be transcended”²¹. The Danube holds even greater potential in this regard, as it has historically been, and still is, together with the Rhine, (at the end of the Second World War) the primary transportation route connecting the industrial centres of northwestern Europe to the granaries in the east of the continent. The Hungarian-born American geographer viewed the Danube Valley in Central Europe as a suitable place to establish an agency with similar tasks as the Tennessee Valley

¹⁷ Rob Sullivan, *Geography Speaks Performative of Geography*, London, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, p. 140; Pradeep Sharma, *Economical Political Geography*, New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, p. 270.

¹⁸ George Kiss, *Political Geography into Geopolitics*, pp. 632-633.

¹⁹ Klaus Dodds, Merje Kuus, Joanne Sharp, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4; Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire. The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 18-19.

²⁰ Along with its tributary rivers.

²¹ C. H. Grattan, *A Hard Look at TVA*, in “Harper’s Magazine”, Vol. 191, 1945, p. 209.

Authority – TVA functioning over the Tennessee River. According to him, other American specialists such as David E. Lilienthal²², Julian Huxley²³, and Arthur Morgan²⁴ additionally agreed with this perspective. However, unlike the Tennessee or Columbia River basins, the Danube valley was considered „a regional unit with national frontiers”.²⁵ The establishment of any agency to coordinate and develop resources in an integrated manner would require the existence and acceptance of a supranational authority with extended powers and adequate international support, which could only happen after a radical change in the political and economic climate of the region.

Nowadays, Kiss/Kish's proposal could be seen as idealistic. Nevertheless, it is important to note that he was not merely a theorist and was well-informed about the topic. The first explanatory note of the article in the *Geographical Review* stated that the author had studied various aspects of the Danube basin, which involved numerous trips along the way by steamer, barge, and skiff. At the same time, benefiting from grants from the University of Michigan, he had done similar field research along the Tennessee and Columbia Rivers, which enabled him to learn about two organisational models – Tennessee Valley Authority and Columbia River Developments. Additionally, he had the opportunity to interact with engineers, administrators, and senior representatives of both entities²⁶. It is important to note that at the end of the Second World War, there was pressure – at least theoretical – to move toward regional human resources development, with similar projects proposed for the British colonial area in Africa and the Yangtze River Valley²⁷.

In essence, Kiss/Kish's Danube project proposed the establishment of a supranational agency or authority, modelled after the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), to coordinate the development of resources in the Danube region at an integrated level. More specifically, similarly to TVA, the purposes of such an agency on the Danube would include effective flood control, enhancing navigability of the river and generating electric power consistent with flood control and navigation. Additionally, it would involve proper use of marginal lands, reforesting the

²² See David E. Lilienthal, *TVA: Democracy on the March*, London - New York, Harper & Brothers, 1944.

²³ See Julian Huxley, *TVA: Adventure in Planning*, California, Architectural Press, 1946.

²⁴ Arthur Ernest Morgan was the first chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), between 1933 and 1938. See George Kiss, *TVA on the Danube?*, p. 274.

²⁵ A distinction must be made between state borders within a federation, as in the case of the United States of America, and national borders, which separate two independent states.

²⁶ George Kiss, *TVA on the Danube?* p. 274.

²⁷ See David E. Lilienthal, *op. cit.*; Julian Huxley, *op. cit.*

drainage basin and promoting the economic and social welfare of the residents of the river basin. The importance of imposing unified control over the exploitation of the river and its resources was further highlighted by the inefficiency of previous works that had already been made to improve the navigable channel, made by each state in an individualistic and selfish manner. Kiss/Kish concluded that regardless of the extensive and expensive hydrotechnical works executed by the Danubian nations since the mid-nineteenth century to regulate the navigable channel and prevent flooding, the outcomes of these efforts were short-lived and inconclusive due to the lack of coordination strategy between various governments. More precisely, nearly every attempt made by a state on its specific segment of the Danube was largely countered by similar works made by other riparian countries located upstream or downstream.²⁸ However, the history of this untamed and at times dangerous waterway (as described by the Hungarian-American geographer), mentions an exception – the establishment of the European Commission of the Danube. This international body was created in 1856 to find, engineer and maintain a navigable channel on the maritime sector of the Danube, from Brăila to its flowing into the Black Sea, including the Danube Delta in its attributions. However, even this European body did not have a unitary evolution. Kiss/Kish noted that the design of the international administration received wholehearted support from its members. However, this cooperation was lost after the First World War, resulting in the cessation of almost all hydrotechnical efforts aimed at improving navigation on the maritime channel of the river until the beginning of the Second World War²⁹. The study's author provided limited information; thus certain explanatory additions are necessary to fully understand his point of view.

The Definitive Statute of the Danube, signed on July 23rd, 1921, established the interwar regime of this navigation and transport waterway within the Versailles system. It divided the navigable course of the Danube from Ulm to the Black Sea into two sectors. Each sector had a corresponding Commission, exercising different powers. The International Commission of the Danube was established on the riverine sector from Ulm downstream to Brăila, consisting of riparian countries and the victorious major powers (France, Great Britain, Italy). The sole duties of this body were to supervise that riparian states properly maintained the navigable channel and applied equal rights treatment for all pavilions. The European Commission of the Danube, an international

²⁸ George Kiss, *TVA on the Danube?*, pp. 275-277.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 277, 282.

administrative organisation with extensive legal, legislative, and fiscal authority, was maintained to oversee the marine sector from Brăila to the sea. Its operational principles closely resemble those of the current European Union. Unlike the pre-war structure, when all great European powers were members,³⁰ the interwar period saw the European Commission of the Danube limited to only four members (Romania, as a territorial authority, along with the other victorious powers – France, Great Britain, and Italy). This limitation generated a negative international representation and great deficiencies in achieving the hydrotechnical goals set since its establishment in 1856³¹.

The lack of a strategy or vision for the integrated development of resources, the selfish national policies of riparian countries (mutually applying restrictive trade practices), disparate or non-implemented works to improve the navigable channel, and many other factors had all had negative consequences on Danube River traffic before World War II. In 1936, the peak year of the interwar period, the circulation of goods registered on the maritime sector of the Danube was around 7.5 million tons – just 10% of what was carried out on the Rhine. Border formalities, customs duties, tug costs or loading/unloading costs greatly increased the price of transport. In 1929, the cost of transporting a ton of wheat from Budapest to Mannheim (on the Danube to Regensburg and thence by rail) was 38 marks/ton, compared to just 19 marks for a ton of wheat brought by sea from the United States of America. Similarly, a ton of Hungarian wheat transported from Budapest to any of the ports located on the Rhine, Elbe, Danube, or the Mediterranean cost about 30 marks, a huge sum compared to the mere 11 marks/ton of wheat brought to the same ports by ocean freight from the United States of America³².

³⁰ When the European Commission of the Danube was established in 1856, it included all the great European powers: France, Great Britain, Austria/Austria-Hungary, Russia, Sardinia/Italy, Prussia/Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. Romania joined them in 1878, as a territorial authority, after the annexation of Dobruja [Dobrogea] and the Danube Delta.

³¹ For more details see Arthur-Viorel Tuluş, *Problema Dunării la conferința de pace de la Paris (1919) și în perioada imediat următoare* [The Danube Question during the Paris Peace Conference and the immediately subsequent period], in “Analele Universității ‘Dunărea de Jos’ din Galați”. Istorie, Tom VII, 2008, pp. 175-182; Idem, *Dunărea maritimă între Aranjamentul de la Sinaia și Acordul de la Belgrad (1938-1948)* [The Maritime Danube between the Sinaia Settlement and the Belgrade Agreement (1938 – 1948)], Galați, Galați University Press, 2008, pp. 30-35.

³² George Kiss, *TVA on the Danube?* pp. 300-301.

George Kiss/Kish concluded that merely improving navigation would undoubtedly address these shortcomings. However, transforming this great river into a true commercial route required a radical change of vision or strategy, which involved establishing an authority to oversee the integrated regional development of resources in the Danube Valley. This authority would not have been limited solely to the maintenance of the navigable channel; instead, it would have also focused on improving the lives of inhabitants through flood control, maximum use of hydropower potential to produce electricity, appropriate use of marginal land for agriculture through irrigation or appropriate reforestation of lands in the drainage basin. Given the successful implementation of a similar approach on the Tennessee River since 1933 by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Kiss/Kish's study focused on two main issues:

(1) motivating the need to move to a new form of qualitative regional integration – in which case his approach is historical-geographical, carrying out a broad analysis of available resources, their previous use, and their potential, with an emphasis on distribution models;

(2) the advantages of adapting the American TVA model to the post-war reorganising of the Danube – a rather political approach, because any authority proposing such goals must obtain and possess supranational competencies, which involve founding acts, administrative powers and structure. Any supranational authority or agency commissioned to plan, arrange, and maintain a system covering over 500,000 km² would need strong political support from its member states, to have sufficient financial capital to materialise its projects, including valuable human resources such as engineers, administrators, agronomists, etc.

A thorough analysis of George Kiss/Kish's project revealed that the Hungarian American geographer remained consistently committed to the concept of political geography, which earned him notoriety in the scientific world. His historical analysis of the evolution of the Danube regime takes a comprehensive approach that opposes geopolitics. Concretely, the river's vast potential can never be sufficiently exploited as long as any kind of Danube organisation serves the ideology or ambitions of certain states.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AND FAILURE OF THE PROJECT

Implementing the TVA model on the Danube was challenging even in a favourable international context. It required overcoming historical rivalries between the riparian countries, as well as substantial funds, which their governments did not have after the war ruined them financially. The solution could

have also come from overseas, through the non-reimbursable American financial aid European Recovery Program (ERP), later known as the Marshall Plan. Although a direct link between George Kiss/Kish's plan to establish a Danube supranational authority/agency and the Marshall Plan cannot be identified, both initiatives have several similarities:

(1) they were means to prevent the recurrence of the great depression of 1929-1933, a traumatic experience for Americans and not only for them. In the USA, the complex crisis of the interwar years was overcome by applying the New Deal plan of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who became the longest-serving American president³³. The New Deal included a broad set of economic programs, based on state intervention in the economy. The establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1933 followed this line of action. The Marshall Plan was conceived and designed as a New Deal for post-war Europe, even if in the end, for known reasons, it was applied only to the western part of the continent³⁴.

(2) both the Marshall Plan and the establishment of a Danube agency required cooperation between beneficiaries/partners as a crucial prerequisite. „Cooperation" was interpreted by Moscow as a way for American influence to enter Europe. Claiming that the American financial aid would violate the „sovereignty of participating states", the Soviet Union refused the Marshall Plan and coerced its Eastern European satellites into rejecting it as well³⁵.

Without American financial and technical aid, George Kiss/Kish's project for the Danube was doomed to fail. Its last chance was wasted during the Danube Conference, held in Belgrade between July 30th and August 18th, 1948, when a new regime for the Danube was established. Under the generous slogan „The Danube belongs to the riversides", the Soviet Union imposed the following through the Belgrade Agreement:

(1) elimination of any form of internationalization of the Danube to conceal

³³ President of the United States of America between March 1932 and April 12th, 1945.

³⁴ Concerning the elaboration, application, and consequences of the European Recovery Program (ERP), see: John Gimbel, *The Origins of the Marshall Plan*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1976; G.S. Prentzas, *The Marshall Plan*, New York, Chelsea House, 2011; Michael Holm, *The Marshall Plan. A New Deal for Europe*, London - New York, Routledge, 2017; Benn Steil, *The Marshall Plan. Dawn of the Cold War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018.

³⁵ Michael Holm, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-57. Between July 9th and 11th, 1947, the governments of Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland announced that they would not participate in the discussions over the Marshall Plan, scheduled to take place in Paris on June 19th, 1947.

the Soviet Union's hegemon that was exercised in an authoritarian manner until the death of Soviet leader I.V. Stalin (March 1953);

(2) unification of the official course of the Danube under the authority of a single institution, the Danube Commission, which was only granted supervisory powers (replicating the former interwar International Danube Commission) over how riparian states maintained their own navigable sectors;

(3) since the Danube was divided between the two worlds of capitalism and communism by the Iron Curtain, the unification of the river was utopian from the start. Furthermore, the conflict between Tito and Stalin divided the navigable channel of the communist sector into three other segments between 1948 and 1954³⁶.

Assessing the project of George Kiss/Kish in light of current knowledge, it would be simplistic to blame the whole failure on the Soviet Union and Moscow's dictatorship over the Danube satellite states. Even if the communist bloc seems predominantly responsible, the lack of reaction from American and Western politicians remains particularly surprising. Under these conditions, George Kiss/Kish's project of reorganizing the Danube regime on new bases remained a „scientific suggestion”, and the lack of reactions either for or against it rapidly led to abandonment and disregard, even within the scientific world. To further simplify, it may be said that political geography had triumphed over geopolitics only theoretically since politicians and diplomats from both ideological sides still viewed the world in geopolitical terms at the beginning of the Cold War.

CONCLUSIONS

Even today, implementing the model of integrated development of resources that the Danube can offer to the inhabitants of its extensive river basin is difficult to achieve. George Kiss/Kish was a visionary and an innovator, but equally an idealist. Considering the extensive damage caused by the Second World War and the financial ruin that threatened Europe, Kiss/Kish argued that the governments of the Danube states should have agreed to cede their powers in favour of a supranational agency or authority. Modelled after the American Tennessee Valley Authority, it would have been responsible for the collective and efficient use of the

³⁶ Arthur-Viorel Tuluș, *Dunărea maritimă...*, pp. 257-285; Idem, *A consequence of the Second World War: The Belgrade Agreement (August 18, 1948) and its consequences upon the navigation on the Danube*, in “Analele Universității Maritime din Constanța”, Vol. 18, 2012, pp. 67-72.

economic potential of the Danube. The objectives of the new agency/supranational authority would have extended beyond the mere improvement of the navigable channel, unlike all previous Commissions formed for the Danube. On the contrary, the exploitation of hydropower potential, flood control, or the appropriate use of marginal land for agriculture would have also been pursued. Kiss/Kish's project was a significant challenge, necessitating close cooperation between states and substantial financial funds to get the process off the ground. Unfortunately, almost simultaneously with the publishing and dissemination of Kiss/Kish's study, the whole of Europe and, implicitly, the Danube basin entered the logic of the Cold War, resulting in the project's ultimate downfall.

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