



# Target Bristol - how Soviet spies mapped out West city

**David Clensy** studies Cold War Soviet intelligence maps of Bristol, published for the first time, which show the strategic targets the Russians would have targeted in the outbreak of war



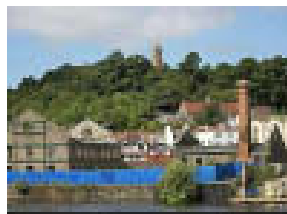
Council House, College Green

At the height of the Cold War, the Soviets had built up a sinister understanding of every building in Bristol.

The extraordinary depth of Soviet intelligence about the city by the early 1970s is revealed in a series of chilling secret maps, shown here, compiled by the Soviets using satellite photographs, existing Ordnance Survey maps, and their own network of Soviet spies on the ground here in the West.

The map even features precise details of the width of roads and the depth of rivers – essential information in the event of an invasion or strategic missile attack.

Everything from Cabot Tower to Temple Meads Station appears on the maps. The Council House is shown in red



Old gas works, city docks



Bristol Cathedral



with a black outline – denoting its strategic significance.

Perhaps the most worrying detail is the inclusion of hundreds of marks denoting every individual mooring position in the Floating Harbour.

Bristol Cathedral appears in great detail – with the shape of the building reproduced painstakingly on the map, but intriguingly, without any indication by the Communist cartographers of its status as a place of worship.

Some of the buildings highlighted as being of strategic importance to the Soviets include the old Wills Tobacco Factory in Bedminster, all the city's gas works, the Docks Railway, Temple Meads Cattle Market and the railway goods yard opposite Temple Meads, which no longer exists.

It is thought that these highlighted buildings would have been high on the Soviets' hit list in the event of the Cold War hotting up.

The maps are believed to be more comprehensive than any other historical maps in existence, as they also feature every single house in the city.

For historians, the detail of the maps offers an intriguing insight into the changing face of the city – the M32 is not yet built, and the Castle Park area still has the pre-Blitz road layout and the occasional pub and shop still surviving.

The maps are only seeing the light of day after recently being purchased by the Landmark Information Group, which yesterday launched a website [www.russianmaps.co](http://www.russianmaps.co).

## The Cold War in 1972

In 1972, when the maps were created, the Cold War was already more than two decades old – George Orwell had coined the term “Cold War” 27 years earlier, as a chasm opened between East and West in the wake of the defeat of European Nazism.

- By 1972 there were some signs of a thaw, with US president Richard Nixon and USSR premier Leonid Brezhnev signing arms limitation treaties and other agreements that year, including an international ban on biological warfare.
- February 1972 also saw



Nixon, above, and Brezhnev



Nixon travel to Beijing to meet Mao Zedong. Nixon also met Soviet leaders, including Brezhnev in Moscow, later in the year. Nixon and Brezhnev proclaimed a new era of “peaceful co-existence” and established the new policy of detente (or co-operation) between the two superpowers – but as the decade progressed, US-Soviet relations deteriorated again.

- Spy networks continued to flourish between the East and West, and intercontinental ballistic missile reserves were at an all-time high – 1972 is the year the USSR is

believed to have achieved nuclear parity with the US while the Vietnam War proved there was an ongoing “hot war” within the Cold War.

- In 1972 the US had 4,100 megatonnes of nuclear weaponry, compared to the USSR's 4,000 megatonnes – that equates to America having 2,230 missile launchers pointed at the USSR, while the Soviets had 2,090 missile launchers pointed back at the opposing superpower. By the following decade, the Soviets led the nuclear arms race.

**‘There were Russian spies snooping around the streets of Bristol as late as 1972 – it’s real James Bond stuff’**

Russell Morris, of Landmark

uk, where visitors will be able to freely view their own street as seen by the Russians, with the option of ordering special prints of the maps.

Russell Morris, of Landmark, says the maps only came to the West by accident.

“Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russians retreated out of the Baltic states in great haste, and all these intelligence maps were accidentally left behind in a railway carriage.

“They were sold to an American company, which kept them hidden away until this year when we purchased the rights to the maps.

“The maps range from the 1950s to the 1970s, and offer a fascinating insight into the Soviets’ detailed understanding of a number of British cities.

“Some of the information for the Soviet cartographers came from satellite pictures, but the intricate detail came from spies on the ground.

“It’s fascinating to think that there really was a network of Russian spies snooping around the streets of Bristol as late as 1972 – it’s real James Bond stuff.

“But the most amazing thing is, these maps preserve details of our landscape and geography that might otherwise have been lost.

“Our website allows users to search for a particular area by OS map coordinates or post-code, so it’s straightforward to examine how a particular neighbourhood was recorded by the Russians.”

The activity of Soviet spies in Bristol in the 1960s and

1970s has previously been highlighted by the Ministry of Defence.

A secret 1960s report, which the MoD made public in the 1990s, revealed how Bristol was a target for nuclear attack by the Russians during the Cold War, with Filton Airport listed as one of dozens of sites throughout the country which would have been obliterated during a nuclear war.

The MoD has estimated 43 million people in Britain – about 80 per cent of the population – would have been killed or seriously injured by a Soviet nuclear strike.

The MoD also revealed at the time that more than 100 Russian spies were expelled from the country in 1971 to protect the Concorde project at Filton.

