



Russia's Cold War maps of Wales revealed

SPIES HELPED TO PROVIDE VITAL MILITARY DETAILS

JAMES MCCARTHY
james.mccarthy@walesonline.co.uk

SECRET maps of Wales created by Soviet agents at the height of the Cold War are to be published online.

Their publication gives an insight into how, as Nato and the Eastern Bloc squared off across Europe, Russian spies were carefully recording the topography of Wales' industrial and shipping centres.

Cardiff, Rhondda, Swansea, Newport, Pembroke and Milford Haven were all on the USSR's list of important military targets, and the maps drawn up by the Soviet cartographers highlighted the government offices, military buildings, power plants, radio stations and fuel storage tanks which would have been targeted if war had erupted.

Harbour depths, road widths and railway stations all got special attention.

The maps are being made available to the public today by Old-Maps.co.uk

The site's Russell Morris ex-

plained how the maps, which were discovered on a train in the Baltic states after the collapse of the Soviet Union, were created.

"During the Cold War they basically used aerial photos, satellite images and local knowledge because they had people on the ground in these areas," he said.

"What is interesting is that it is not like Ordnance Survey. They are all slightly different, because they are all done by different cartographers.

"It is not like OS who have a consistent style.

"They use the same information but they are drawn in slightly different ways."

The site will let users overlay modern and Cold War maps so they can be compared.

Mr Morris said: "They were looking at things like heights of bridges, widths of roads, and that is indicated on some of the maps. I suppose they wanted to know what roads they could use to good military access.

"It is all very James Bond in the sense that if you cast your mind back to the '70s it was the Cold War. The Russians were the enemy and what they were doing was making these."

Following their discovery in 1991, the maps were sold to Minnesota firm East View Cartographic before Old-Maps.co.uk snapped them up.

Oxford, Cambridge, London, Belfast, Liverpool, Birmingham and Bath were among more than 100 towns the Russians surveyed.

Mr Morris said: "If you watch James Bond or Harry Palmer, it was all covert and the Russians were the bad guys.

"It is quite easy to imagine the kind of people who were doing these sort of things."

Professor Nicola Cooper, director of Swansea University's Callaghan Centre for the Study of Conflict, said that such maps would have been invaluable to Russian military planners.

"If you're going to take out another country, you are going



to want to know what to hit," she said.

"It looks like they have done a reconnaissance of Britain so that if they decided to float those missiles at us they would know they were going to hit the right places.

"They will always go for the head rather than the body so things like the admin buildings they would want to take out.

"South Wales was obviously an industrial place and that would have been one of the main reasons it was looked at.

"And the ports are important. You would want to take out ports as strategic military targets. It would damage the infrastructure and trade."

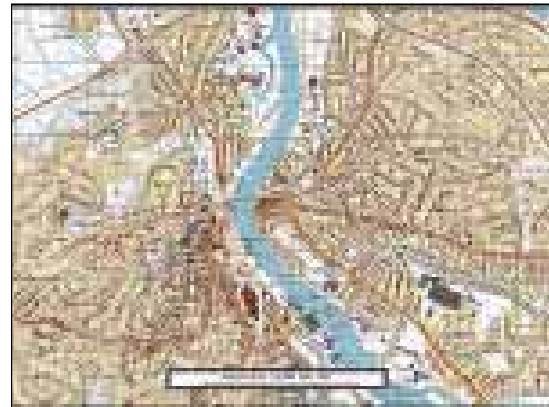
Lieutenant Colonel Ed Brain

heads the 3rd Battalion Royal Welsh. He said that some of the big South Wales ports would have been key targets.

"For Cardiff and Swansea I think it is about the economic impact you would have if you took out the docks," he said.

"With Britain being a seafaring nation, if they blocked off places like Liverpool and Glasgow – because Liverpool has a massive dock and Glasgow too – you would have to go somewhere else to continue trade.

"That could be one of the reasons they were looking at targeting places like Cardiff and Swansea."



DON'T MISS

KEN FOLLETT ON INSPIRATION FOR HIS NEW BOOK
IN TOMORROW'S MAGAZINE

