



Russians map out town and county

RUSSIAN spy maps revealing the hidden secrets of neighbourhoods have become available to the public for the first time.

A Cold War legacy, the maps were produced by the Russian military from 1950 to 1997 and reveal the exact location and purpose of every structure of possible military importance, including details of the width of roads, the height of bridges and the depth of rivers.

Experts believe the maps, which in some towns and cities include potentially-sensitive details not shown on UK versions, were developed using aerial photographs, satellite images, local knowledge and even spies.

Matthew Seligmann, reader in history at the University of Northampton, said: "These maps are really interesting and in part raise more questions than answers. Assuming the Russians didn't pilfer the information in them from Ordnance Survey maps and actually did them themselves it shows they were extremely interested in Britain as a military objective. The question is was this a military objective as an exercise in knowing your enemy or a military objective in that they envisaged

invasion or a military objective in that they really believed there would be a nuclear war and they were looking for places that could be worthwhile bombing targets."

He said he thought the maps would be of particular interest to historians in helping them to build up a picture of the local area, and allowing them to learn more about the Russian side of the conflict. "I'm not surprised the Russians had maps of Britain. It's in the realm of the obvious, bearing in mind the conflict that was the Cold War and the expression 'know your enemy'. This just confirms it."

Mr Seligmann said it was not immediately clear why Northampton had been included, but it could be down to its central location, transport links and potential for industry storage. The Russians mapped out 16,000 sq km of the UK, including 103 towns and cities, forming part of the most comprehensive global survey ever attempted, with the military creating detailed, accurate maps of practically every country in the world. To view the maps visit www.russianmaps.co.uk.

