



## **Hungarian military maps of foreign areas 1950–1990 Establishment of a digital map collection – project**

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The military always map those areas where military actions may be expected. Naturally, they survey their own country and make maps of those areas that they plan to attack.

The transformation of Hungary to a Soviet type system was practically completed by 1950. As a result, the topographic maps were produced by the military according to Soviet legend and execution. The existing maps were transformed (updated by quick terrain work) into the new system between 1950 and 1952. In the next step, from 1953 to 1959, Hungary was surveyed at 1: 25 000, but smaller scale maps were also made.

By 1950, the relationship between the Soviet Union (and Hungary) and its 2nd world war allies (western countries) deteriorated. The same happened with Yugoslavia due to Tito's separate policy. This situation made Hungary to urgently prepare the 1: 50 000 maps of an app. 150 km band along the southern and western Hungarian border.

The communist countries formed the Warsaw Pact in 1955, of which Hungary became a member. This was a defensive organization in principle, but they were prepared for attacking as well. Every member country was instructed to prepare for a specific direction of attacking. Hungary got the plan of overrunning Southern Austria and Northern Italy, which was an illusory idea considering the level of the Hungarian military forces and relief conditions.

However, secret plans were made, in which the Hungarian military mapping service played a major role. The maps were made at 1 : 50 000. They covered an area much larger than the direction of attacking: they prepared map sheets not only of Northern Italy, but also of almost the whole territory of Austria and the border areas of Germany and Switzerland (!). A part of the maps was made after Soviet maps, but many were completely new sheets based on foreign maps. These maps were updated by using gazetteers, timetables and intelligence information. In parallel with the detailed maps, 1: 100 000 and 1 : 200 000 (and even smaller scale) sheets were also made of larger areas.

The topographic maps were completed with many city maps at 1: 10 000 to 1 : 15 000. This type of map became a special product of Hungary: the Hungarians prepared maps of many cities in Italy and Germany lying outside the mapped area. These products were added with photographs and detailed descriptions of the major military data of cities.

Lists of geodetic points and military geographical descriptions with map annexes were also made. Some of these products were real thematic atlases. They were interesting and beautifully executed publications: naturally, they were strictly secret documents.

Almost all these maps are available in the Map Archives of War History, which are continuously digitized. The database can only be studied in the Map Room for the time being, but later they might be available on the Internet.