

The Military Cartography of the Habsburgs



Ever since its foundation over 50 years ago, ICA has been concerned with celebrating, documenting and learning from the history of cartography. The flowering of scientific cartography in the 18th century is an example of a leap in mapmaking activity which has had a profound effect on our discipline. That is when the first systematic nationwide topographic surveys were started, with the Cassini-inspired *Carte géométrique de la France* being perhaps the best-known example.

Further east, on 13 May 1764, Maria Theresa, the Empress of the Habsburg Empire, started a large-scale topographic survey of her realm. Today it is remembered as the First Military Survey, and named the *Josephinische Landesaufnahme* after her successor,

Joseph II, in whose reign it was completed. This First Topographic Survey was performed without the requirements of a modern survey (like rigorous datum, projection and triangulation). The work was carried out in 19 relatively uniform survey regions covering the contemporary areas of Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Belgium as well as parts of Poland, Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. Although systematic, the resultant survey was not completely uniform across the whole of the empire.

About 4,000 map sheets were created, each covering an area of approximately 216km². As for the scale, the *Militärmaß* is 1 Viennese inch to 400 Viennese fathoms; as 1 fathom equals 72 inches, the representative fraction 1:28,800 was used (just like in most countries at that time). Due to the strict confidentiality, only two hand-drawn copies were made of each sheet; luckily these were all saved by the Austrians, and after the First World War the newly formed 20th-century countries received copies (along with sheets of the subsequent surveys) covering their area.

At the time of the survey, Austria-Hungary was a larger (by area) political entity than France, so this comprehensive large-scale topographic survey was a major task. Without it, the Central European Arc Measurement would not have been created in 1862 as the first international scientific organisation of significance; without that survey, the International Society for Photogrammetry would not have been founded in Vienna in 1910; and without that survey, the International Cartographic Association would probably not have an Austrian president and a Hungarian secretary-general.

On 13 May 2014 a special celebration was organised by the civil (BEV: *Bundesamt für Eich- und Vermessungswesen*) and the military (IMG: *Institut für Militärisches Geowesen*) cartography institutes of Austria. The programme for this two-day celebration (http://www.ovg.at/uploads/media/Einladung_250Jahre_Landesaufnahme_Festsymposium.pdf) reveals a number of ICA personalities involved, alongside the direct successors of the 18th-century military cartographers, in presenting their views of the importance of this 250-year-old project.

ICA has maintained a strong Central European perspective, with 6 of the 28 ICA Commission chairs coming from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic or Hungary. The region plays a leading role in world cartography today.

Image: *The area around Budapest on the First Military Survey (1783).*

(Courtesy of the Institute and Museum of Military History of the Ministry of Defence, Hungary.)