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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #1 OF 2017 – January

INTRODUCTION

The world went through one of its momentous shifts in late 2016 with the election of Donald Trump as incoming President of the USA. The political changes to the world's fragile political alignments are going to be many and are going to be profound. I don't intend to comment on the outcome of an extremely bitter election contest; I merely point out that we are going to see fundamental relationships that have evolved over the past half-century suddenly turned upside down. Lan and I spent three weeks inside the reality of American news reporting during December. It was maddening!

The entire ITMB executive participated in this year's IMIA conference in San Diego. We had a bit of juggling to do as we had our two grandsons with us, but everything went well. Sandy and Linda Hill announced that they were retiring after 16 years of managing the affairs of first IMTA and then IMIA, the map industry's organization. There is no word at time of writing as to who will be replacing them. As the rest of the family headed back home, Lan and I embarked on a Holland America ship for one of those trips of a lifetime – two weeks down the west coast of Central America, through the Panama Canal, and across the widest portion of the Caribbean after a brief stop in Cartagena, Colombia, to end in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Three days after flying back to Vancouver, we were on a plane again – this time to the Dominican Republic to geo-reference our map of that country. It's been a busy month!

STUPID CROOK OF THE MONTH

I couldn't believe this story when I read it. A drug dealer in Jacksonville, Florida, spent part of December peddling his poison dressed as Santa Claus; that's right, Saint Nicolas, the patron saint of charitable giving. His 'sleigh' was a rented U-Haul van. Now, one of the essential ingredients for success as a drug dealer is to be unnoticeable. As reports started reaching the local police about Santa dispensing drugs from a clearly-marked moving van in a drug-infested part of town, it didn't need an Einstein to track down the culprit. All they had to do was look for a U-Haul truck and ask Santa to open it for them. Well Santa, aka Isaac Geiger, took off running, but tripped over his oversized Santa costume and was easily captured. Apart from a truck full of marijuana, ecstasy pills, and assorted hallucinogenic drugs, he was carrying a large plastic bag full of cash when police arrived, so he never got to spend his ill-gained loot. Does the expression "Fly under the radar" apply here?

THE CHANGING FACE OF HOPE

We enter 2017 at a point in time where hope seems to be a declining property. After valiantly holding out for years against Assad's thugs, the citizens of Aleppo, the Guernica of our age, left the destroyed city in UN-provided buses while the Russian gunners who had made their lives a living hell for many months looked on. Russia is now embroiled in a conflict it cannot win and apparently learned nothing from its futile involvement in Afghanistan. Propping up Assad doesn't solve anything; it just prolongs the agony of Syria. They can't leave, because without their active support, Assad will fall and undo their plan. They can't stay, because the war effort is bankrupting Russia. The war will continue simply because it is the interests of Saudi Arabia to oppose Iran's ambitions to dominate the so-called Middle East, as it is in the Saudis' interests to intervene in Yemen and increasingly in Libya. As long as this drive for dominance in that corner of the planet continues, and it will, the Russians are ensnared. If they leave, Assad falls; if they don't, they have a long-term low-level insurrection to wear them down. They have no way to get out of the mess they've created. The fighting and displacement of people continues. Hope is lacking.

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The Europeans are in a box as well. Britain's decision to leave the EU may or may not have been a wise move, but it was made. Brexit has changed the dynamics of all of Europe. Of course, there is much gnashing of teeth by those Brits who have enjoyed cheap labour from various depressed parts of Europe, and by those accustomed to buying a cheap bottle of French plonk at Tesco. Does Britain face a tough and united European Union in 2017 that will fight tooth and claw to damage Britain as much as possible in its negotiations to divorce itself from the EU? At a time when anti-EU sentiments are growing stronger in continental Europe and elections are scheduled for France, Germany, and Italy, the last thing that the EU presents is a strong and united front against Britain. The issue of hope in the European context is gravely muted as a result. Simply stated, without the second largest and most powerful member (the UK), the concept of a united Europe does not exist. No one country is strong enough to stand up to Germany. Not now, not in the future. Germany's unilateral decision to allow a million migrants access to all of Europe without even consulting one single member state of the EU is a slap in the face to each and every EU country. Where is the vision of hope to inspire us to greatness in Europe?

The USA may have just exhausted itself fighting the most bitter and vindictive political contest in modern times, but the early days of Trumpite America show many battles still to come. Where is the hope that inspires greatness? What a way to enter 2017!

COUNTRY/REGION IN THE NEWSLETTER FOR THIS MONTH:

In the past month, we have seen newsworthy tragic events occurring in Berlin and in Istanbul, but these are negative events. We want to inspire people to travel; that's what the map publishing industry is all about. The country that inspires me right now is Canada – not because I'm from here, but because 2017 marks the 150th anniversary of Canada's independence, and that's worth noting. The actual date for celebration won't happen until July 1st, so this will just be an introduction for most of you to a marvelous travel destination – a country full of history, drama, multiculturalism, and wide open spaces. Canada is a prime travel destination this year, so take note.

Just for fun, here's a little quiz that will be educational, especially for American readers:

1. In 1775, at the Congressional Congress in Philadelphia that opted for independence, how many American colonies attended? The average American would blurt out 13 without thinking, because that's what everyone is taught in school. Wrong! There were 17. What do you think Quebec was, or Newfoundland, or Nova Scotia? These were also 'American' colonies of Great Britain. They also attended the Congress. Quebec argued strongly against rebellion, but was shouted down by the hotheads from Virginia Colony.
2. Canada has existed since 1604, when French settlers first arrived – true or false? False! Newfoundland was Britain's first colony in the New World, settled three generations before anyone settled further south. The first settlement in the New World was actually La Isabella, in today's Dominican Republic, established in 1493 by Christopher Columbus on his second visit to what he thought was India. Canada, as a political entity, did not exist until the American Revolution, and then only because tens of thousands of displaced settlers were moved north to safety into what are now the Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. Canada, as a name, was applied to all parts of French-controlled North America as a geographical name only, not a political name. Quebec and Acadia were the political names until the 1780s.
3. Jamestowne, Virginia, is the first settlement of Europeans in the continental United States – true or false? False, as the Spanish had settled St. Augustine, Florida, earlier, but the actual first settlement is modern-day Presidio, Texas, created by the Spanish moving northwards into Texas. They founded a small fort to guard the ford crossing the Rio Grande several generations before the English settlements began in Virginia. The Jamestowne settlement was merely the first English colonization effort in modern-day USA.

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4. Canada, as a political entity, was created by the American Revolutionary War – true or false? True, simply because so many settlers fled the violence of the civil uprising and sought sanctuary in such areas as Nova Scotia and Quebec. My ancestors were burned out of their farm in New York Colony by so-called ‘patriots’ and fled northwards into the then-wilderness of what became Quebec’s Eastern Townships and the Eastern counties of a future Ontario. The men then formed up Butler’s Rangers and Roger’s Rangers and spent the next seven years saving as many people as possible from the horrors of the most vicious civil uprising the world had ever seen and escorting wagon trains northwards to safety. So many tens of thousands of displaced people arrived that new colonies, such as New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Upper and Lower Canada had to be created, largely out of the wilderness. It was, for its time, a remarkable exodus of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing violence and civil anarchy – much as we are seeing in Syria today.
5. The United States recognized Canada in 1867, when Canada became independent – true or false? False! The American government refused to acknowledge the reality of Canada until 1933, 66 years after Canada became independent. For many years, manifest destiny ruled American foreign policy and Americans refused to believe that anyone except themselves could govern North America. The stimulus for the desire to unify the various British colonies did indeed result from the witnessing of the American civil war 1860-65. The leaders of the varied colonies met in Charlottetown in 1864 and agreed to merge, believing that a united front would be protection against possible invasion by a victorious Northern army. Britain agreed to pass the BNA Act and four of the seven British-controlled American colonies gained their independence peacefully, on July 1st, 1867, through negotiations (the others followed in time). It took the Great Depression to bring the American government to the realization that hopes of taking over Canada were futile. More next month!

PRICING OF ITMB MAPS IN EUROPE

This is a reminder to European/Great Britain customers that minor changes in pricing are coming into play in 2017. Rather than cluttering up the newsletter with details, in essence the city and regional maps are being adjusted in price to create one price in Euros and a constant price appropriate for the UK – nothing earth-shaking.

WHAT’S NEW WITH ITMB

Apart from being busy with updates, we’re expecting several maps from the printer during January that unfortunately are taking longer to arrive than expected. Please be patient. Almost all of our 500+ titles are available! We are also expecting a new Africa travel atlas in a month or so. This will be our second trans-Africa atlas and, to the greatest extent possible, we’re trying to avoid overlap with the Cairo to Cape Town edition that is proving to be popular. This edition covers the Western Route, from Morocco south to Senegal, then east and further south into northern Nigeria, then eastwards through the Congo to Uganda and Kenya, then south through central Tanzania to Zambia, west to Victoria Falls and the Caprivi Strip, then south through Namibia and the Atlantic coast to Cape Town. This is the more traditional Europe to Cape Town route, and completes our long-distance travel guides for now.

We are also close to finishing a new map covering western Canada. I was just proofing the artwork today, so release is still a couple of months away. We are also working on new maps of Wales and Ireland.

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In non-mapping matters, our ITMB family is about to expand again. Son Graeme announced that baby number 2 is on the way, expected in June. Son Number 1, Nimoy, is somewhat over one year now, so will soon have a new playmate; perhaps after three grandsons, might we see a daughter? We'll have to wait and see! Lan and I also will be in Vietnam for the latter part of February. Lan's father is 96 and still active, but understandably, she wants to spend time with him now, as later might be too late. Her younger sister, having married a Canadian and completed immigration processing, will be returning to Canada with us, along with her daughter.

GOOD NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF TRAVEL

Visas are the bane of any traveller's existence. They're expensive; they're annoying, and they do little to encourage travel. In fact, they discourage travel. Some are iniquitous, such as Chile's ridiculous limitations on allowing Canadians. Canada imposed visa requirements on Mexicans coming to Canada to avoid what happened in the USA. This was during the Drug War and was only imposed because we were experiencing a significant increase in the number of 'visitors' who weren't returning home. Times change and Mexico, which has always been a highly-respected neighbour of Canada, is in a much better position than a few years ago. As a result, Canada has removed visa requirements for Mexican citizens entering Canada. I wish to point out that this is happening at the same time as incoming Trumpite Donnie is promising to restrict the ability of Mexicans to visit the USA. That's all right; bookings by Mexicans going to the USA are down 50% since the election anyway, as reported by Reportur, without any necessity by the US government doing anything. Insulting people doesn't work.

Canadians also are finding it easier to travel to China. Visa requirements have been removed for short-visit trips of three days' duration as an experiment, to great applause. China is now considering extending visa-free access to one week, which would really improve tourism to China. As visas for China cost \$100 and take several days to process, this move is very good news. We will be visiting China in March to take our first-ever tour. Canada is also easing travel restrictions for Chinese passport holders coming to Canada, at the same time that the incoming US government is threatening to restrict Chinese access to the USA. Again, this is a good and bad situation; good for Canada; bad for the USA.

More good news comes from Boeing Aircraft Company, which was recently slammed by the incoming President and suffered enormous stock market devaluations as a result (as has General Motors, Carrier Heating, and other firms that have been victimized by this irresponsible individual). However, Boeing has recently signed an agreement with Iran Air to refurbish that country's entire airline industry with billions of dollars' worth of American-built airplanes. There may be a certain amount of politics involved from Iran's side, but it's all good news for America. Similarly, the expanding airline industry in China is increasingly looking to Boeing for providing their next generation of airplanes. Several large orders have been recently signed. Is this a political move that can be used to negate orders if the US government decides to change existing trading relationships? We'll have to wait and see.

More good news has just come to my attention thanks to Tourism Vancouver. Visitors to Canada, year to date in 2016 terms, increased by 11% over the previous year, to 17,660,593 (overnight visits, not counting day trippers). The vast majority of these, over 12 million, were from the USA (a 9% increase), but the largest increase was 19.1% from Mexico. Overnight visits to British Columbia were 3,188,736 (a 10.8% increase) and same day visits from the USA increased by 7%. Overall, BC increased its tourism market by 12.2% in one year – not bad! I'm sure that similar increases in tourism growth could be shown for visits to other countries; unfortunately, I don't have those figures. At a time when tourism demand is changing rapidly, it is important to note growth areas. Fortunately, ITMB has Canadian travel destinations well-mapped, so increase your coverage for Canada!

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Finally, travel between China and Canada (specifically Vancouver) has recently increased as a result of new links being formed granting landing rights to two more Chinese airline companies. Beijing Capital Airlines will now enable travellers to fly directly to Hangzhou and Qingdao, and China Eastern to Nanjing. This brings six Chinese airlines flying directly into North America, via Vancouver. To put this into context, this is two more than for any airport in either Europe or North America. I find that hard to believe, but apparently it's true! As I repeat over and over, the world of travel is changing rapidly. Tourism demand is changing rapidly. The places people want to travel to (for whatever reason) is changing rapidly. Asia is the future of travel. We need to take into account such changes in our businesses.

YOU KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN

What better way to end off a newsletter than with this story out of Florida where some enterprising yahoo has established a dating service for Trumpite supporters to find love. Its name? What else than Make America Date Again! Only in America, my friends, only in the good 'ol USA could such a travesty happen.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND OUT OF STOCK ITEMS

Antarctica has now sold out of copies. We are working on a new edition, Lan having vetoed my suggestion of a motorways map. Unfortunately, the ETA of the new map is unknown at the moment.

Armenia/Azerbaijan is almost out of copies (17 copies). A new edition is at press; no ETA.

Edinburgh/Scotland is almost out of copies (2 copies). This title has been re-worked as Edinburgh & Scotland South is at press; no ETA.

Havana is out of print. This title has been re-worked as Havana and Central Cuba and is at press; no ETA.

Mexico Pacific Region/Guadalajara is almost out of copies (19 left). This title has been re-worked as Guadalajara & Mexico's Pacific Coast is being prepared, no ETA.

Mexico South is getting low on copies, so a new edition will be needed before summer.

Nova Scotia is out of print. A new edition is being prepared, no ETA.

QCI, or the Queen Charlotte Islands, is down to 40 copies. We are re-naming this map Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Is. to reflect the more current practice used in BC. The new edition will be available in the near future; no ETA.

Singapore City Map is running low on copies. A new edition will be prepared for release in the summer of 2017.

Sydney/East Australia is out of copies. This title has been re-worked as Sydney & Australia Southeast is being prepared; no ETA.

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