



ITMB PUBLISHING LTD.

- **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MAPS AND BOOKS**
- **ITM DISTRIBUTION**

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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #12 OF 2016 – Early December

INTRODUCTION

This is the last newsletter of the year, and is being prepared during November, as Lan and I will be in Nicaragua, Panama, and Colombia during the first half of December, and in the Dominican Republic over Christmas. As a result, as I write this, it seems a bit early to say Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a prosperous New Year, but the sentiments are sincerely expressed nonetheless. ITMB is now in its 37th year of business and we could not possibly have survived, let alone grow into a major publisher of travel maps, without the loyal support of distributors, retailers, libraries, and end users around the world. Over the decades, millions of maps have been placed in the hands of those visiting exotic destinations. We very much appreciate the opportunity we have had to enable us to create some marvelous maps. I still remember the phone call I made to Tommy Thompson, of the Map Centre in San Diego, where I introduced myself and started telling him about some of the titles we were importing for distribution. He placed an order without even asking the prices, which at that time even I didn't know. He remained a good customer until he retired many years later. ITMB's first distributor, once we started publishing, was GeoCenter, in Germany, who remain to this day one of our best distributors. The US Library of Congress was our first standing order customer and has by now received more than a thousand different titles and editions of ITMB maps. ITMB is, as a result, one of the very few depository publishers in the national library that is not an American firm. Well, we are, in that we're inside North America, but you know how those Americans are, appropriating the name of the whole continent for themselves without a by-your-leave. I can't remember our first sale, but our first bank deposit in 1980 included a VISA slip for \$5.00 and I doubt that the first deposit totaled more than \$50. Times have changed. We now offer over 530 maps, two dozen atlases, half a dozen inflatable globes, and a dozen desktop 12"/30cm globes. We enter 2017 confident as to the future of marketing maps to bookstores and end users. The methods being used today are more electronic than in the past, but we still find that end users prefer solid paper to electronic viewing when travelling.

CHINA AND ITS FUTURE

This is a travel newsletter, but economic events affect travel as much as political events. China is a very popular travel destination, and Chinese nationals are increasingly dominant in travel to other countries. Both these trends are bound to continue to impact upon travel in future years, but there is an elephant in the room and it is scaring bankers and money people all over the world. In a nutshell, the Chinese economy is contracting. The speed of the showdown and the reaction by frightened Chinese individuals is only partly seen, like many things in a controlled society like China. However, increasingly, facts and trends are piling up data that shows a troubling scenario. Capital outflows from China are increasing, despite desperate efforts by the government to reverse direction and curtail investment policies that have proved disastrous. This affects all of us, due to the size of the Chinese economy. According to the Daily Telegraph's business report, in September alone \$55 Billion fled China, bringing the total for 2016 (to date) to over \$500 Billion. The Bank of China spent \$50 Billion in September propping up the Yuan, but the currency continued to fall in value, thereby encouraging even more people to get their money out of China. The current prognosis is for a continuing devaluation totaling 20% by 2018, causing economic turmoil in the world economy as well as economic chaos within China. Should we care? The answer is yes. If the Yuan devalues by 20%, it makes Chinese exports 20% less expensive. Imagine a situation where Chinese steel is 20% less expensive than anyone else's. No one could compete; plants would close, and thousands would be out of work. Many cities are already seeing huge inflationary growth in housing costs, thanks to investment money fleeing China. 20% annual increases are common now in Toronto, for example, and it appears that prices in London and Paris have soared in recent months. Property in China shows year-on-year increases of 40% or more. Debt in China is now 255% of GDP. If China crashes, we all do – such is the power of globalization, so let's hope the elephant farts instead of explodes!

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REMEMBRANCE DAY AND THE ORIGINS OF WAR

November 11th is the special day we remember those who fought and died in various wars, but particularly in World War 1. 2016 is also the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, where Britain suffered 60,000 casualties in the first day of battle alone. Figures like this make every other military conflict pale in comparison. We should remember those who fought, whether they were killed in action, died of diseases, or suffered a lifetime of agony as a 'survivor' of horrendous trauma or debilitating gas. To do less demeans us as well as them and I'm not just talking about a war that was so horrible that we still call it the Great War. Since the end of WW2, there have been more than 100 regional wars and millions more casualties. Fortunately, to date, we have avoided a third world-wide war, but one has to question how long our luck will hold.

I recently read an article about the origins of the words we use to describe mortal military conflict. Battle comes from the Latin 'battualia', originally meaning a gladiatorial exercise. Belligerent and bellicose also derive from the Latin word 'bellum'; rebel, rebellion, and revolution all derive from the Latin word 'rebellis'. Surprisingly, none of the Romance languages base their words for war on Latin. My source advises that late 12th century Old English used the then Normanized French word 'guerre', which meant dispute. That word, in turn, derived from 8th Century Old High German word 'werran', meaning confusion or strife. It evolved into 'winnan' by the 12th century, still meaning struggle, strife, or exertion, and now meaning to win, or the winner, in modern-day English. Thus, over several centuries, what we call war is the idea of exertion, strife, struggle, acquisition, confusion, and discord – all concepts coursing through history like a tidal river. Sometimes, war is subdued and at other times it surges with enormous power to disrupt, such as in Syria today, but it is always present. That's what we really need to remember.

STUPID CROOK OF THE MONTH

This tale came to my attention thanks to a regular reader and occurred in Berlin during October. A fellow not-well-met plotted to blow up an ATM machine at a local bank. He planned everything: obtained dynamite somehow, placed the explosives late one night and detonated the explosive device. This created a huge sound, a lot of broken windows, a great number of alarm systems hooked up to the nearest police station to ring, and caused a lot of damage to the bank premises. Unfortunately, the crook wasn't too bright. He blew up a machine that only prints out bank statements. He was still trying to figure out why there wasn't any money when the police arrived. He should have plenty of time to think about a better plan over the next few years!

A CRIME WITH A TWIST

Here's another story of a crime gone wrong. A man in Melbourne, Australia, paid some thugs to kill his wife for a fee. They told him that they had done so, and collected a bonus of several thousand dollars. The problem was, the hit team didn't kill her; instead, they kidnapped her, questioned her, and convinced her that her husband wanted her dead. This happened during a visit the couple had made to Burundi, by the way. The 'thugs' turned her loose after a couple of days, provided her with a cell phone, recordings of phone conversations with her husband, and photocopies of receipts from her husband. These are really unusual 'bad guys'! This woman, amazingly, managed to get back to Australia, met with authorities, and agreed to confront her husband. The husband, meanwhile, was organizing a memorial service for his supposedly dead wife. At the service, she appeared, along with a BBC camera crew and the police, and her husband started screaming. Wearing a police 'wire', she got him to confess. He was arrested, convicted, and is now serving nine years in prison for incitement to murder. She is left raising their eight children alone. Is she brave? Is she an inspiration? This is what she said to a reporter who interviewed her after the trial: "I will stand up like a strong woman. My situation, my past life? That is gone. I'm starting a new life now." What an incredible story. I gained it from the Washington Post in September.

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KEEP YOUR BOARDING PASS SECURE!

That little slip of paper that gets you on to a plane and into a specified seat is much more than the simple piece of paper it appears to be. All such 'boarding cards' contain information of value to cyber-thieves. Most boarding cards include QR bar codes that include your name, your phone number, your flight information, and your frequent flyer data. Any crook with a smart phone can access all this information and use it to access your airline account, re-set your pin number, and gain control of frequent flyer points. It seems incredible to me, but some individuals apparently post pictures of their boarding passes on Facebook, allowing anyone to use a free on-line reader to decode all this security information. A friendly word to the wise: don't throw away any boarding cards – destroy them!

COUNTRY/REGION IN THE NEWSLETTER FOR THIS MONTH:

There is no question that the USA deserves full credit for being country of the month, but not because December is a particularly attractive month for a visit. The tumultuous and bitterly personal election campaign was watched by the entire world. It was the most fascinating soap opera in history and was great entertainment, if your taste runs to the tasteless and bizarre. Could anyone have written a movie screenplay this bizarre and would any filmmaker seriously consider making a fictional movie as extreme as the real-life campaign turned out to be? I doubt it. Regardless, the race is over and congratulations are in order for the incoming President and Congress next January. We'll all have to wait and see how the next few years unfold.

Off politics and on to travel. What's hot in the world of maps during 2016? Well, the answer is two-fold; first, Iceland, and then Cuba. Cuba has been in the news quite a bit, so let's focus on Iceland, whose economy is doing all right, thanks to an increasing influx of tourists. A German friend of ours was there this past summer and reported that, if he hadn't booked each night in advance, he probably would have been sleeping in the car most nights! It was very crowded. Outside of the capital Reykjavik, accommodations are not plentiful. We know that Iceland is 'hot' touristically, as our map of the country is doing very well. Excellent maps are available in Iceland, but they are very expensive, so get yours before you go! Cuba has enjoyed a mini-boom in travel during 2016 and there is little new that I can say about it. Our map of Cuba, always popular, has been supplemented by the first of three regional maps, covering the western portion of the island. Cuba East is well underway and should be here early in the New Year. Cuba Central will grace the second side of our forthcoming Havana map.

PRICING OF ITMB MAPS IN EUROPE

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Anyone who is still unaware of the effect that the Brexit vote has had on European currencies must live on another planet. Both the Euro and the Pound Sterling have fallen in value as a result. This is creating an anomaly for ITMB. The problem we face is what to do about it. We do not believe in knee-jerk reactions to currency alterations; otherwise our maps would be significantly more expensive in Canada than they are. The changed political reality created by Brexit appears to be a long-term change rather than the 'brief' interlude promised by the Leave Europe side. The EU, like Humpty Dumpty, has fallen off its wall and all the king's horses and all the king's men are not going to be able to patch it together again. A new concept of a true economic union without the political union aspects will probably emerge over time, but for the next several years, both Britain and continental Europe will be weakened. ITMB's pricing structure has always been based on the value of the Euro vis-à-vis the Pound and that formula no longer works. However, the status quo cannot remain either. We discussed this situation in Europe with our distributors at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October and we have decided to move cautiously towards what we feel will be reasonably acceptable to all concerned, given that no one welcomes higher prices. We have maintained a two-price structure in Europe for several years and have decided to move to a one-price system that will result in little overall change, but will raise the prices of those titles that are the least profitable for all concerned.

At the moment, country and regional maps published by ITMB are marketed at E9.50 in continental Europe and 8.95GBP in Great Britain (I use GB rather than the UK because there are parts of GB that are not part of the UK, such as the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man). A variety of ITMB titles are marketed at a lower price. This actually makes little sense because it is inconsistent. A map like Baja California is as expensive to make and maintain and is as valuable to an end user as a map of Panama, for example. The premise that a city map should be less expensive than a country map is also a tad irrational for ITMB, given that almost all ITMB urban maps are double-sided urban maps combined with a country/regional map on the second side (e.g. Quito and Central Ecuador or Berlin and Eastern Germany). Therefore, starting in January, 2017, we will maintain our current price structure for country maps at the current levels and increase the list prices of city, sectional, and recreational maps to the same level. Thus, all ITMB maps will be provided to European re-sellers at E9.50 or 8.95GBP, ex-VAT, with the discounts applicable at the moment. We will review this policy in one year's time, to see if it still makes sense.

This change is not written in stone. I will be happy to listen to anyone who feels that this policy change is inappropriate or unwarranted. I am not being, I think, unreasonable in deciding to simplify European marketing during a time of particular distress resulting from political changes whose long-term impacts are still working their way through reality. I see the new structure as being an interim one for another reason as well. The map industry seems locked into a mental state whereby maps MUST not rise above a certain price point or the skies will open and Thor will smite us with his mighty hammer. Retail prices of travel maps have not increased significantly for the past decade by any publishing house, but production costs have increased significantly and certainly taxation levels have. Many commercial map publishing houses have gone out of business or converted their marketing to other, more profitable, formats. I note Hema Maps as an example. We desperately need to move beyond the self-imposed limit of E9.90 (VAT included) or 5,95GBP and recognize that retailers and distributors alike have to make sufficient margins to make carrying a product line profitable for them. This process HAS started. The new Ordnance Survey eight-sheet road map series of Great Britain is offered at a reasonable price, but one attractively-priced for retailers (hopefully with a sufficient margin to be profitable) and equally hopefully, profitably enough for OrdSurv to realize an advantage. The bottom line is that we all need to make a surplus, in order to invest in new product and have a reasonable margin for profitability. It is time for the industry to move beyond a self-imposed artificial pricing limitation.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND OUT OF STOCK ITEMS

Antarctica has fewer than 20 copies left in stock. We are working on a new edition, Lan having vetoed my suggestion of a motorways map. Unfortunately, the ETA is unknown at the moment.

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Armenia/Azerbaijan is almost out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Bhutan/Northern India is out of copies. A new edition is at press and due early in January.

Edinburgh/Scotland is out of print. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Havana is almost out of print. This title has been re-worked as Havana and Central Cuba, no ETA.

Madagascar is now out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Mexico Pacific Region/Guadalajara is running low one copies. A new edition is being prepared, no ETA.

Newfoundland/Labrador is now out of copies. A new edition is at press; no ETA.

Nova Scotia is almost out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

QCI, or the Queen Charlotte Islands, is down to 72 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 New Year.

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

Sydney/East Australia is almost out of copies (17 left). A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Tanzania is getting low on copies. A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Vancouver Island is getting close to running out of copies; a new edition is being prepared.

NEW TITLES THAT ARRIVED DURING NOVEMBER, 2016

**Banff & Jasper National Parks Travel Reference Map 3rd Ed. 2016 1:240,000/1:250,000 ISBN 9781771290852
UPC 817712908520 \$12.95cdn/us E9.59 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE**

**Bolivia Travel Reference Map 5th Ed. 2016 on waterproof paper 1:1,250,000 ISBN 9781771290050 UPC
817712900500 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP - AVAILABLE**

**New Guinea Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2016 1:2M/1:1.6M ISBN 9781553413424 UPC 815534134233
\$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE**

**USA Southwest Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2016 on waterproof paper 1:1,000,000 ISBN 9781553414841
UPC 815534148452 \$9.95cdn/us E8.50 7.95GBP – AVAILABLE**

**Pyrenees and Andorra Travel Reference Map 1st/2nd Ed. 2017 1:450,000/1:40,000 ISBN 9781771290104 UPC
817712901040 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE**

**Slovakia and Hungary Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2017 on waterproof paper ISBN 9781771296984 UPC
817712969842 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE**

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