

Today, CBC Radio One interviewed Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (the Americas) on the subject of Honduras. Kent is in Tegucigalpa. In the interview, he spelled out the ominous and dictatorial conditions that Canada, its imperialist ally to the south, and their supporting governments in Latin America are setting for the return to the presidency of Honduras of Manuel Zelaya.

There are many parallels in the current situation with the two coups d'etat that took place in Haiti, in 1991 and 2004. The conditions being set for a return to power by Zelaya are very similar to those dictated to Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1994.

Aristide was sharply criticized in 1994 for accepting the conditions that accompanied his return to power. His critics included the Communist Party of the day as well as contemporary and future employees of ngo's and fake-left groupings who aligned themselves with Haiti's venal elite in support of the 2004 coup. All this to say that the situation today in Honduras is very complicated and fraught with danger.

Below is a link to the CBC interview, contained in a letter to the broadcaster by this writer.

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Vancouver BC
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Hello CBC The Current,

I listened with interest today to your interview with Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (the Americas) on the subject of Honduras.
<http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/2009/200910/20091008.html>.

Your host repeated a phrase uttered two days ago during her interview with Jorge Heine of the Center for International Governance Innovation of Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, that the June 29 military coup d'etat in Honduras was "the first military coup in Latin America in 20 years." The phrase is erroneous on at least two counts. There was a military coup d'etat in Venezuela on April 11, 2002 that ousted the elected President Hugo Chavez. Fortunately, that coup lasted only two days. A popular uprising in support of Chavez combined with support for him among the ranks of the Venezuela army quickly sent the coup-makers packing.

There have been two coups d'etat within the past 20 years in Haiti, both directed at the elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. One took place in 1991, the other in 2004. Both resulted in thousands

of deaths, jailings and exiles of supporters of the elected president at the hands of the coup-makers. To this day, President Aristide lives in exile as a result of the 2004 coup.

Further on Haiti, perhaps your host's use of the phrase in question results from a belief that Haiti does not form part of "Latin America," either because it is not Spanish speaking or because the "Caribbean" region of which Haiti forms part cannot be considered a part of "Latin America." This is wrong on three counts.

One, progressive opinion in South America and the Caribbean understands the phrase "Latin America" as encompassing all the territory lying south of the Rio Grande River. So, too, does institutional opinion--the Organization of American States (OAS) makes no distinction in its membership eligibility between countries of the Caribbean and those of continental South America.

Two, there are very close historical, ethnic and economic ties between the countries of the Caribbean and South America. Continental countries with a Caribbean shoreline, such as Mexico, Honduras and Venezuela, to name only a few, are as much Caribbean as they are South American in their historical and present ties. Any attempt to create artificial divisions between the continental and island countries of this region ignore its history and are therefore arbitrary.

Thirdly, the designation "Latin America" as synonymous with "Spanish speaking" defies the geography of the region. Guyana and Belize are continental countries that speak English; Cuba and Dominican Republic are island countries that speak Spanish. Island countries of the Caribbean speak many languages, including English, Spanish, French, Haitian Kreyol, French Kreyol, and Dutch. They form a part of the whole to which history, admittedly haphazardly, has bequeathed the designation "Latin America."

One detects an element of historical whitewashing behind the effort to write Haiti out of the region in which it and its future lies. Is the claim of "no coups in the past 20 years in Latin America" an effort to ignore the disastrous consequences of the two military coups in Haiti during these same years, including the coup of 2004 in which the Canadian military played a direct and shameful role? Many ngo's and think tanks in Canada and abroad have material and ideological interests in promoting such whitewashing. I hope that in future The Current will not allow this to pass. One way to set to the record straight would be to revisit the events of 1991 and 2004 in Haiti. The parallels with Honduras, including the present efforts of Canada and other OAS powers to set conditions for the return of the elected President Zelaya, are disturbing and invite further investigation.

Sincerely,
Roger Annis