

Canadian Prime Minister Getting Bad Advice on China, Former MP Says

By [Matthew Little](#) On April 21, 2012 @ 12:21 pm In [National](#) | [1 Comment](#)



Canada's Prime Minister Stephen Harper (L) and his wife Laureen wave as they disembark from their aircraft after arriving at Beijing international airport on February 7, 2012. While in China, Harper met with Chongqing City's Party Secretary Bo Xilai, a notorious rights abuser now ousted from his position and under investigation. Harper's meeting with Chinese propaganda chief Li Changchun has raised questions over how much the PM knows about the people he is meeting with. (Ed Jones/AFP/Getty Images)

The prime minister is getting some bad advice.

Those were former member of Parliament David Kilgour's first words when he heard Stephen Harper had met with another senior Chinese cadre who is among the most notorious rights abusers in China today.

"I am very sad to hear that. It simply has got to stop or Canada is going to be a laughing stock among the people that believe in human dignity and rule of law," said Kilgour, a former Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific).

Harper met with Li Changchun, head of the Chinese regime's propaganda and

ensorship system, on Thursday, but the meeting was not announced in advance. Details of the meeting emerged from Chinese press likely in Li's entourage, and a photo of Harper and Li was distributed by the Prime Minister's Office.

Kilgour said the fact that Li was making the rounds in Ottawa while trying to keep his presence unknown to the western press should have tipped Harper's staff off that Li had something to hide.

Meetings With Top-Level Targets for Ousting

Li comes to Canada amid factional infighting in the highest ranks of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) which is claiming some of Li's most powerful allies.

Li has long been counted among the core members of the faction loyal to former chairman Jiang Zemin, as opposed to the faction headed by current leader Hu Jintao and his premier Wen Jianbao.

Several top members of Jiang's faction are now targets for ousting. It's a messy process that has caught the attention of the international press as former Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai, another Jiang ally, comes under investigation.

[Harper met with Bo on Feb 11](#), just weeks before Bo was purged from his position, a move The Epoch Times predicted before Harper's meeting. Once considered a rising star, Bo is now under investigation for "serious discipline violations."

"[Harper] should never have gone to see Bo in Chongqing, that was colossally bad advice. It was abundantly clear to everybody that follows China closely that Bo was on his way out," said Kilgour.

Kilgour also noted Bo's leading role in the organ harvesting crimes against [Falun Gong](#) practitioners, arguing he is not someone Canada should have been looking to build ties with.

"Our PM is supposed to get better advice than that. He's got a lot of stuff to keep track of and he's not supposed to be an expert on all these nuances that are happening in China at breakneck speed."

Abrupt Terminations

Kilgour said the prime minister needs capable China advisers able to understand the situation unfolding in that country now. Otherwise, Canada will look absurd as events play out and its closest China connections continue to be cadres with careers marked by brutality and abrupt termination.

Those terminations are climbing ranks, and Epoch Times analysts are expecting Bo's former protector and one of the regime's most powerful figures, Zhou Yongkang, will be next to fall. Zhou heads China's all-powerful internal security apparatus, which controls a massive surveillance network as well as China's police and courts.



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For several weeks, The Epoch Times has been pointing to evidence that Zhou is on the ropes, and recently many large media organizations have also reported that the sharks appear to be circling the communist security chief.

It's all bad news for Li, a close ally of both Bo and Zhou. Li may have left China for a trip to four nations to escape the fallout of those struggles, said Sheng Xue, a prominent Chinese democracy activist in Toronto.

"He wants to keep his power after the struggle, so he chose to leave," said Xue, adding that Li may actually have connections on both sides of the struggle and so left the country to avoid having to position himself.

Li has already been forced to oust his past ally Bo after his fellow eight members on the regime's ruling Standing Committee supported purging Bo.

While Li may now wish to avoid stating allegiances, he has traditionally been associated with Jiang's clique. According to one news report from Hong Kong's Apple Daily, Li has already come under censure amid the fallout surrounding Bo.

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Propaganda Czar Zealous in Persecutions

A spokesperson from the Prime Minister's Office said Thursday's sit-down with Li was a courtesy meeting, a casual chit chat with Li to exchange niceties with no formal business agenda.

Li is due to be retired from the Politburo's Standing Committee, the nine-member organ that rules China, due to an age limit put in place by Jiang. Though Li has no official government role, his position within the Party—and the Party's control of the government—make him one of the most powerful people in China.

In his role as head of the Orwellian-titled Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilization and Central Leading Group for Propaganda and Ideological Work, Li controls what 1.3 billion Chinese people see, hear, and speak.



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Like Bo and Zhou, who Jiang raised from lesser positions, Li climbed through the ranks by making zealous efforts in Jiang's campaign to crush Falun Gong. Before being banned 1999, the spiritual group had attracted 100 million adherents pursuing spiritual enlightenment via its tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

Li made a name for himself by being particularly brutal in his efforts to eradicate the Falun Gong spiritual group from Guangdong province during his tenure there as the Party chief from 1998 to 2002.

In 2002 Li was promoted to his current role.

As the regime's propaganda czar, it has fallen to Li to maintain the demonization of Falun Gong necessary to justify the crackdown. Meanwhile, he must also ensure all media in China follow the Party line, regulate censorship, and carry out propaganda campaigns as needed.

In March 2008, it fell on Li to formulate propaganda to justify a violent crackdown on protests in Tibet on the eve of the 2008 Olympics.

Fear of Protests, Lawsuits Abroad

Li's propaganda responsibilities include enhancing China's soft power abroad.

During his trip, Li opened another Confucius Institute in Canada. The schools have come under criticism from experts in the intelligence community for possible espionage work while others criticize the institutes for giving students a distinctly communist perspective on contemporary issues.

The institutes are a central plank in the regime's efforts to extend its soft power.

But even that ribbon cutting ceremony was held in stealth, without any effort to attract the usual fanfare elicited for such events.

Lucy Zhou with the [Falun Dafa](#) Association of Canada said she suspects Li is afraid of attracting critics if his agenda is known in advance.

"I can certainly understand when officials heavily involved in persecution come overseas, they want to keep their itinerary secretive because they are afraid of protests and lawsuits," said Zhou.

Efforts to sue Li for persecuting Falun Gong adherents were made when Li went to Ireland in 2010 and France in 2004.

Such lawsuits against Bo Xilai caused his downfall in 2007, according to U.S. diplomatic cables published by Wikileaks.

Premier Wen Jiabao argued at the 17th National Congress that Bo, then the minister of commerce, should not be promoted to the Standing Committee because of the bevy of lawsuits against him. Bo was instead demoted to Party chief of Chongqing.

Now that Li has dodged the prospect of additional lawsuits

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against himself, he is off to meet other world leaders in Indonesia and Colombia.

- [Canadian PM to Meet With Chinese Regime Hardliner, Subject of Wikileaks Cable](#)

Li's meeting with Harper comes after a similar meeting with British PM David Cameron.

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