

Philippine President Aquino compares China to Nazi Germany

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On February 4, Philippine President Benigno Aquino, speaking in an exclusive interview in Malacañang presidential palace with the *New York Times* Hong Kong bureau chief, Keith Bradsher, compared China and its role in Southeast Asia to that of Nazi Germany in the lead-up to the Second World War.

Aquino likened the disputed portions of the South China Sea to the Sudetenland, annexed by Hitler prior to the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. He stated that “the Philippines faces demands to surrender territory piecemeal to a much stronger foreign power and needs more robust foreign support for the rule of international law if it is to resist.”

The Philippine president amplified his call for international backing by drawing a comparison to the West’s failure to intervene to support Czechoslovakia against Germany’s demands for the Sudetenland in 1938. “At what point do you say, ‘Enough is enough?’ Well, the world has to say it. Remember that the Sudetenland was given in an attempt to appease Hitler to prevent World War II,” Aquino declared.

Aquino’s interview came less than two weeks after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, drew a similar parallel between the conflicts between Japan and China today and those between Britain and Germany at the beginning of World War I.

Tensions in the Asia Pacific region have reached a point where the leaders of Japan and the Philippines have each announced that the situation bears a close resemblance to the onset of the two most devastating military conflicts in human history. The responsibility for ratcheting up tensions to this fever pitch rests squarely with Washington, and specifically with the imperialist drive of the Obama administration to diplomatically isolate and militarily encircle China.

Aquino has over the past three-and-a-half years come to function as a point-man for US imperialism in Southeast Asia. Through a series of aggressive maneuvers in the South China Sea and provocative statements at regional summits, Aquino has led Manila to serve as a spearhead of the Obama “pivot to Asia.”

The comparison to Nazi Germany made in the *New York Times* interview is absurd on its face. China is not an imperialist power. It has not threatened the invasion of any country in the region. The militaristic aggression that has brought the Asia Pacific region to the brink of possible war has been instigated and carried out by Washington.

The interview, published very prominently by the newspaper of record in the United States, represents the thrust of US foreign policy in the region, a policy for which Aquino has come to serve as a reliable mouthpiece.

There has been no response from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, but the official news daily Xinhua stated: “Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III, who has taken an inflammatory approach while dealing with maritime disputes with China, has never been a great candidate for a wise statesman in the region ... But his latest reported attack against China, in which he senselessly compared his northern neighbor to Nazi Germany, exposed his true colors as an amateurish politician who was ignorant both of history and reality.”

Aquino’s spokesperson Herminio Coloma in a press conference the following day defended the comparison to Hitler, saying that Aquino’s analogy was “a principled position that draws from historical lessons.”

The interview with Aquino was published several days after Washington concluded the fifth round of negotiations in Manila for the basing of US forces in

the country. Under the rubric of an “increased rotational presence,” Washington is negotiating the construction and use of naval bases in the country, most notably on the island of Palawan and at the former Subic Naval Base, both just off the disputed waters of the South China Sea. Talks over basing had reached an impasse by October of last year. Washington used its military and financial aid in the wake of the destruction wreaked by Typhoon Haiyan as a bargaining chip to secure the resumption of negotiations.

Speaking with the *Times*, Aquino said “he thought the Philippines and the United States were close to a long-delayed deal that would allow more American troops to rotate through the Philippines.” The sixth round of basing negotiations is scheduled for March, and arrangements have been made for President Obama to visit the country in April.

As part of the “pivot,” the US military has dramatically expanded the number of “routine port calls” its ships make to the Philippines, engaging in regular and provocative war games in the South China Sea. The guided missile destroyer USS Pinckney is arriving in Manila today.

Washington has provocatively escalated tensions in the region, looking to secure arrangements for the significant and long-range deployment of its military forces in the country. It is at the same time, under the auspices of the negotiations of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, working to extract dramatic economic concessions in favor of US business interests.

Speaking to a joint meeting of the Makati Business Club and the Management Association of the Philippines—the leading representatives of the Philippine financial elite—the new US ambassador, Philip Goldberg, announced that the Philippines would need to join the TPP to have a “a competitive edge in attracting foreign investments” and this would entail “painful choices” and “difficult decisions.”

This is slightly coded language for the ending of legal limitations on the foreign ownership of core industries. Goldberg acknowledged that this may require amending the Philippine Constitution, but stated that the Philippines could enter the next round of negotiations prior to such amendments having been made.

Washington is blatantly seeking to strengthen its

economic and strategic dominance in the Asia-Pacific. Far from playing a defensive role against the so-called expansive demands of Beijing, the United States has consistently been the aggressor. The provocative statements made by President Aquino directly serve the interests of US propaganda in its headlong drive toward war with China.



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