

# CORDILLERA PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE

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## CPA STATEMENT ON THE COLLAPSE OF THE CORDILLERA PEACE TALKS

The Cordillera People's Alliance views the collapse of the Cordillera Peace Talks as a logical consequence of the questionable intentions of and manner by which the major participants conducted this grand palabas.

Today, March 13, 1987, the Cordillera Broad Coalition announced in a press conference that it was separating itself from the Cordillera People's Liberation Army because it does not agree with the demands being imposed by the CPIA regarding autonomy in the region. In effect, this means that the present Cordillera panel to the peace talks has self-destruct.

This was to be expected in the cards from the start. In negotiating with the CPIA, the Cory Aquino government provided a mantle of legitimacy and power to a fledgling group in the Cordillera. Without this official government recognition, the CPIA should already have disintegrated by now.

Today, the CPIA is becoming increasingly discredited because of its indiscriminate recruitment of criminal elements and its increasing collaboration with the AFP, who to the Cordillera people have not yet paid for their crimes of military abuse and human rights violations. Many people are becoming disillusioned with the CPIA, discovering that the deluded Balweg is an idol with clay feet and wild assertions.

The Cory Aquino government, in consciously making a grand palabas of the Cordillera peace talks with full media hype was actually divisiveness and disunity among the Cordillera people. Again, just like all former regimes, the attempt to divide-and-rule.

So what was really the government's real motives in the Cordillera peace talks?

Today, the CPIA is already announcing that it is willing to fall under the direct command of the AFP if its demand to become the new CHDF in the Cordillera is granted.

The collaboration between the CPIA and the AFP and the Aquino government is part of the government's insidious counter-insurgency drive. It also reflects the Aquino government's implementation of the US strategy of Low Intensity Conflict, where Filipinos are pitted against Filipinos in violent internal strife, in order to derail the growing nationalist and democratic mass movement and ensure continued US domination and interference in Philippine internal affairs.

Indigenous people's movements are primary targets of US intervention (e.g. US support of contras from among the Miskito Indians against the popular Sandinista government in Nicaragua), and it is of grave concern to us that the Aquino government is grooming the CPIA as a counter-insurgency force in the

Cordillera, with the blessings of the US.

These are crucial times, and it is urgent to forge a stronger unity among the Cordillera people to persevere in the struggle for genuine regional autonomy. It is therefore important to draw out the lessons from the collapse of the Cordillera peace talks as basis for any future alliance for the realization of genuine regional autonomy in the Cordillera.

First, there should be democratic representation of all concerned groups in the Cordillera. A clear distinction should be made of the separate identities of armed groups, government, and civilian organizations.

In forging any alliance, all groups should, at the very beginning, define clearly their point of unity on the basis of a common political program, and not necessarily on the basis of ideology which is the more difficult to unite on. Without clear political unities, any alliance will end in collapse.

Ground rules in the interaction of the various groups within such alliance should then be collectively agreed upon and strictly implemented.

The starting point should be mutual recognition and mutual respect which are earned by being honest about our intentions and motives, and an uncompromising perseverance to forging principled unity among various groups.

Furthermore, we should do away with undue haste in the formulation of important decisions, and instead, allow full democratic participation in the definition of the structures and processes of the Cordillera Autonomous Region.

These are valuable lessons drawn from concrete experiences which should serve as important guidelines for continued action.

The Cordillera People's Alliance lobbied the Constitutional Commission for Cordillera autonomy, and we won the Constitutional provisions. We should, however, look beyond the Constitution and continue direct people's actions and build organized people's power for the establishment of genuine regional autonomy where political and economic power is transferred from the traditional elite into the hands of the peoples of the Cordillera.

Genuine regional autonomy in the Cordillera cannot be established without structural changes in Philippine society. There should be freedom from foreign domination and popular democracy where power belongs to the people. Sadly, this is not a reality under the Aquino government.

We therefore call on all groups in the Cordillera to a principled unity in the common quest for genuine regional autonomy through people's empowerment, within the framework of the continuing struggle for national sovereignty, people's democracy, and social justice which can be the only lasting framework for peace in the Cordillera.