

Besides Hillary, Everest also inspired Che Guevara

As tributes continued to pour in for the late Sir Edmund Hillary, Nepal remembered how the world's most majestic peak had inspired others besides the legendary mountaineer who was the first to conquer Mt Everest. Like iconic revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara.

A Nepali revolutionary, who had waged an armed struggle against the kingdom's all-powerful royal dynasty decades before the Maoist guerrillas did, reminisced how the other legend, the Argentina-born Che had also drawn heart from the Everest saga.

'Mt Everest continues to inspire those who want to bring an upheaval in society,' Nepal's official daily, the Rising Nepal, said Friday, carrying an interview with Nepali leader Ram Raja Prasad Singh, whose underground outfit had tried to bomb Nepal's parliament and the palace in its bid for a republic more than three decades ago.

'(It) offered stimulus to his long revolutionary journey.'

Singh told the daily about his meeting with the Marxist revolutionary icon in Myanmar when Che was seeking to nurture revolts worldwide.

In the 60s, when Che was organising a guerrilla movement in Bolivia, his followers were repeatedly frustrated by the local peasants' reluctance to join them and the government crackdown that caused their strength to decline rapidly.

'Che used to recount the story of humans' struggle to beat Mt Everest to encourage them,' Singh said.

'He compared his battle with the struggle to conquer Mt Everest.

'Did people abandon the idea of scaling Mt Everest though it was so perilous?' Che would tell his men.

'Guerrilla warfare is also like that. One day, we will win, like the climbers who succeeded with Mt Everest.'

Though Che never came to Nepal, he sent a lieutenant, a Bolivian woman only known as Clara, to New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University to train a band of revolutionaries from different countries, Singh said.

There were 11 young people, including Singh.

However, instead of going to Bolivia to foment a revolution there, Singh decided to return home and start a movement in Nepal.

'All except I joined Che in Bolivia and lost their lives,' said Singh, who plans to contest the April election. 'I am now the only surviving member of the team.'

Singh said Che, who was captured and killed by Bolivian Special Forces trained by the CIA in

Bolivia on Oct 9, 1967, would have been delighted had he seen how successfully Nepal's Maoist guerrillas had followed his path in the land of Mt Everest.

In October, the Maoists, who signed a peace pact with the government ending their decade-old armed struggle, loyally remembered the 40th death anniversary of the bearded revolutionary with flashing eyes, paying tributes to him as a man who had not been diminished by time and death.

Sudeshna Sarkar (© IANS / India eNews)