

# THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

JUNE 24, 1988

## Zapata painted on Pathfinder mural

BY FRED FELDMAN

NEW YORK — Marcos Byrd had just come down from the scaffolding, where he had been painting the figure of Mexican revolutionary peasant leader Emiliano Zapata into the six-story mural on the Pathfinder Building here.

During a coffee break, the artist explained that he had heard about the mural while working on the West Coast. He decided to help out after he attended a gathering held for Arnolfo Guillén in San Francisco last fall.

Guillén is the Nicaraguan artist who painted into the mural the portrait of Augusto César Sandino, leader of the struggle in Nicaragua against U.S. occupation in the 1920s and 1930s. He also contributed to painting the portrait of Carlos Fonseca, founder of the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

Byrd, who works as an artist in the United States and Mexico, said he paints "psychologically charged, emotional figuratives." This description fit the intense expression, three-dimensional qualities, and striking colors of his Zapata.

As part of an international work brigade, Byrd visited Nicaragua last year to work on the coffee harvest. The sketches he made there were later displayed at La Mama La Galeria in New York.

Byrd decided to paint Zapata when project director and mural designer, Mike

Alewitz, told him that Zapata was one of the revolutionary leaders who would be portrayed in the mural.

Zapata is one of the most prominent figures in the crowd scenes that surround the sketch of a giant printing press, which is to be the centerpiece of the completed mural.

Born in 1879, Zapata was one of the central leaders of the democratic revolution in Mexico. The revolution opened in 1910, resulting in the overthrow of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz the next year.

In the civil war that followed, Zapata led an army based on the poorest and most oppressed people of the countryside under the banner of "land and liberty." They fought for an independent, democratic government and for dividing up the big estates to provide land for the peasants.

Zapata was assassinated by government soldiers on April 10, 1919. Although the workers and peasants were driven back for a time, the struggle they waged transformed Mexico — dealing huge blows to landlordism and imperialist domination.

The Pathfinder mural, according to Alewicz, is aimed at portraying the role of the revolutionary press in arming workers and farmers today with the ideas and experiences of the revolutionary working-class movement. In addition to Fonseca, Sandino, and Zapata, there will be other portraits including Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Maurice Bishop, Malcolm X, and V.I. Lenin and other founding

leaders of the Communist International.

The Pathfinder Mural Project has announced a campaign to raise \$30,000 to complete the project. The expenses range from travel expenses for participating artists to the legal costs required to fight the city government's attempt to impose \$3,500 in fines for alleged illegal posting of leaflets.

Recent contributions included \$200 sent by the Prospect Mural Group of Australia.

To make a contribution or obtain further information, please fill out the coupon below.