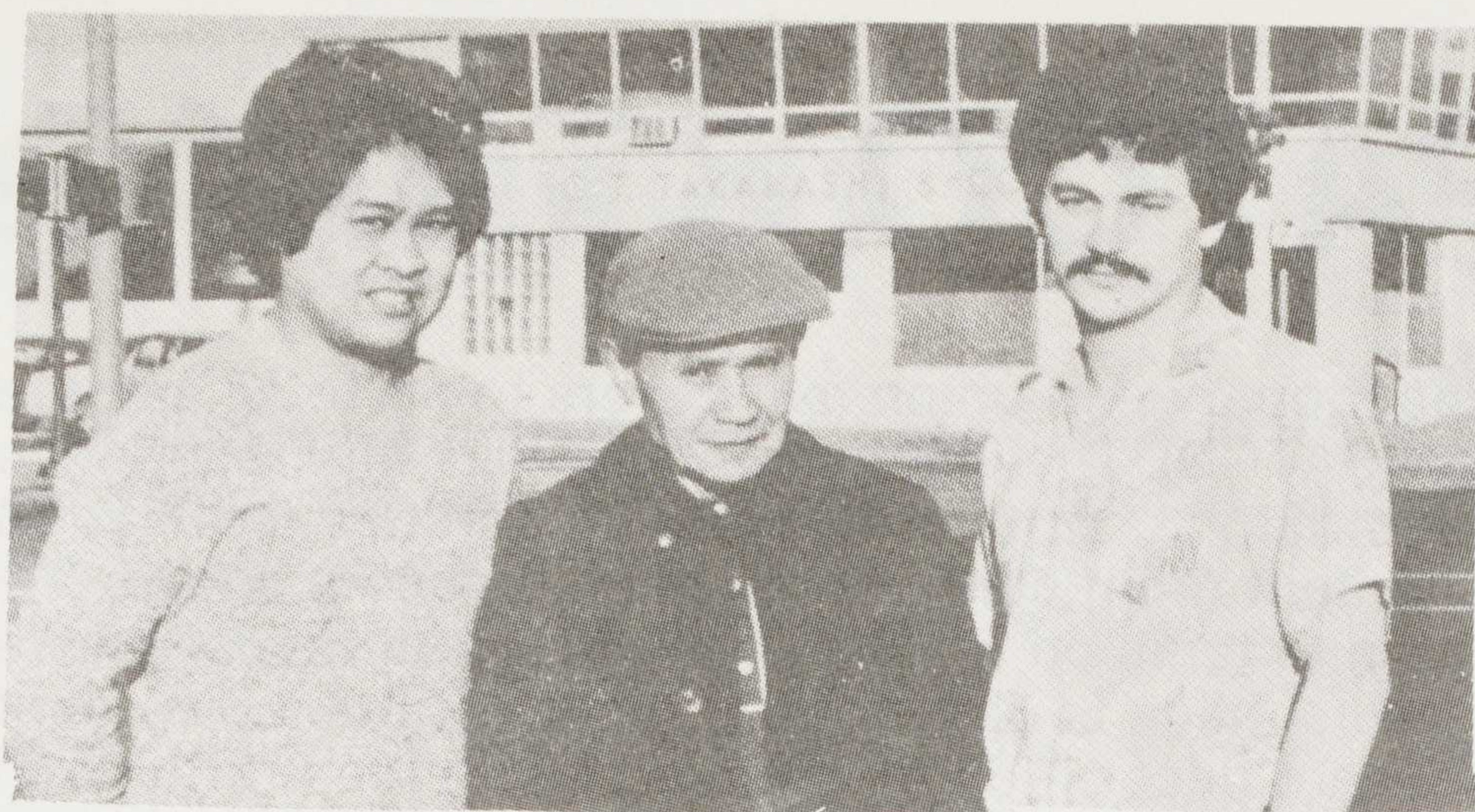




Domingo and Viernes with fellow worker



Memorial march in honor of slain brothers Domingo and Viernes

RANK AND FILE UNION LEADERS ASSASSINATED IN SEATTLE

On June 1, 1981, Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes were assassinated in the International Longshoremen and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) Local 37 Dispatch Hall in Seattle, Washington. Domingo, Local 37 Secretary-Treasurer, and Viernes, Local 37 Dispatcher, were leaders of a rank and file movement to reform the union. They were gunned down by thugs connected with the sold-out leadership.

ILWU Local 37 is composed of workers in Seattle who work in the Alaskan fish canneries in the summer. Both Domingo and Viernes had been Local 37 members for many years, and in 1972 they helped build the Alaska Cannery Workers' Association to fight discrimination against Filipino and Eskimo workers in the canneries. In 1977 they, along with other workers, formed the Rank and File Committee in Local 37 to rid the union of its "old guard" leadership. In addition to collaborating with the companies the old bureaucrats ran a completely corrupt dispatch system based on bribery and favoritism, and participated in gambling operations in Alaska and Seattle. In 1980, Domingo and Viernes, along with 11 other Rank and File Committee activists, were elected to office. In one year they had cleaned up the corrupt dispatch system, ridding it of bribery and favoritism, basing it on seniority. They had begun to train the shop stewards and the membership to defend the union and fight the companies. And they had begun an organizing campaign to bring more cannery workers into the union.

Both Viernes and Domingo were also members of the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP) which opposes the Marcos dictatorship and U.S. imperialist domination of the Philippines. At the recent ILWU convention in Hawaii, Domingo and Viernes introduced resolutions to support the struggle of workers in the Philippines against the brutal repression and martial law imposed by the Marcos dictatorship.

On September 24, 1981, two members of the gang that ran the gambling operations in Seattle and Alaska were convicted of killing Domingo and Viernes. However, the assassinations were not simply the work of these two thugs, or their criminal gang. The gun that was used belonged to Local 37 President Tony Baruso who, at the murder trial, took the Fifth Amendment whenever he was asked about his connection to the murders. Baruso is a thoroughly sold-out and corrupt official who defended the system of super-exploitation in the canneries and racketeering in the union. Baruso also has ties to the rich Filipino businessmen in Seattle who are staunch defenders of the Marcos dictatorship and who have been involved in beating and threatening activists in the democratic anti-Marcos movement.

Viernes and Domingo dedicated their lives to fighting for the democratic rights of ILWU members and all workers. The rank and file rallied behind these two brothers and elected them to positions of leadership in the ILWU. But wealthy cannery owners, the sold-out ILWU leadership, the gambling ring, the U.S. government, the Marcos dictatorship and its agents in the U.S., all saw Viernes and Domingo and the movement they were building as a threat to their system of exploitation and oppression. This is why Viernes and Domingo were murdered.

The two men who pulled the trigger have been imprisoned. But so far the rest of the conspirators, from Baruso on up, have not even been charged by the courts. Members of Local 37 and concerned unionists and citizens in Seattle have formed the Committee for Justice for Domingo and Viernes to uncover the entire conspiracy and to convict all of the conspirators.

The murders of Domingo and Viernes did not stop the movement of the rank and file in Local 37. Brother David Della, speaking on behalf of the Rank and File Committee at the memorials for brother Domingo and Viernes, declared:

*Let the opponents of progress and reform in this union, no matter who they might be, take note that **we will not be intimidated** by such a vicious crime. We will heighten our determination and re-double our efforts to strengthen this union by carrying through the reform work that Silme and Gene started.*

For more information on this struggle, or to support the struggle with a contribution, write:

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Seattle, WA 98104
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