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Victor Serge
An Honest Gentleman
June 15, 1911

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This article on “illegals,” anarchists who participated in holdups and counterfeiting for political reasons, was written under Serge’s early pseudonym of Le Rétif. “La Guerre Sociale” was an anarchist newspaper, and Almereyda an important figure in French anarchist circles who died in prison under suspicious circumstances. His son was the great French film director Jean Vigo.

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Tuesday May 30. The police arrested three illegals, notorious anarchists. Of these three comrades one was and was still at the time of his arrest a friend of “La Guerre Sociale,” well known in its offices.

The proof? This comrade – André W. – during the recent railroad workers strike left his job so as to dedicate his time to “La Guerre Sociale.” We have no choice but to believe that he was somewhat known there...

In truth, he was even very well known there, since I’ve seen a photo where he can be seen next to Almereyda and de Tissier. Nevertheless, from the day of his arrest M. Merle, interviewed by “La Presse” and “Excelsior,” declared that they didn’t know him. I’m willing to admit that despite the unlikelihood of this fact he could make such a declaration as an individual. Sure. But the reporters didn’t question M. Merle because he is M. Merle – even though this would be interesting – but because he is the administrator of a newspaper “that has no master.”

So A.W. was employed at “La Guerre Sociale” and M. Merle doesn’t know him. He’s a good friend of Almereyda and de Tissier – and M. Merle who is their close friend doesn’t know him. M. Merle is interrogated in his position of administrator

of “G.S” and he doesn’t take the trouble to ask among his colleagues: “Don’t know him.”

Duly noted.

This is just one more bit of filthiness on the part of these gentlemen. Do you remember the “idiotic” gesture of the London Anarchists¹? You have perhaps forgotten it? In order to remind you, here’s a lovely gesture on the part of M. Merle.

We’re not surprised. These are honest men who don’t want to be confused with crooks. Mister Administrator of the great insurrectionary newspaper – 30,000 readers – fails to recognize an illegal as soon as he’s pinched.

It’s good to know this. It allows us to appreciate the moral value of a man and a newspaper.

Le Rétif

¹ The famous “Siege of Sidney street,” when a group of foreign-born anarchists held off London police and military units.