

“Are all Englishmen so stupid as to wander into revolutionary France, Mr. West? Or, are you the spy my men believe you to be?” Not giving Freddie an opportunity to reply, he said, “*Oui*, I think you are *un espion anglais*, an English spy.”

“Oh, *non, bon général*,” Freddie protested, “unless you consider Arthur Young’s venture into France to observe agriculture a few years ago to be spying. He did keep a journal in which he wrote of his travels, which you might like to read. I found his musings quite fascinating. My own interest is botany and the plants that grow without human assistance.” Freddie had become familiar with botany for his code work and could have expounded for hours on Brittany’s vegetation.

“*Ça suffit!*” Rossignol glared at him with suspicious eyes. “Lies and subterfuge!”

Freddie tried to summon an indignant look. “*Non, non, je vous assure.*” Retaining a placid expression and mimicking the bloody bands of *sans culottes* he had observed arguing in favor of the revolution, he placed his palm over his heart, “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* is my motto. I expect one day soon, England will come to see the revolution for what it truly stands for.” To Freddie’s mind that would be a thirst for blood and a disdain for everything true Frenchmen valued.

“Your ruse is entertaining, I give you that, *l’Anglais*. But already I grow tired of you. Normally, that would mean the guillotine here in Rennes, but it so happens I owe Robespierre a favor of some import. An English spy served up on a silver platter might be just the offering I need to demonstrate my gratitude. *Oui*, I think you shall go to Paris to answer to him. Should Robespierre decide it best, you can meet Madame Guillotine there before the English-hating *citoyens* who enjoy a good show.”

Conversation with Frederick West and General Rossignol, Commander of the Army of the Coast of Brest

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