

Dear Mustafa,

1st August, 2014

On July 14th I was driving through Paris, which was completely deserted due to the Bastille day holiday. So I was surprised by your comment that you happened across the key to the Bastille itself at Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington.

It amazes me that one of the most resonant symbols of European history is in America. The key, as you said, was given by the Marquis de Lafayette, one of the main participants of the French Revolution, to his mentor, George Washington; Lafayette, ironically, had been placed in America at the request of King Louis XVI. The Marquis was an ardent supporter of the American Revolution and gave the key to GW to show that America and Europe shared values.

It is interesting to think that when this gift was made it was being given by 'Old Europe', represented by Lafayette, to 'New America',

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represented by George Washington. However, 'Old Europe' was actually a young aristocrat whose head was full of 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité' and the 'New World' was one of the largest landowners in the new country.

GW hung the key in a prime position, he knew European links were critical for America; the key has remained in the same position at the entrance in a glass case ever since. Although this historic object hangs relatively obscurely in a Virginia plantation house, let us hope our shared history and values are not forgotten by our current crop of leading lights.

See you soon in London - Chris