President Monroe's Dilemma: A New Foreign Policy Challenge

James Monroe

- James Monroe became president in 1817
- After the excitement of the War of 1812, he was relieved to return the nation to isolationism.
- Americans began to turn their attention away from Europe, and direct it to Latin America.
- From Mexico to the tip of South America, Latin Americans were rising up in revolt against Spain.

Latin America's Revolutions

- In Mexico, the revolt against Spanish rule was inspired by a Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo.
- September 16, 1810, Hidalgo spoke to a crowd of poor Indians in the town of Dolores, "My children, will you make an effort to recover from the hated Spaniards the lands stolen from your fore-fathers three hundred years ago? Death to bad Government!"
- Speech is called the Cry of Dolores
- Inspired a revolution that lasted ten years.

- In 1821, Mexico won its independence from Spain.
- Two other leaders **liberated** South America
- In 1810, a Venezuelan named Simon Bolivar launched a revolution in the north with this cry: “Spaniards, you will receive death at our hands! Americans, you will receive life!
- Jose de San Martin, a revolutionary from Argentina led the struggle for independence in the south.
- By 1825, the last Spanish troops had been driven out of South America.

New Latin American Nations

- Many Americans were excited by independence movements in Latin America.
- The British also supported the revolutions—for their own reasons.
- Spain had not allowed other nations to trade with its colonies.
- Once freed from Spanish rule, the new Latin American nations were able to open their doors to foreign trade (including Great Britain)

- Other European leaders were not so pleased, some even began talk of helping Spain recover the lost colonies.
- In 1823, Great Britain asked the United States to join in sending messages to these leaders telling them to leave Latin America alone.

Decisions

- President Monroe asked former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison for advice.
- Should the United States do something to support the new Latin American nation? What should they do?

What Happened: The Monroe Doctrine

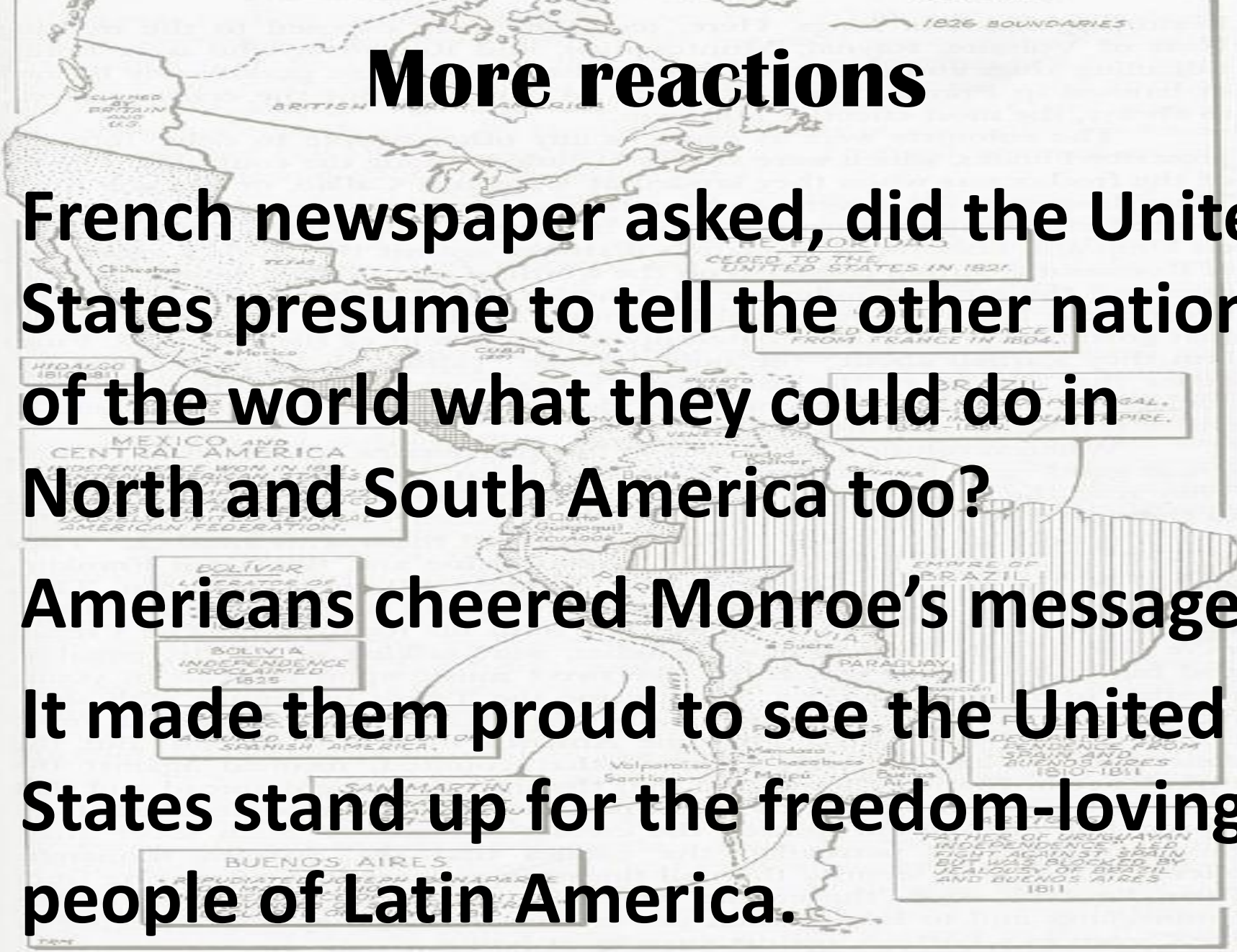
- Both Jefferson and Madison liked the idea of joining with Great Britain to send a warning to the nations in Europe.
- President Monroe's Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, agreed with them, but felt that it would be better if the United States spoke boldly for themselves, rather than joining with Great Britain.
- In 1823, Monroe made a speech to Congress announcing a policy that became known as the **Monroe Doctrine**

Reactions

- Monroe stated that the nations of North and South America were “free and independent” and were “not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”
- The US would view efforts by Europeans to take over “any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”
- Europeans denounced Monroe’s message as arrogant.

More reactions

- French newspaper asked, did the United States presume to tell the other nations of the world what they could do in North and South America too?
- Americans cheered Monroe's message.
- It made them proud to see the United States stand up for the freedom-loving people of Latin America.



Independence Movements, 1804–25

What it means?

- The Monroe Doctrine joined isolationism as a basic principle of the U.S. foreign policy.
- The doctrine asserted that the United States would not accept European interference in American affairs. It also contained another, hidden message.
- By its very boldness, the Monroe Doctrine told the world that the United States was no longer a weak collection of quarreling states.
- It had become a strong and confident nation- a nation to be respected by the world!