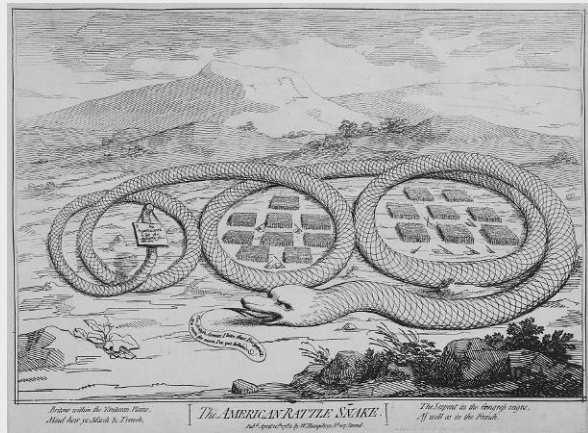


BRITAIN'S DEFEAT IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOUR BRITISH CARTOONS, 1782

The rattlesnake as a symbol of the American colonies originated with Benjamin Franklin's *Join or Die* cartoon of 1754, which he printed above his newspaper essay urging unity among the colonies for defense against the French and Indians on the frontier. So in 1782, as Britain was reeling from defeat and maneuvering through treaty negotiations with the U.S. and its allies, English cartoonists relished portraying the U.S. as a vengeful and menacing rattlesnake. Europeans had long been fascinated by accounts of the rattlesnake's threat and prowess—which translated into “deceitful foe”—and yet the cartoonists’ awe of the coiled muscular reptile is evident. The United States was a power to contend with, period, and the standard symbol of an Indian princess for America was no longer apt.



The American Rattle Snake, London, 12 April 1782

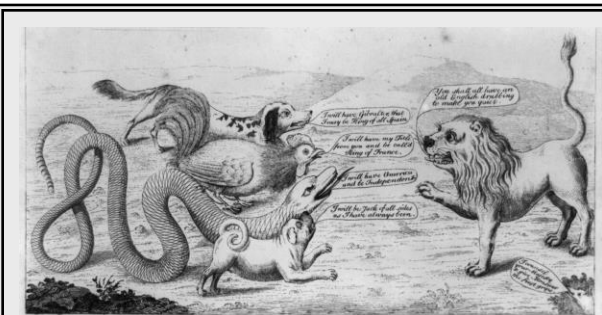


Paradise Lost [sic], London, 10 May 1782

Rarely printed in newspapers at the time, political cartoons were usually published by printmakers as large etchings—the four in this selection average 9 x 13½ inches. They were called *satires* or *caricatures*; the term *cartoon* was not commonly applied to such illustrations until the mid 1800s. What impressions do the cartoonists give of the U.S. and Britain in these satires? How do they characterize the nations’ new relationship in 1782? How do they acknowledge that the U.S. is, indeed, a *nation* among nations?



Franklin's cartoon in his *Philadelphia Gazette*, 9 May 1754



The British Lion engaging Four Powers, London, 14 June 1782



The American Rattlesnake presenting Monsieur his Ally a Dish of Frogs, London, 8 November 1782

BRITAIN'S DEFEAT IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOUR BRITISH CARTOONS, 1782

The American Rattle Snake, etching attributed to James Gillray, London, 12 April 1782

8 ½ x 12 ½ in. Library of Congress: LC-DIG-ppmsca-23664.

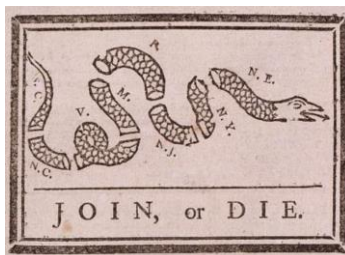
Within two coils of the snake are surrendering troops of the British army under Generals Cornwallis and Burgoyne at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 18, 1781.

Sign hanging on snake's tail: "An Apartment to lett for Military Gentlemen."

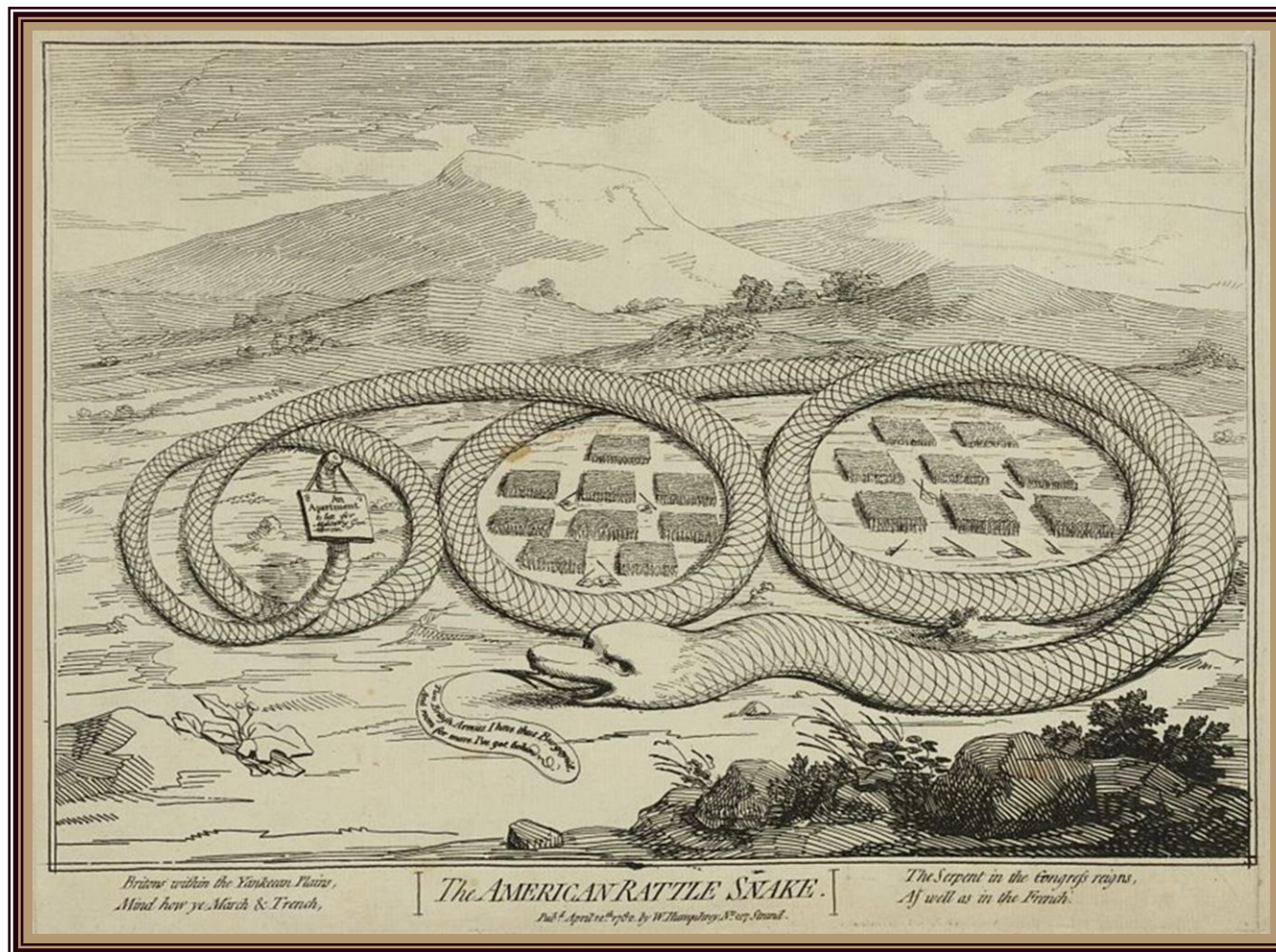
Snake tongue: "Two British Armies I have thus Burgoyne'd, / And room for more I've got behind."

Lines at bottom:

Britons within the Yankee Plains,
Mind how ye March & Trench,
The Serpent in the Congress reigns,
As well as in the French.



Well-known cartoon by Benjamin Franklin published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on May 9, 1754, accompanying his essay urging united action against the French and the Indians on the frontier.



BRITAIN'S DEFEAT IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOUR BRITISH CARTOONS, 1782

Paradise Lost, etching, London, 10 May 1782

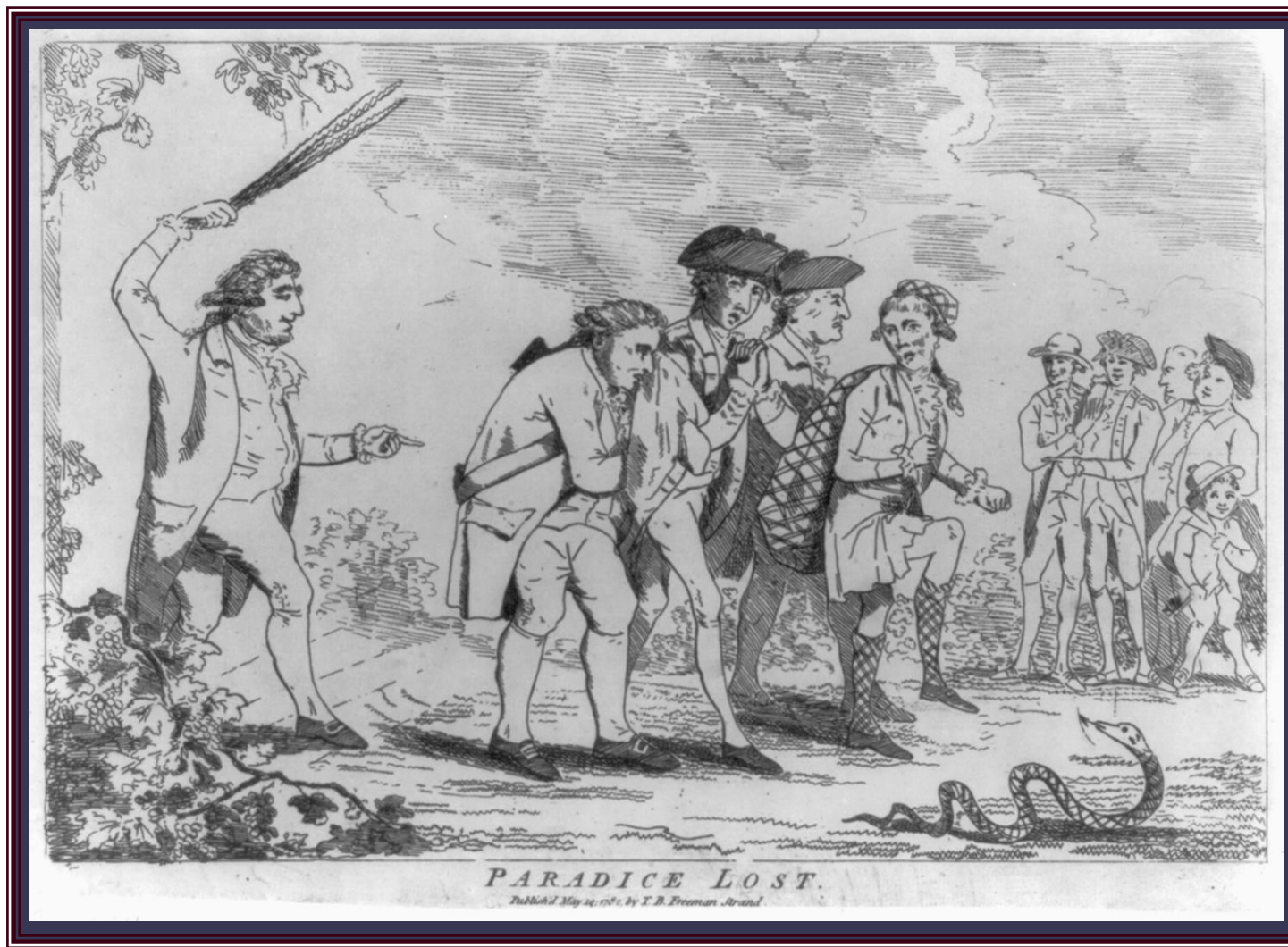
9 x 13¼ in. Library of Congress: LC-USZ62-45475.

Four British cabinet officials* who had led Britain in the revolutionary period are driven out by Charles Fox, a leader in the new cabinet organized after Parliament voted in March 1782 to negotiate peace with the U.S. (a failed attempt).

The "American rattlesnake" looks on defiantly as the deposed British leaders are driven out of the "Garden of Eden," leaving behind their powerful years at the nation's helm.

The cartoon alludes to the 1667 epic poem *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, in which God drives Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden after they succumb to the serpent's temptations to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

* P.M. (Prime Minister) Lord Bute (1762-63, at far right in Scottish garb), P.M. Lord North (1770-82, second from right), and probably Lord Sandwich (First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-82, second from left), and P.M. Lord Shelburne (1782-83) or Lord Germain (Secy. of State for the American Dept., 1776-82). [*The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints*, ed. D. H. Cresswell, (Library of Congress, 1975), p. 352]



BRITAIN'S DEFEAT IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOUR BRITISH CARTOONS, 1782

The British Lion Engaging Four Powers, etching, London, 14 June 1782

9 x 14½ in. Library of Congress: LC-USZ62-1533.



| | | | |
|--------|----------------|---------------|---|
| Allies | Lion: | Great Britain | "You shall all have an old English drubbing to make you quiet." |
| | Fox (right): | Charles Fox* | "I counsel your Majesty to give Monsieur the first gripe." |
| | Spaniel (top): | Spain | "I will have Gibraltar, that I may be King of all Spain." |
| | Rooster: | France | "I will have my Title from you and be call'd King of France." |
| | Rattlesnake: | United States | "I will have America and be Independent." |
| | Pug dog: | Holland | "I will be Jack of all sides as I have always been." |

*Influential British statesman who opposed George III and supported American independence; held the post of Foreign Secretary at the time of this cartoon.

Verse at bottom:

Behold the Dutch and Spanish Curre,
Perfidious Gallus [France] in his Spurs,
And Rattlesnake with head upright
The British Lion join to fight;
He scorns the Bark, the Hiss, the Crow,
That he's a Lion soon they'll know.

BRITAIN'S DEFEAT IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: FOUR BRITISH CARTOONS, 1782

The American Rattlesnake presenting Monsieur his Ally a Dish of Frogs, etching, London, 8 November 1782

9¾ x 14½ in. Library of Congress: LC-USZ62-1536.

The American Rattlesnake:
United States.

Monsieur [mister] *his Ally*:
France.

U.S. to France, presenting a barrel of frogs: "Monsieur, be pleas'd to accept the Frogs / I just have kill'd them in the Bogs."*

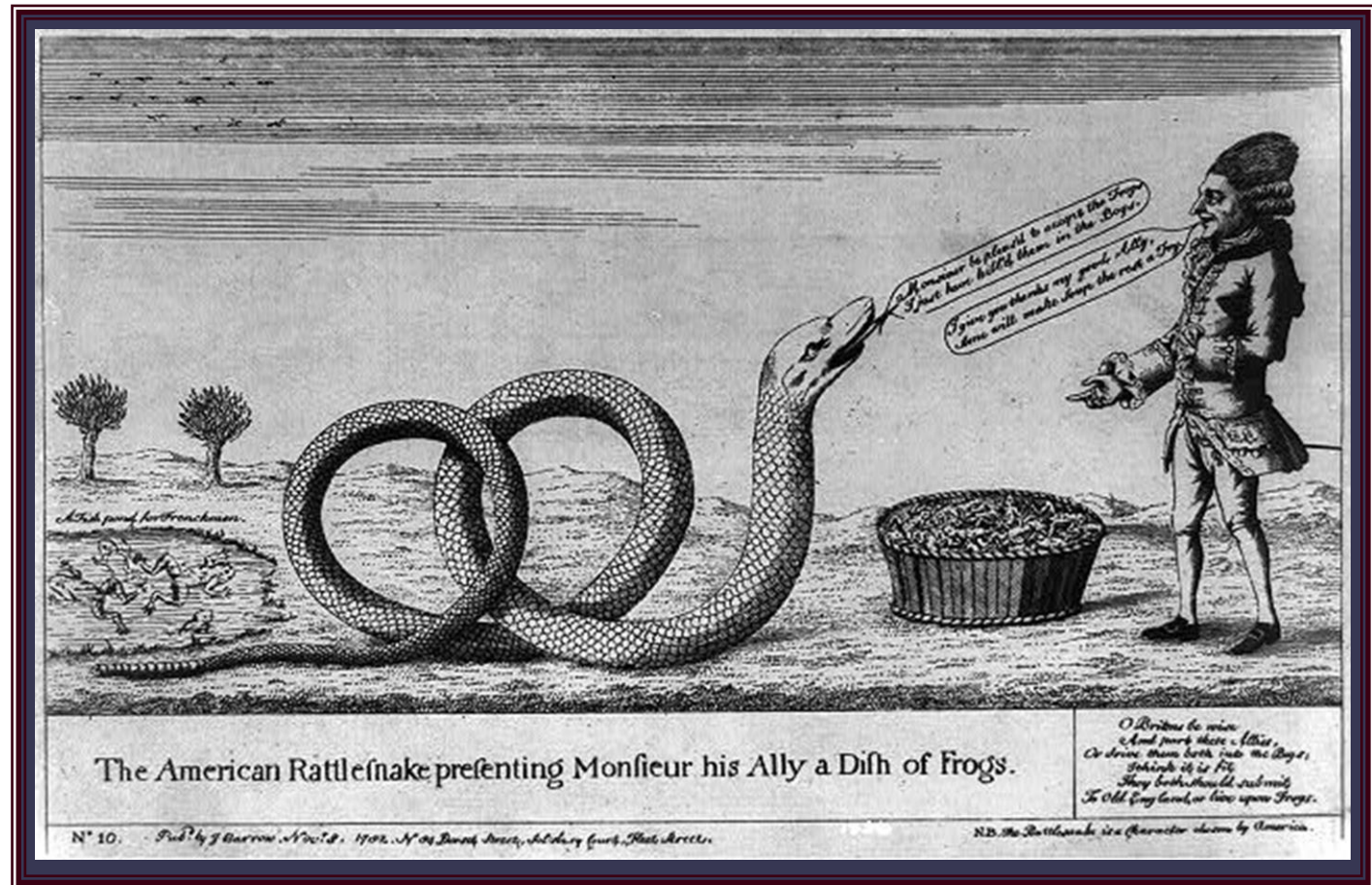
France to US: "I give you thanks, my good Ally, / Some will make soup, the rest a Fry."

Bogs (at left): "A Fish pond for Frenchmen."

Verse at right:

O Britons be wise
And part these Allies
Or drive them both
into the Bogs;
I think it is fit
They both should submit
To Old England, or live
upon Frogs.

* Frogs, frog-eaters: derogatory terms for the French since the late Middle Ages in Europe and later in colonial America and the U.S.



Statement (bottom right): "N.B. [Nota Bene: note well] The Rattlesnake is a Character chosen by America."