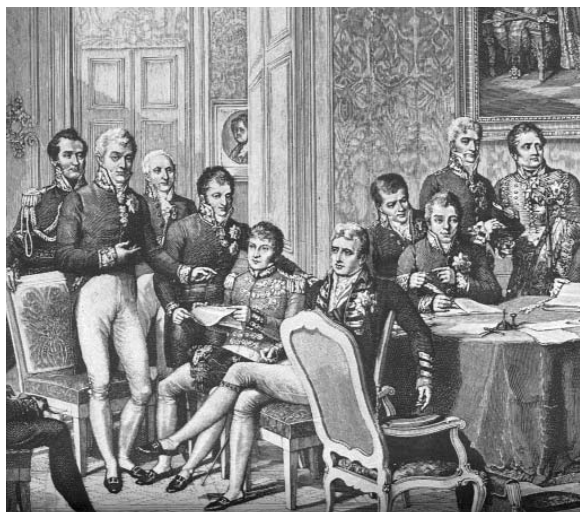




Castlereagh in 1820



Delegates at the Congress of Vienna



Canning in 1827

Secretary. If there was a 'Congress System', it had almost broken down by 1822. He lacked Castlereagh's personal knowledge of continental rulers and he was less cautious in dealing with them. This approach persuaded some European leaders such as Metternich and some Tories in Britain that he was a dangerous radical but it also made him more popular with a greater number in this country. He was a better orator than Castlereagh and was more aware of the importance of public opinion; his policies gained support from Whigs as well as Tories, some of whom, such as Wellington, believed that his policies were dangerous. His supporters believed that he should be admired for the way in which he stood up for the country's interests and others praised him for his support of liberal movements. However, his real motives were often as much economic as political. For example, he recognised new countries in Central and South America such as Mexico, Brazil and Colombia that had been part of the Spanish and Portuguese empires. This was popular with many who favoured the liberation of suppressed people but trade with the new countries was, in reality, as important to Canning. This made him more popular with the merchant and business classes in Britain. It also helped Britain's relations with the United States of America, whose Monroe Doctrine warned against intervention of the New World by European powers.

In Europe, he became more interventionist than Castlereagh in spite of his earlier unwillingness to commit Britain to action. But he could be flexible and sent English soldiers and a fleet to Portugal to prevent it coming under Spanish control. Trade, liberalism and the defence of a traditional ally were more important than non-intervention.

Perhaps the most difficult problem that faced Canning was the Greek rebellion against Turkish rule. He wished to support the Greeks' struggle for independence but feared that Russia, Britain's rival, would gain by this and Turkey, Britain's ally would lose. He tried to persuade the other countries to accept British mediation and died before this policy failed.

In conclusion, both Castlereagh and Canning achieved considerable but not complete success. Most important, Britain continued to be a powerful country and was not involved in a major war from 1815 to 1827. However, under

Castlereagh, Britain became more isolated from the allies who had helped to defeat Napoleon and this isolation increased under Canning. However, a clear gain for the future was that Britain gained a reputation for assisting liberalism against repression.

Examiner's Comments

The answer is given 65 marks out of 90 (Band B). It is always relevant and Kathy concentrates on explanation, avoiding narrative. The answer is balanced between Castlereagh and Canning. This is important when questions are about two people or issues. There is a good introduction which immediately focuses on the question and avoids too much background. The conclusion is a clear summary of the argument. The main part of the answer makes a variety of valid points. Most of the answer is relevant, for example, the description of the Vienna settlement only discusses how Britain was involved.

How could the answer be improved to gain Grade A? The second paragraph is poor. There is no need to mention that Castlereagh committed suicide, that his funeral was cheered and that Canning had moderate *domestic* policies. You will probably know much more than is needed to answer a question. Be careful to limit your answer to what the question requires. Do not waste time by giving additional information - you will not get marks for it!

The question asks about 'securing British interests' and the answer, although relevant, deals with these indirectly and occasionally. An A grade answer would have explained clearly what is meant by such issues as the balance of power, Britain's trading position, defence of the empire and suspicion of Russian expansion in the East. The answer would have been improved if these had been the foundations of the answer and then linked more deliberately to the description of developments. Make sure that you deal with all of the issues that are mentioned in a question!

Russell Williams, latterly Lecturer, University of Gloucestershire, is an AS/A Level Chief Examiner.

There are further articles on this, and the Tackling the Documents Paper at AS, series in the open access 'Exam and study advice' section of our website
www.history-ontheweb.co.uk