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What Are Warlike Operations Under F. C. & S. Clause in Marine Policies

S. Hasket Derby*

The usual F. C. & S. (free of capture and seizure) clause in marine policies reads as follows:

"Warranted free of capture, seizure, arrest, restraint, or detainment, and the consequences thereof or of any attempt thereat (piracy excepted), and also from all consequences of hostilities or war-like operations whether before or after declaration of war."

There have been many decisions under this clause by the English courts and three decisions by American courts and they cannot all be reconciled.

Two of the most famous of the English cases are those of The Petersham and The Matiana. In The Petersham, a merchant vessel under charter to the British Admiralty, was carrying a cargo of iron ore from Bilboa to Glasgow and, while sailing without lights as ordered by the Admiralty, she collided with a Spanish vessel and was sunk. There was no showing for what purpose the iron ore was intended to be used nor was there any evidence that any hostile vessel was in the neighborhood. The House of Lords held that the loss of the vessel could not be attributed to "hostilities" or "war-like operation." In The Matiana, the vessel was proceeding from Alexandria to a British port with a cargo of cotton and was forced to sail without lights under convoy. While the convoy was traversing a part of the Mediterranean usually infested by submarines and steering under orders of the officer in charge of the convoy a course more northerly than that adopted in times of peace, she was lost by stranding on a reef (though she was in fact torpedoed later). The House of Lords held, two judges out of five dissenting, that the Matiana was not lost as a result of warlike operations. It should be carefully noted, how-

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1 ELDRIDGE, MARINE POLICIES (3d ed. 1938) 282.
3 Green v. British Indiana Steam Navigation Co. et al., ibid.
ever, that both vessels were proceeding on peaceful missions between ports which were not war bases and that the cargoes were purely commercial and not contraband. Lord Wrenbury aptly sums up the results of the two cases as follows:

"To apply these principles to the two cases before the House: The Petersham was lost by collision by reason of navigation in the dark without lights. The risk of collision at night is an ordinary maritime risk. It was aggravated by the removal of the protection of the usual lights of navigation. This is governed by the principle of Ionides, which I think was right, and which in fact counsel have not attacked. The Matiana was lost by going on a reef when sailing in convoy. To sail in convoy is to increase the every-day maritime risk of collision whether with a fixed object or with another vessel, for vessels in a convoy are necessarily not far apart. But there was no new risk. The abandonment of navigation lights in the case of the Petersham by way of protection against attack by submarine, the sailing in convoy in the case of the Matiana by way of protection against the like attack, are in principle similar. They are devices to give in time of war additional protection against an existing maritime risk. Their object is to give greater security to peaceful operations."

In the case of The Ionides, the earliest case on the subject, a vessel proceeding from New Orleans to New York during the Civil war went ashore south of Cape Hatteras, due to the fact that the confederate troops had extinguished the light there. It was held that she was lost by a marine peril and not by reason of hostilities. Here again the cargo was apparently neutral and the ship was engaged in a peaceful mission.

In Larchgrove v. The King a merchant vessel chartered to the United States Navy, carrying munitions for the American army in France, was held to be only a cargo ship.

In Harrisons Ltd. v. Shipping Controller the vessel stranded was a mechantman carrying a cargo of hospital stores for the British Government and a few British troops from Salonica to Taranto in Italy and ran ashore. The court held that the vessel was not engaged in a warlike operation, laying special stress on the fact that she was only a merchantman and not a vessel of war.

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4 *Supra* note 2, at 136, 15 Asp. M.C. at 58.
6 (1919) 1 K.B. 122, 15 Asp. M.C. 270.
In France, *Fenwick & Co. Ltd. v. North of England P. & I. Association*\(^8\) a vessel was sunk by a German submarine and another vessel which ran on the wreck was held not damaged by a warlike operation.

The above are the principal English cases holding what are not warlike operations. Before examining the American cases, it would probably be well to discuss the English cases holding what are warlike operations, because, as said by Justice Holmes in the *Queen Insurance Co.* case,\(^9\) American courts should keep in harmony with the marine insurance law of England, "the great field of this business."

In *The Geelong*,\(^10\) a collision case, a vessel chartered by the Australian government was carrying a cargo of normal merchandise. The other vessel, a British merchant ship, was carrying military stores between British war bases. It was held that the collision was a result of warlike operations. It is submitted by the writer that it is difficult to reconcile this case with the *Harrisons and Larchgrove* cases, * supra*. In *Attorney General v. Ard Coasters*,\(^11\) a merchant vessel, requisitioned by the government, was run into and sunk by a destroyer patrolling for submarines and it was held that the collision was due to warlike operations on the part of the destroyer. So, also, in *Liverpool & London War Risks Ins. Association, Ltd. v. Marine Underwriters of the S.S. Richard de Larrinaga*\(^12\) the collision was between a merchant vessel and an armoured cruiser on her way to escort a convoy and it was held due to warlike operations on the part of the cruiser.

In *Henry and MacGregor v. Marten*\(^13\) a steamer encountered a semi-submerged object, which her captain took for an enemy submarine and rammed it, thus injuring his ship. It was held that the war risk underwriters were liable.

In *Adelaide S.S. Co. v. The King (The Warilda)*,\(^14\) *The Warilda*, which was used as a hospital ship, but treated by the Australian Government, which chartered her, as an ambulance transport and was

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\(^8\) [1917] 2 K.B. 522, 14 Asp. M.C. 92.


\(^12\) *Ibid.*

\(^13\) (1918) 34 T.L.R. 504.

armed with a gun, came into collision with a merchant vessel. It was held that she was, under the *Geelong* decision, engaged in a warlike operation. The court also took occasion to hold that it made no difference whether the *Warilda* was negligent or not in determining this question. It should be pointed out, however, that, where the collision is entirely due to the fault of the vessel not engaged in a warlike operation the loss is not a consequence of the warlike operation. It should also be pointed out that the owners of the *Warilda* were only allowed to recover their own damages as due to war risk and could not recover the damages paid the other vessel.

In *Hain S.S. Co. v. Board of Trade (Trevanion Roanoke case)* a British merchant ship carrying a cargo of oats, collided with an American mine planter which was returning to the United States after the armistice with a load of mines. It was held that the latter vessel was engaged in a warlike operation.

In *Yorkshire Dale S.S. Co., Ltd. v. Minister of War Transport (The Coxwold)*, a convoyed vessel carrying military supplies from one war base to another stranded, and it was held that she was engaged in a warlike operation. Lord Simon, the Lord Chancellor, there presents an exhaustive summary of the English cases, showing that, since the decisions in *The Petersham* and *The Matiana*, the law has developed to a considerable extent, so that now it is no longer important that the vessel damaged is a merchant vessel and that such vessels if carrying war supplies are engaged in warlike operations and are on the same footing as war vessels.

Lord Porter in the same case presents a tabulation of precedents in British cases, which are well summarized as follows:

"(1) In this as in every other insurance problem, the proximate cause is alone to be looked at. (*Ionomides vs. Universal Marine Ins. Co.*)

"(2) But the proximate cause is not necessarily the nearest in point of time; it is the dominant cause. (*Leyland S.S. Co. vs. Norwich Union Fire Ins. Co., and Samuel V. Dumas.*)

"(3) In the case of a ship proceeding on a voyage which is not itself a warlike operation, absence of lights, sailing in convoy and zigzag-
The court distinguishes the Matiana case because the cargo in that case was cotton and because the vessel was not then proceeding between war bases, but it is apparent from reading the opinions that there is considerable doubt as to whether the case was rightly decided and only the fact that the House of Lords never reverses itself prevented the court from overruling it. This is apparent from the following language used by Lord Wright:

"A more difficult problem was presented in Green v. British India Steam Navigation Company (The Matiana) reported along with Britain Steamship Company v. Rex (supra). The facts were up to a point practically identical with those of the present appeal. The crucial question there was whether the vessel was engaged on a warlike operation. The majority of their Lordships held that as regards the convoyed merchantmen, sailing without lights and in convoy and by an unusual route under naval orders did not constitute a warlike operation. That case is to be distinguished, according to the authorities to which I now refer, from the present case because of the

nature of the cargo of *The Matiana*, which was cotton, and because neither her port of departure nor her port of arrival was a ‘war base’.”

In *British & Foreign S.S. Co. v. The King (St. Oswald case)*, a vessel was requisitioned by the Admiralty to go to Gallipoli and pick up troops there and, while on her way, collided with another vessel. It was held that she was engaged in a warlike operation.

There are other cases on this subject, but they involve situations where the war risk was or was not obvious and are not worth while discussing. The whole subject is exhaustively treated in II Arnould on Marine Insurance (12th ed.) Sections 905c-905f.

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21 [1918] 2 K.B. 879, 14 Asp. M.C. 270.

22 Cases not cited in the foregoing article, where the nature of the risk was obvious:

Vessels missing, presumably in vicinity of submarines or mines and loss held due to war risks: Oriole (1915) 31 T.L.R. 630; Membrand (1916) 32 T.L.R. 581; Euterpe (1917) 33 T.L.R. 540; Ava (1917) 34 T.L.R. 140; Inveramsay [1920] 3 K.B. 94; General de Boisdeffre (1923) 14 L.L. Rep. 25; Albyn (1924) 18 L.L. Rep. 98.

Vessels actually torpedoed or sunk by mines or bombs: Ikaris [1918] A.C. 350; El Zorro (1918) 34 T.L.R. 466; Tennyson (1918) 14 Asp. M.C. 430; Alice H. (1919) 14 Asp. M.C. 497.

Collision cases where one or both of the vessels were engaged in war duties: Caroline and Merida (1921) 7 L.L. Rep. 56; Maryland and Pacuare (1921) 9 L.L. Rep. 370; Instructor and America (1922) 10 L.L. Rep. 514; Kate and H. M. S. Marshford (1924) 18 L.L. Rep. 152; San Gregorio & Fernleaf (1925) 23 L.L. Rep. 301; Commonwealth Shipping Representative v. P. & O. Branch Service [1923] A.C. 292.

Other war risk cases: Green v. Emslie (1795) 1 Peake N.P. 278 (capture after stranding on enemy coast); Livie v. Jansen (1810) 12 East 648 (same point); Anderson v. Marten [1908] A.C. 334, 10 Asp. M.C. 494 (vessel lost by sea perils after capture); Robinson Gold Mining Co. v. Alliance Ins. Co. [1902] 2 K.B. 489; Hindustan (1921) 37 T.L.R. 856 (damage by fire from spontaneous combustion of coal kept on board by order of naval authorities).

Marine risk cases: Hagedorn v. Whitmore (1816) 1 Starkie 157 (British vessel seized and towed by British man-of-war and cargo damaged by sea perils); Nickels v. London, etc. Ins. Co. (1900) 6 Com. Cas. 15 (vessel returning to loading port because of outbreak of war); Sherwood (1917) 14 Asp. M.C. 92 (collision with submerged wreck of torpedoed vessel); Pelayo, 23 Com. Cas. 264 (missing vessel and evidence of bad weather in vicinity of loss); Taikosan Morin & Ancona, Lloyd’s List Feb. 10, 1919 (collision of merchant vessels); Exmoor (1920) 4 L.L. Rep. 286 (stranding of merchant vessel on course altered to avoid mine); Admiralty Commissioners v. Brynawel S.S. Co. (1923) 17 L.L. Rep. 89 (collier bumping against mine sweeper while coaling her before she resumed warlike operations); W. I. Radcliffe & Sylvan Arrow (1925) 23 L.L. Rep. 278 (collision between two merchant vessels requisitioned by British and American governments, but not yet engaged in war duties); Brendonia & Alderpool (1941) 70 L.L. Rep. 56 (collision between merchant vessel at anchor and one requisitioned, but not yet engaged in war duties); Clan Stuart & Orlock Head (1942) 73 L.L. Rep. 165 (collision between two merchant vessels, one carrying steel billets for armament factories, the cargo, however, being held to be industrial).
It is submitted that while the Petersham and Matiana cases are probably still law, the Larchgrove and Harrisons cases may be considered as overruled by the later cases, such as The Geelong and The Coxwold and further, that the rulings in the Petersham and Matiana cases, especially the latter, might not now be followed.

The net result of the British cases, therefore, seems to be:

1. That a merchant vessel proceeding on a peaceful voyage with an ordinary commercial cargo, even if in convoy, and sailing without lights, is not engaged in a warlike operation.

2. That a merchant vessel carrying any kind of war supplies for the government between war basis is engaged in a warlike operation. This principle applies to ships used as hospital ships.

3. That a warship engaged in performing her duties is almost always engaged in a warlike operation. (Per Atkin, L.J., in The Petersham case in the Court of Appeal.) This, however, would probably not include a case where a warship was merely preparing to perform her duties, as, for instance, while being painted or drydocked.

4. That in cases of convoys, a convoying vessel is performing a warlike operation, but the convoyed vessel engaged in an ordinary commercial voyage is not (The Matiana, supra).

5. That negligence or lack of negligence makes no difference, unless the collision is solely caused by the vessel not engaged in war duties.

We should also consider the dates of the English decisions and the courts by which they are decided:


It will thus be observed that six cases materially extending the meaning of the words “warlike operations” were decided after the Petersham and Matiana decisions and also after the Harrisons case. It should further be observed in this connection that the Morgan case was decided in 1871 and the Queen Insurance Company case in 1923 (two American cases) and also that at the time of the latter decision the Geelong and Warrilda cases had only just been decided, while the Trevanion-Roanoke and Coxwold cases were far in the future. While the Geelong and Warrilda cases were referred to in the argument in the Queen Insurance Company case, Justice Holmes appears to have paid no attention to them and they were not reported at the time of the district court and circuit court of appeals decisions. The four cases referred to make important changes in the English law.

Let us now turn to the American authorities. In Morgan v. United States a vessel was chartered by the government during the Civil war to transport troops and munitions of war and was ordered to sea

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25 Morgan v. United States (1871) 81 U.S. 531.
26 Supra note 9.
27 Supra note 25.
by a quartermaster and was badly damaged by sea perils. It was held
that the damage was not due to war risk. This holding is squarely
opposed to the English decisions above mentioned, especially those
in the Geelong, Warrilda, Trevanion-Roanoke and Coxwold cases
heretofore mentioned.

In Queen Insurance Co. v. Globe & Rutgers Fire Insurance Co. the
steamer Napoli sailed from New York to Genoa with a contra-
band cargo intended for the Italian government, part of which was
munitions of war. She was sailing in convoy without lights under
orders and collided in the Mediterranean with a British vessel also
in convoy. The Court rests its decision that the Napoli was not en-
gaged in a warlike operation partly on the Morgan case, but also on
The Matiana, completely overlooking the fact that in The Matiana,
the vessel was not proceeding between two war bases and that its
cargo was neutral (see The Coxwold). It is submitted that this case
also is opposed to the British cases, although Justice Holmes, speak-
ing for the Court, expresses a strong desire to be in harmony with
the English cases. Judge Hough, a jurist of great eminence, in giving
judgment in the district court, expressed his personal view that a
warlike operation was involved and only reached the contrary view
with great reluctance. It has also been pointed out that most of the
British cases heretofore cited had not yet been decided and the courts
apparently only had before them the Ionides, Petersham, Matiana,
Larchgrove and Harrisons cases. If the other cases had been con-

28 Supra note 9. The reports of the case in the district court and the circuit court
of appeals will be found in (1922) 278 Fed. 770 and (1922) 282 Fed. 976.
29 See 282 Fed. 976, 980, 981. Judge Hough expresses his personal view as follows
(278 Fed. 770, 781):

"The baldest statement of libellant's position is to say that the act of sailing in
convoy without lights is in and of itself a warlike operation; and from this flows the
conclusion that such marine disasters as may reasonably be expected to result from
convoy dangers are themselves the result of warlike operations. My own view on this
matter is that of Bailhache, J., expressed in The Petersham, Britain, etc., Co. v. The King
[1919] 1 K.B. 575 (580), and The Matiana, British, etc., Co. v. Green [1919] 1 K.B. 632
(636) viz.:

"'However peaceful the immediate business upon which a ship is engaged, if she
is sailing as one of a convoy she is engaged, in my opinion, in a warlike operation. The
assembling, presence, protection, and movements of the king's ships protecting the con-
voy are a warlike operation, and both convoyed and convoying ships are taking part
in it, and that character attaches to the whole flotilla and covers the whole operation.'

"And the learned judge continues:

"Suppose a dangerous route from which lights had been removed was prescribed
(by the authorities) to deceive the enemy; and a ship taking such a route, without neg-
sidered a different result would doubtless have been reached and it is submitted that, under the conformity principle, it is not now too late to overrule the decision in the Queen Insurance Company case. The Supreme Court followed this principle in reversing itself in a case involving Hawaiian law in order to conform to the changed views of the local court in Kapiolani Estate v. Atcherley. It should be all the more ready to do this in order to conform to the marine insurance law of England—"the great field of the business." The Supreme Court, unlike the House of Lords, does sometimes reverse its earlier decisions.

The last American case to be referred to is that of the Eastern Prince-Roustabout. There the Roustabout, a navy tanker, was proceeding between war bases on the west coast of the United States and Alaska, with a cargo of petroleum products for United States naval vessels and it was held, in a case where she negligently collided with a merchant vessel, that she was engaged in a warlike operation. The court said that the Queen Insurance Company case involved two principles—the first being to stop inquiry with the cause nearest the loss, and the second being to follow the English court decisions for the sake of expediency and harmony. The court said that the latter requirement was "a more specific and less variable criterion than that of stopping at the cause nearest to the loss" and hence felt that

30 (1914) 238 U.S. 119.
31 See United States v. Darby (1940) 312 U.S. 100; West Coast Hotel Co. v. Parish (1937) 300 U.S. 379.
under the English decisions postdating the *Queen Insurance Company* decision it was free to disregard the latter.

Hence, despite the Supreme Court decisions, it is submitted that they are no longer good law and that they will, in due course, be overruled.

We have not considered in this article just *what* navy and army vessels can be considered as coming within the scope of being vessels engaged in warlike operations, because there are apparently no decisions on this subject. It is submitted, however, that any vessel engaged in assisting our war efforts falls within this category unless its activity is clearly *not* a part of the war effort. This would cover all supply ships, tugs and the like engaged in rendering aid to United States army and navy vessels performing war duties.