



## INVITATION

The War Archive has the pleasure to invite you to a presentation by John Carr entitled

**“Was Metaxas Right? The British Debacle in Greece in 1941”**

**On Friday, 12 April 2011 at 7.30 pm at the above address**

Please note that the presentation will be in English

Following the presentation there will be a projection of a short documentary drawn from the film archives of the War Archive on the campaign of the Wehrmacht to occupy Greece. The film is based on weekly German newsreels and is in German with English subtitles. There will also be a small exhibition from the collection of military models of the Archive of some of the troops, planes, tanks and military vehicles used by the Germans in their Greek campaign.

Light refreshments will be served.

Please let us know if you will attend by calling Ms Maka Dokhnadze either at the Archive or on mobile 69-98088220, but not later than Friday 5 April as space is limited.

Looking forward to seeing you at the War Archive !

### **The presenter**

**John Carr** was born in Staffordshire in 1948, and spent a career in broadcasting and journalism. He has written many news articles and made many radio and television broadcasts from Greece, where he was the correspondent for the Wall Street Journal Europe (1986-1993) and The Times of London (1992-2011). John has a BA degree from

the University of Maryland (USA) and an MA from the University of Leicester (UK) in history, politics and mass communications. He is the author of "The America Capsule" (2005), a science-fiction novel, "On Spartan Wings" (2012), a history of the Royal Hellenic Air Force in World War Two, and "Sparta's Kings" (2012). He is currently preparing for publication "The Defence and Fall of Greece 1940-1941", to be released by Pen and Sword Books (UK) later this year.

### **The topic**

In the early days of 1941 the Greek government was giving serious thought to receiving British military aid in the event that the Germans would attack from the Balkans to help Mussolini, whose forces had been pushed back by the Greeks in Albania. Churchill believed that a token display of British force would send a signal to Hitler that Britain would support its Greek ally. Metaxas, on the contrary, believed such a small force, far from deterring Hitler, would provoke him to attack. Which unfortunately turned out to be true.

From the beginning, the official British attitude to helping Greece was ringed with caution. From Churchill on down, there was universal British admiration for the Greek achievement in Albania. But it was quite another matter when it came to sending military aid. In early 1941 Britain was stretched on several fronts, mainly against the Axis in North Africa. The Battle of Britain had just been fought, at great cost to men and materials, and the Luftwaffe was still bombing British cities. Hitler had not yet abandoned his scheme to invade the British Isles.

For the British, Greece could be nothing more than a 'sideshow,' a secondary theatre of war. For the Greeks, however, the issue was far more emotional. Britain was seen as the great ally, the power which had helped the Greeks gain independence in the 1820s, the guarantor of freedom. This was the first divergence of view.

A second divergence occurred when the British expeditionary force entered Greece in March 1941. Many British officers looked on it as an adventure and appeared more concerned with their reputations and press publicity than with fighting. The Greeks, as a consequence, tried to keep the British away from northern Greece so as not to provoke the Germans. In fact, the Greeks were far more security-conscious.

In conclusion, the British and Allied withdrawal from Greece in April 1941 was the result of a) a serious miscalculation on the part of Churchill as to the power balance in the eastern Mediterranean, and b) an equally short-sighted Greek stance (after Metaxas) that discounted Realpolitik and was too naive in assessing the value of British aid.