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00.30 B.S.T. ON TUESDAY, 11th NOVEMBER, 1941

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Speech delivered by Lord Croft to a large
audience in East Anglia on Sunday, November
9th, 1941

Those who have visited the Army will have realised as we do how closely linked is the army of the field with the army of workers in munition factories and all engaged in the manufacture of any of the thousands of types of material essential to a modern army.

My information is that in many, and I hope most, factories engaged on war work, effort is continuous and we are as a nation really sweating to provide the tools of victory.

When telling the country how grateful we are for that effort it is your right to know why Government, Parliament and public opinion as expressed in the press, continues to call for all possible speed.

There are five main reasons.

1. If an army is expanded by ten times in less than three years it requires not only ten times the equipment of 1938, but also the provision of all spare parts. The more an army is mechanised the greater is the need for spares. For instance, you may turn out a perfect tank but when that tank manoeuvres over a thousand miles of rough country it may need two or three replacements of tracks.

Only by the efforts of munition workers will our main army be in that perfect condition essential to win victory.

2. Starting from so small a beginning with an army negligible in size, we have now to guard a vast front including not only the sea frontier of this Island and the interior against air-borne troop invasion, but our army is straddled across the Western Desert from the fortress of Tobruk to the Egyptian frontier via Alexandria and the Suez and right up through Palestine and Syria to Aleppo, thence across to Iraq and Persian frontiers, a total front in the Middle East alone nearly as long as that of the war in Russia. We have to be ever watchful on the frontier of India and in the Far East, for we cannot neglect to defend Burma, the Malay States and Singapore, which is 12,000 miles from this Island even by the nearest sea route.

The British army cannot neglect any one point of all those long frontiers.

In addition, we must hold at all costs Iceland, the Faroes, Orkneys, Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Aden, and all the vast Italian East African Empire which our armies won for us in brilliant conquest; West Africa also is vital to our sea power.

This means not only great strain on our military machine, but also we must aid in equipping as far as we are required the armies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, all the African native troops we can train and the large army of India. Add to all these the equipment of the Home Guard, and you get an idea of the terrific effort demanded from our factories if we are to defeat the military might of Germany.

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3. We have fought several campaigns largely in offensive operations. In the first group, in aid of our Allies, we were impelled by every consideration of honour to attempt to help in the defence of Norway, France, Belgium, Greece and Jugoslavia, and consequently Crete. All these countries broke under the hammer blows of the Hun, each delivered in circumstances aided in most cases by treachery never equalled in the history of mankind.

In every one of these campaigns our armies fought with great honour, inflicting severe casualties on the enemy, but in each we lost nearly all our heavy equipment. It was almost heart-breaking to see all this magnificent material lost or destroyed, but, thank God, the vast proportion of our men were saved to be armed and equipped again.

This is a task we surmounted.

Again, we have been winning victories in the Desert and East Africa and occupying Syria and Iraq, which have covered so many thousands of miles that wear and tear have been immense. We did not mind that so much because we destroyed armies totalling half a million of well-equipped Italians.

By now we have nearly made that wastage good also.

4. Next we are asked at top speed to replace the vast losses in production of Russian tanks, aircraft and equipment, losses far heavier than all we have lost in our campaigns.

The Russian soldier is fighting bravely in defence of his native soil and in so doing he is taking sledge-hammer blows as we did last year. Every weapon we can place in the hands of Russia in this colossal struggle is of direct and definite aid to our common cause - the defeat of Hitler and the German armies. Every moment is precious - next year it might be too late. It is everything to give Russia immediate aid in the things that matter most. That with the help of our workers we are resolved to do.

5. Lastly we have the greatest need of all - the perfect equipment of our striking forces so that at the right hour we can hit the Hun at the vital point. That vital point you and I cannot choose, but we can at least see to it that when we hit, it will be with a tank power, a fire power, a machine power and air power which will be as nearly as possible irresistible.

We of the Army know what we are up against. We know quite well that we alone can never equal the German army in numbers, that is why we are training incessantly to reach a super efficiency, that is why we are insisting on skill and preparation never before equalled, and if there is any army in all our history which can triumph in face of odds, it is the army which munition workers are serving in the factories to-day.

There is not a Briton from our great Prime Minister to the last joined recruit who is not passionately desirous of getting at the enemy. But we must be given the power for offensive action.

In these twenty-six months of war not one yard of the British Empire except only the Channel Isles voluntarily evacuated, have we been forced to cede to the Hun. With our lands inviolate, our manhood still intact, our spirit high, we only await our complete outfit and equipment to show the world that this warrior race with its brethren of the Empire will yet outshine in achievement all the great story of our people; save our own liberty and give freedom back once more to a world in chains.

We must all work hard for the sake of the soldiers we have met to-day and help to speed up if we possibly can the production of our munitions factories in which there is always room for more workers and more vigorous effort. Together we will smash our enemies and bring the light of rescue and victory to the dark places of the earth.