The trade union movement - in Britain and internationally - must mobilise for the defeat of Russia in the war in Ukraine.

Putin is committed to the destruction of Ukraine as a state, and to the destruction of Ukrainians as a people.

Putin has declared - repeatedly - that the creation of Ukraine as an independent state was a historical mistake and that Ukrainians are really Russians.

For Putin, inhabitants of Ukraine who think otherwise are neo-Nazis. But that would mean that some 44 million Ukrainians are neo-Nazis!

Putin’s eve-of-invasion promise to ‘denazify’ Ukraine, needs to be understood in that context: His aim is the destruction of the Ukrainian nation.

Anything short of defeat for Russia would mean more concessions to Putin, more annexations by Putin - and an encouragement for him to come back for more.

ARMS FOR UKRAINE

Trade unions normally campaign for improvements to education, health care and social services – not for the provision of more weapons.

But if Ukraine does not get more arms and ammunition, it will be left with the ‘choice’ of surrender to Putin or being overrun by Putin’s invasion.

The Stop the War Coalition (and others) claim that “the USA and other western powers have poured arms into Ukraine since 2014”.

In fact, prior to the invasion, Ukraine received little by way of military supplies from the West.

Even now, the supplies received by Ukraine continue to be too little - and potentially too late:

According to media reports last week-end, Ukrainian forces are now running out of ammunition.

The standard objection to the call for arms for Ukraine is that it will only “prolong the conflict”.

But an end to the conflict today would be an end on Putin’s terms.

NO WESTERN DIKTATS

The Minsk Accords brought a (temporary) halt to the fighting triggered by the Russian military aggression of 2014.

The Accords gave Putin everything he wanted (at that time), with the backing of western governments.

According to the Chatham House analysis of the Accords:

“German and French leaders seem to have been so keen for a ceasefire that they assented to political provisions at odds with Ukraine’s existence as a sovereign entity.”

Now the scene is already being set for another ‘peace deal’ at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty.

French President Macron, for example, says that it is important that Putin is not humiliated.

And former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has also called on Ukraine to cede territory to Russia, in order to ensure “European stability”.

But Ukraine’s right to exist is at stake.

Only Ukraine - free from western pressure - has the right to define an acceptable end to the conflict.

TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY

Attacks on workers rights, by governments and employers, do not cease in times of war.

Legislation currently going through the Ukrainian Parliament (Draft Law #5371) is a major attack on workers rights.
Build direct links with Ukrainian trade unions! Support their demands for more arms for Ukraine, for the defence of workers’ rights, and for the cancellation of Ukraine’s foreign debt!

Lviv, May 2022: British and European trade unionists and elected parliamentarians meet with Ukrainian trade unionists to build practical solidarity in the war against Russian aggression, and in trade union struggles to defend workers rights in the midst of war.

The draft law removes many terms and conditions of employment from the current statutory protection (which sets minimum standards), and also allows employers to unilaterally sack workers without giving reasons for doing so.

The KVPU (Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Ukraine), the European TUC and the International TUC have all condemned the draft bill.

But martial law in Ukraine has restricted the ability of Ukrainian trade unions to campaign against the draft law.

Trade unions internationally need to combine solidarity with the people of Ukraine against Russian imperialism with solidarity with the workers and trade unions of Ukraine in defence of workers rights.

**DROP THE DEBT**

With a national debt of $125 billion Ukraine is fighting Putin’s invasion with one hand tied behind its back.

Debt servicing consumes 12% of all state expenditure. This year Ukraine is due to pay $7.3 billion to service its debt. Ukraine also now needs a further $5 billion a month to cope with the economic impact of the invasion.

Ukraine was already one of the poorest countries in Europe. And now its people are at the centre of a war, losing their jobs and homes as Russia ravages their country.

The costs of the war should not be borne by Ukrainian workers. State spending should not be consumed by debt servicing. It should be used to rebuild the country’s infrastructure and social services.

Ukrainian trade unions are rightly demanding the cancellation of the country’s debt. This would free up the money needed for a post-war workers’ reconstruction plan.

The international trade union movement - and the Labour Party - should throw its weight behind that demand.

**SUPPORT UKRAINIAN REFUGEES**

The Tories have made it as difficult as possible for Ukrainian refugees to enter Britain. In both absolute and relative terms, their numbers in Britain are pitifully small.

All visa requirements for Ukrainian refugees should be scrapped. Not because Ukrainians are a ‘special case’. But because all people fleeing wars and persecution have the right to a safe haven.

British trade unions should work with new refugees and settled Ukrainian communities, supporting their political campaigning and humanitarian appeals.

Ukraine today is fighting for its existence and its future. By taking action in solidarity with Ukrainian workers and trade unionists, here and in Ukraine, British trade unions can play a central role in helping to ensure success in that struggle.

**Morning Star and Stop the War Coalition:**

**Time to Pull the Plug**

Coverage of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine by the *Morning Star* (MS) and the Stop the War Coalition (STW) has been a disgrace.

The MS has spent years repeating Putin’s lies about Ukraine’s 2014 Revolution of Dignity being a US-sponsored fascist coup.

Prior to the invasion the MS and STW both poured scorn on the evidence of an imminent invasion.

While Russia massed its troops for invasion, the MS and STW condemned NATO as the ‘real’ aggressor. And they still do!

The MS and STW have opposed the supply of arms needed by Ukraine to defend itself.

The MS even condemned the trade union demonstration of 9th April in solidarity with Ukraine (backed by the GMB—see overleaf).

To create the illusion that there are Ukrainians who support its sad politics, the STW has hosted meetings with a speaker from the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement.

The UPM consists of just three people - only one of whom is active.

The time is long overdue to end the charade that STW is about stopping war, and that the MS is “the daily paper of the labour movement”.

Trade unions at all levels should disaffiliate from the STW, end financial support for the MS, withdraw representatives from the MS Management Committee, and stop stocking it in their offices.