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## Prepped and eloquent, Zelensky wows Europe's leaders

### *Підготовлений та промовистий Зеленський вражає європейських лідерів*

*На думку авторів статті, хоча Президент України В. Зеленський не повернувся додому з винищувачами або обіцянням швидкого членства в ЄС, його поїздка до Європи посилила тиск на західних союзників, щоб вони зробили більше для перемоги. За словами дипломатів у Брюсселі, за зачиненими дверима під час турне, В. Зеленський навіть здивував деяких європейських лідерів тим, що знав більше, ніж вони, про те, яка зброя є в їхніх арсеналах, що могла б допомогти Україні. Прем'єр-міністр Нідерландів М. Рютте заявив, що український Президент справив величезне враження на всіх лідерів.*

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/europe/2023/02/10/prepped-and-eloquent-zelensky-wows-europes-leaders.html>

BRUSSELS (AP) — Before the Ukraine war, Volodymyr Zelensky travelled to western European capitals as a junior partner, one of many leaders of poorer eastern countries looking for aid and attention.

This week, he strode confidently through the halls of power in London, Paris and Brussels, pushing for warplanes and EU membership, and drawing admiring crowds.

He showered European leaders with thanks, hugs and kisses for all their support so far to counter the Russian invasion — but grew ever bolder in his demands for more.

The man in olive drab proved to be an overpowering presence who knows how to set the agenda in Western minds, as much as his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin has done from the other side of the frontline.

Behind closed doors during a whirlwind tour of European allies, Zelensky even surprised some European leaders by knowing more than they did about what weapons their arsenals hold that could help Ukraine, according to diplomats in Brussels.

In Britain, he made an impact with a sweeping address to Parliament that prompted fawning praise from the Times of London: “In Churchillian cadences he echoed Britain’s wartime leader in insisting that ‘freedom will win — we know Russia will lose.’”

For months Zelensky wanted Western tanks, and as part of Germany’s sea change in strategic policy Berlin agreed to provide some and let others do too. Immediately, the Ukraine president pressed on for fighter jets. And during Wednesday’s visit to Britain, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said combat planes were “part of the conversation,” adding that “nothing is off the table.”

As a trained performer — he is a former actor — Zelensky made a similarly strong impression appearing in the European Union’s Parliament and a summit of the bloc’s 27 leaders on Thursday. Host

Charles Michel reminisced about the fateful Feb. 24 opening day of the Russian attack when Zelenskyy took time to address the leaders from a bunker. Many were left wondering if they would ever see him again.

Since then, the EU has spent or committed some 67 billion euros (\$71.48 billion) in aid on Kyiv, and opened up a channel to funnel military hardware into the nation — a move that few would have thought possible just a year ago.

And Zelenskyy pressed on, insisting on more help in what he painted as an existential battle for Europe's civilization.

Everybody wanted a piece of him in Brussels — and to be seen in a photo with him. Some leaders took him almost in a wrestling grip, pressing hands and elbows, kisses flying all around.

An EU official who took part in the meeting described “a certain pride in having been able to mix with the star of the day.”

And before the night was done, Zelenskyy's magic started to have some effect.

EU leaders pledged to look at boosting ammunition production for Ukraine. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said a new 10-billion euro sanctions package under discussion would focus on depriving Russia of military goods it needs and cannot get anywhere else.

And Slovakia's Prime Minister Eduard Heger promised to “work on” giving Ukraine its Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets.

It is not just the silver-tongued rhetoric. Some EU officials and leaders were stunned at Zelenskyy's pinpoint preparation.

At the summit, he had meetings in small groups with EU leaders to ask them directly for the weapons he wanted. “Zelenskyy gave all leaders, each of them, a list of the material that was needed for the war,” said the EU official, speaking anonymously because the discussions took place behind closed doors.

“In fact, Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian team know better what each member has in his stocks than the leaders themselves,” the official said. “They know exactly what they need, and they know what they should ask for.”

Some leaders vied to show they're giving him what Ukraine wants.

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola said allies should consider “quickly, as a next step, providing long-range systems” and fighter jets to Ukraine. Since the head of the EU legislature really has no say in this, EU member states were quick with criticism behind the scenes.

And even Zelenskyy can get ahead of himself. Much though he has pressed to get EU membership talks started, a process that can take years, the EU has been holding off with polite diplomatic talk.

“Of course we need it this year,” Zelenskyy said, then looked at summit host Charles Michel, and insisted, tongue-in-cheek: “When I say this year, I mean this year. Two, zero, 23.”

Then he fell back on his past as a comedian. He laughed.