

Belarus Headlines

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Office for a Democratic
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EU COMMISSIONER BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER: WE NEED STRONGER SIGNALS FROM MINSK

European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner (Austria) is always brightly elegant. Her colour palette knows all shades – turquoise, white, carmine, dusky pink. Commissioner's friendly smile has earned her the nickname Ferrero-Kuesschen ("Ferrero Kiss"), after the famous chocolate pralines. Born on the same day with philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Marx, she was the first female Foreign Minister of Austria.

Office for a Democratic Belarus: *Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner, do you share the view voiced by some that Brussels and Washington have done more for the Belarusian people than Belarusian opposition parties and movements?*

Benita Ferrero-Waldner: All actors involved are doing their best to help Belarus out of its current self-isolation. At the moment we finance an independent media project which broadcasts in Belarusian and Russian on radio, TV and on the internet to help widen the resources of information available to Belarusian people. We also support Belarusian students at the European Humanity University in exile in Vilnius but also in Poland and Ukraine. We further contribute in a very tangible manner to efforts to tackle the conse-

quences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. We support the efforts in the social and educational field, and the efforts to develop civil society.

We would like to do more, but it's up to the people of Belarus to decide on their own future. We will continue to support those who want reform and closer ties with Europe, but in the end Belarus will work out its own destiny.



ODB: *How could you interpret for the Belarusians the results of the European Council in June 2007?*

BFW: Due to the significant progress made in deepening of economic, financial, thematic, regional and civil society dimension of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the European Council in June reaffirmed the crucial importance of this policy to foster prosperity, stability and security in the Neighbourhood countries. These are based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

We have always expressed our wish to have Belarus as a full partner in the framework of the ENP. This

would be in the interest of all parties and a real benefit to the people of Belarus. But in order for this to happen, we need to see a real move towards democratisation.

ODB: *Are you satisfied with the current development of the EU-Belarus relations? Could both sides, do more?*

BFW: We welcome the release of some political prisoners and the agreement to open a Delegation of the European Commission in Minsk. The next step should now be the actual signature of the establishment agreement. But to see a real breakthrough in our relations we need stronger signals. The release of all political prisoners is of the prime concern

Interview with Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner

or us, as are real changes to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law, such as changes to the electoral code and real moves to guarantee freedom of expression.

Belarus also needs to comply with key labour rights related to freedom of association: the Commission first raised this issue more than 4 years ago. We regret that Belarus has not taken any concrete measures to respect the trade unions' rights despite repeated calls by the Commission and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). We hope that the Belarusian authorities will now act to ensure the respect of the Belarusian workers rights. The situation is now in the hands of the Belarusian authorities. It is our strongest wish to see labour rights respected, and thereby to be able to reverse the withdrawal of GSP preferences: as soon as Belarus complies with its ILO obligations, the Commission will propose that GSP preferences are reinstated to Belarus. More generally, if we see strong signals from Belarus, the next step could be the start of negotiations on an ENP Action Plan.

ODB: *Why is the policy proposal of the EU Commission called a non-paper? How would things change in Belarus if Minsk fulfils the 12 requirements?*

BFW: Since the Government of Belarus favours a policy of self-isolation, we issued a message to the people of Belarus explaining what they would gain from engaging with the EU on the basis of true democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

If Belarus respected those principles, we would work together to achieve improvements in people's lives. To name a few: new trade and job opportunities, better provisions of health care and education, transport and energy networks and greater cross-border cooperation.

ODB: *Have you ever been to Belarus?*

BFW: No, I have never travelled to Belarus before.

ODB: *What would you as a Commissioner wish Europe in its relations with Belarus?*

BFW: As the European Commissioner for External Relations and the European Neighbourhood Policy I would very much like to see a new chapter opening in relations between Belarus and the European Union. This would be for the benefit of everyone, but first of all for the people of Belarus who miss out a lot in the current situation. I would like to be able to extend to Belarus the same offer of partnership that we have made to other neighbours like Ukraine and Moldova. I would like Belarus to benefit from closer trade relations with the EU, to facilitate travelling to Europe, and raise the living standards through ENP programmes and policies.

We have always expressed our wish to have Belarus as a full partner in the framework of the ENP. This would be in the interest of all parties and a real benefit to the people of Belarus. But in order for this to happen, we need to see a real move towards democratisation.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner has been Member of the European Commission in charge of External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy since 2004.

Born in 1948 in Salzburg, Austria. University of Salzburg, study of Law, PhD. Until 1984 worked in private sector, then entered diplomatic service. Held different positions at the Austrian embassies in Spain,

Senegal, France; at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Was UN Chief of Protocol (1993 – 1995), State Secretary for Foreign Affairs (1995-2000), Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria (2000-2004). Member of the conservative Austrian People's Party.

Speaks English, French, Italian, Spanish. Married. Enjoys cycling, swimming, reading.

Prepared by Maryna Rakhlei for the Office for a Democratic Belarus

Politics and Society

Opposition Activists Found Association Named Belarusian Christian Democracy

A group of opposition activists held a founding conference for an association named Belarusian Christian Democracy (BCD) in Minsk on Saturday. The activists approved the organization's charter and elected five people — Mikalay Artsyukhow, Heorhi Dmitruk, Vital Ry-

maszewski, Pavel Sevyarynets and Al-yaksey Shein — as its co-chairpersons.

The activists used the meeting to discuss proposals for promoting Christian and family values and national historical and cultural heritage among Belarusians.

The BCD activists also discussed matters

related to the organization of a founding conference for a political party under the same name, which they plan to hold either later this year or in early 2008.

03/09/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Politics and Society

No Plans to Deploy Nukes in Belarus - Russian FM

Russia's foreign minister denied Monday any plans by Russia to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus, following last months allegations that nuclear facilities could be deployed on Belarusian territory. "We

do not have any plans of the kind, and the Foreign Ministry has [repeatedly] said this," Sergei Lavrov said.

"Belarus' status is fixed by its Constitution, and that settles the matter, I



hope," the minister said.

Some media cited Alexander Surikov, Russia's ambassador to Belarus, as saying in late August that he did not rule out any plans for deployment, but the diplomat

said he had been misinterpreted.

The nuclear issue has been hot on the international agenda this year following an announcement by the United

States in January that it was planning to locate components of its global antimissile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland to prevent possible strikes from "rogue states," such as Iran and North Korea.

But Russia, already unnerved by NATO expansion to former Warsaw Pact member states, has condemned the plans as a threat to national security and a destabilizing factor for Europe. Moscow warned that its response would be adequate and highly effective.

03/09/2007

Source: RIA Novosti

Belarusian Court Sentences Young Activists



A court in Salihorsk, Minsk Oblast, has sentenced two activists from the Youth Front (Malady Front) opposition movement to seven days in

prison.

RFE/RL's Belarus Service reports that the activists, a man and a woman, were detained, with other activists, by special police forces while rallying outside a courthouse on September 4.

Other activists on trial received fines of up to 150,000 Belarusian rubles (\$70).

The activists were protesting the trial of

a fellow Youth Front member, 16-year-old Ivan Shyla.

Shyla was in court on September 4 on charges of acting on behalf of an unregistered organization. As a minor, he faced a maximum sentence of six months in prison, but was released with a warning.

05/09/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

Milinkevich Attends Economic Forum in Poland's Krynica

Former presidential candidate Aliaksandr Milinkevich on September 6 attended an international economic forum in the southern Polish city of Krynica. Debates on Thursday focused on energy security in Central and Eastern Europe, foreign investment in the region and European financial integration.

The Belarusian opposition politician made a speech at a debate titled Common Responsibility of Poland, Germany and Eastern Europe about prospects for Belarus' cooperation with Poland and Germany and the European Neighborhood Policy programme. On the sidelines of the forum, he was scheduled to meet with European Commission Vice President Gunter Verheugen.

07/09/2007

Source: naviny.by

Opposition Figure Jailed in Belarus for 'Insulting President'

A court in the Belarusian capital Minsk has sentenced an opposition leader to two years in a punishment camp for criticizing authoritarian President Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Andrei Klimaw was accused of insulting the president in an internet article. The legal process took place behind closed doors. There was no statement from the authorities as to why it was held in secret.



This was the first time an opposition figure had been charged over an internet article. Human rights activists said Klimaw's article contained nothing criminal or libellous.

09/09/2007

Source: Earthtimes

Politics and Society

Twenty Two Opposition Activists Arrested in Belarus



Authorities have arrested two dozen opposition demonstrators outside a

court in western Belarus Monday where a youth activist went on trial for membership in an unregistered organization. About 40 opposition activists rallied outside the court, carrying placards reading "Freedom to Political Prisoners!" and "No to Repression!"

The rally coincided with the beginning of the trial of Yaroslau Hryshchenya. Authorities have refused to register his group, Youth Front. After the activists started yelling anti-government slogans, police encircled the group and arrested 22 of them, said Tatyana

Protko, leader of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, a human rights group. "The authorities are afraid of solidarity and that's the only way this aggression and all these new arrests can be explained," she said. Baranovich police officials refused to comment.

11/09/2007

Source: Pravda.ru

Kazakh, Russian Arms Control Experts Visiting Minsk

A delegation of arms control experts representing Kazakhstan was scheduled to arrive in Minsk on Monday to hold talks with Belarusian colleagues.

According to the Belarusian Defense Ministry's press office, the talks will focus on the implementation of the Vienna Document 1999 on confidence and security building measures, training offered to arms control personnel and issues of bilateral cooperation in the sphere.

A meeting of a Belarusian-Russian advisory group on arms control is to kick off in Minsk on the same day.

11/09/2007

Source: Kazinform

Belarusian Lower-House Head Resigns

Uladzimir Kanaplyou, the chairman of the Chamber of Representatives, has tendered his resignation, Interfax reported on September 11. Kanaplyou reportedly explained that his health no longer allows him to perform his duties. Kanaplyou was a key supporter of presidential candidate Alyaksandr Lukashenka in 1994 and his main aide in 1994-96, after Lukashenka was elected president. Kanaplyou became the chairman of Belarus's lower house in November 2004. "I don't think that Alyaksandr Lukashenka has had a closer associate than Kanaplyou," political commentator Alyaksandr Fyaduta, who was Lukashenka's aide in 1994-95, told RFE/RL's Belarus Service. "And if he has been dumped -- now, before the [2008 legislative] elections -- it has been done with a single purpose: to prevent Kanaplyou from influencing the formation of a future parliament. Because the future parliament will have only one manager -- a successor [to Lukashenka]." Fyaduta suggested that Lukashenka is preparing his son, Viktor, for the post of speaker of the Chamber of Representatives in order to subsequently make him a successor to the presidency.

12/09/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

US Warns Belarus of More Sanctions after Arrests



and intimidating political dissidents.

'As long as the Belarusian authorities are not ready to abide by democratic norms, the United States will continue to maintain and strengthen sanctions on those responsible,' US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

The United States has already banned US firms from doing business with top Belarussian officials, including President Alexander Lukashenko, over crackdowns on political opponents for rigging elections in March 2006. He

The United States warned Belarus on Tuesday that more sanctions are possible if the government continues arresting

has been banned from travelling to the United States.

The latest warning from the State Department came after a court in Minsk sentenced dissident Andrei Klimow to two years in a punishment camp for 'insulting' Lukashenko in an internet article.

Protestors have also been targeted by the government in recent weeks, the State Department said.

'Belarusians are paying a severe price for exercising the basic rights that are taken for granted in democratic societies,' McCormack said.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has called Lukashenko's government the 'last true dictatorship in Europe.'

11/09/2007

Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur



Politics and Society

Belarus is Determined to Restore and Boost Relations with Georgia, Alexander Lukashenko Says

Belarus is determined to restore and boost relations with Georgia, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko stated when meeting with Interior Minister of Georgia Ivane Merabishvili.

I am happy that today we have an opportunity to draw a line under the period of chaos and confusion. We are determined to establish good relations with Georgia and make them even better than during the Soviet period, the head of state stated.



As for trade relations between Belarus and Georgia, Alexander Lukashenko said that the \$25 million turnover did not meet the potential of the two countries. According to him, the bilateral turnover should be increased to \$100 million a year.

As for security issues, Alexander Lukashenko assured that Belarus was ready to do its utmost to foster cooperation in this sphere.

17/09/2007

Source: BELTA

Authorities, NGOs Urged to Join Preparations for October Commemoration of Stalin Terror Victims

A "public organizing committee" spearheading the commemoration of Stalin terror victims has urged government officials and members of non-governmental organizations to join them in preparing events in October to commemorate the Belarusian residents slain by the Soviet authorities between the 1920s and 1950s. The committee is planning to organize commemorative events between October 25 and 29. Those include a poetry evening, an exhibition of works by artists and an

exhibition of books by victims of Soviet purges and scientific works Uladzimir Ramanowski, secretary of the committee, told that a major problem was to find venues. He said that only the Belarusian Popular Front had agreed to provide their headquarters, whereas the International Education Center (IBB) in Minsk had refused.

18/09/2007

Source: BelaPAN

EU and Belarus

EU Rebukes Belarus over Opposition Arrests

The European Commission has condemned the latest wave of arrests of opposition figures in Belarus.

A commission spokeswoman also rejected Minsk's recent offer of deeper economic cooperation with Europe, saying Belarus must first initiate democratic reforms.

The criticism follows the sentencing on September 5 of two activists of the Youth Front (Malady Front) for attending a recent protest rally. A Belarus court handed down seven-day prison sentences to the man and woman a day after they were detained along with other activists while protesting the trial of fellow Youth Front member Ivan Shyla.

Christiane Hohmann, a spokeswoman for the European Commission, said in Brussels today that the European Union was "dismayed" over the recent course of events. "We are dismayed at the reports of continued arrests of members of civil society for having asserted their civil and basic rights of expressing themselves," she said. "The repetition of politically motivated arrests which we have observed over the recent months is not an encouraging sign for Belarus's willingness to reengage fully with the European Union."

Hohmann also rejected the offer of deeper economic cooperation, especially in the field of energy transit, made by Belarusian Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Voronetski on September 3 at a European Neighborhood Policy conference in Brussels. Hohmann said the EU would not let the country's authoritarian leadership "pick and choose" which areas to cooperate in, adding that closer ties are contingent on further democratization in Belarus. "A rapprochement with the EU requires that Belarus takes convincing steps towards democratization and respect for human rights, including the right of people to express their opinion, and the right of NGOs to exist," she said.

The EU offered Belarus membership in the bloc's European Neighborhood Policy in November 2006, under the provision that Minsk commits itself to democratic reforms.

Today, Hohmann said the authorities' actions in Belarus were "in full contradiction" with the EU's message. She said there were "no encouraging signs" in Minsk.

06/09/2007

Source: Radio Free Europe

EU and Belarus

Syarhey Haydukevich Relieved of Duties of Foreign Minister's Special Representative



Syarhey Haydukevich, member of the House of Representatives, has been relieved of duties of the foreign minister's special representative for relations with

European parliamentary organizations,

Mariya Vanshyna, a spokeswoman for the Belarusian foreign ministry, told.

"This decision has nothing to do with the line taken by the Republic of Belarus to build constructive relations with European organizations, above all with the EU and its parliamentary organizations," she said. "The reason for the dismissal is not connected with Belarus' foreign policy."

Mr. Haydukevich, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party and a former presidential candidate, was appointed to the post on December 14, 2006. He said earlier this week that he would make a bid for the position of chairman of the House of Representatives left vacant following Uladzimir Kanaplyow's resignation.

14/09/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Economics

Iran and Belarus Sign Oil Agreement



Belarus will help Iran in development of Juffair Oilfield.

Iranian and Belarusian officials have agreed on development of the Juffair Oilfield, located 80 km southwest of Ahvaz in Khuzestan province. The contract for developing the Juffair Oilfield was signed in the presence of the Acting Oil Minister Gholam-Hossein Nozari. This contract was signed within the framework of the government's plan to boost exploitation of oil resources.

Iran's oil production has currently reached 4.1 million barrels per day, showing an increase of 100,000 barrels.

04/09/2007

Source: Press TV

Telekom Austria Confirms Talks over Belarus Purchase

The Telekom Austria Group has confirmed market rumours that it is in talks on a potential acquisition in Belarus. The company says that additional information can not be given at this point of time. There have been rumours that the company is in talks to buy a Belarus mobile phone operator for around US\$2.2 billion. Further rumours suggest that the target could be Velcom, however unconfirmed reports a few weeks ago had suggested that the company has already been sold to a Cyprus based entity, Brothers Telecom (SB Telecom) - which had owned 49% of the company.

While it is possible that the sale to SB Telecom was a holding transaction pending a complete sale to a 3rd

VELCOM
GSM

party, the state's holding in the company was only valued at between US\$300-\$500 million giving an enterprise value of no more than US\$1 billion - considerably less than the price Telekom Austria is said to be considering investing in the country.

Figures from the Mobile World, show that Velcom is the second largest operator in Belarus, with a 42% market share. The largest operator is the local arm of Russia's MTS, and is presumably not for sale. Two other operators, BeST and Belarusian Cellular have negligible market shares.

10/09/2007

Source: cellular.com

IKEA Wants to Build \$25-Million Plant in Hrodna Region

Furniture retailer IKEA wants to build a \$25-million plant in the Hrodna region, Deputy Forestry Minister Mikalay Yushkevich said at a news conference in Minsk.

The Swedish company reportedly wants the plant that would include logging, woodworking and furniture manufacturing units to use local timber for a long period of time, a condition opposed by the country's authorities. "Latvian experience shows that forests sustain losses as a result of such 20-year contracts," Mr. Yushkevich said, adding that local timber was in demand. IKEA's partner in Latvia reportedly submitted the proposal for the plant in the Hrodna region to the Belarusian economy ministry.

The Swedish retailer has been nurturing plans for an own plant in Belarus since 2001. IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad then visited Belarus to negotiate about the establishment of a \$30-million plant in the Polatsk district, northern Belarus. The project hit snag for undisclosed reasons.

13/09/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Economics

Business Plan for Construction of Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant to be Finished until Beginning of 2009

The elaboration of a business plan for construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant will be finished in 2008 or at the beginning of 2009.

The deputy head of the Department of Investment Devel-



opment of the Ministry of Energy Uladzimir Babrou has informed about it today.

He noted that the share of nuclear power produced in Belarus will be about 14-15% after the construction of a 200 MW nuclear power plant.

Moreover, specialists from the Ministry of Energy claim that the energy produced by the atomic power plant will be 25-30% cheaper. Babrou specified that the price estimation was done on the basis of work of nuclear power plants in Russia, the USA and some other countries.

15/09/2007

Source: Interfax

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is Ready to Invest in Belarus' Cement Industry

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is ready to invest in Belarus' cement industry if its conditions are met, Principal Banker Paul-Henri Forestier told Belarusian reporters in Brussels on September 17.

He said that the main condition is that at least 50 percent of an enterprise's stocks should belong to individuals.

Mr. Forestier stressed that the Belarusian government has done nothing to create suitable conditions despite its repeated statements that the capacities of cement plants should be increased. According to him, there are a number of major foreign investors with money and capacity to turn around Belarus' cement industry. Mr. Forestier added that there is one major investor who is very interested in working in Belarus.

Mr. Forestier noted that big capital would only come to Belarus if investors were given control over enterprises.

18/09/2007

Source: BelaPAN

Culture

American Ambassador speaking Belarusian at "Ambasovishcha"



The third "Ambasovishcha" festival took place on the US territory in Belarus - in the residence of the American Ambassador in Raubichy - on September 12. Karen Stewart appeared in a national Belarusian dress and addressed the audience in Belarusian. Speaking about the dress the American Ambassador noted that red was her favourite colour and that it matched white. As the Ambassador of "Ambasovishcha", she added that its main purpose was supporting Belarusian bands and giving them an opportunity to organize a concert of Belarusian music of different styles.

Karen Stewart: "You represent different musical styles. Each of you has its own cultural, social, personal and political point of view. At the same time all of you have the talent of addressing your audience and sharing your emotions and ideas about life, love and motherland with them".

The concert lasted for more than 6 hours. 20 bands performed for the audience that was composed of musicians, embassy staff members and journalists. Each performance was limited to 3 songs, but nobody complained about lack of time. Ambassador, who was appointed a year ago noted that the festival let her get acquainted with the country she was working in.

According to the aide of the press attaché of the American Embassy Ales Kruhlyakou, "Ambasovishcha" appeared three years ago, when the American Ambassador Kroll expressed his desire to get to know Belarusian musicians. The name of the festival appeared last year.

Ales Kruhlyakou: "It is a combination of embassy and Basovishcha. Of course, we cannot boast of the scale Basovishcha has in Poland. But we are pleased to discover and support new talents".

14/09/2007

Source: ERB

Culture

To Be Free or Not to Be

Free Theatre in Belarus: *all the country's a stage and cops merely players.*

The stage is set up in a private house on the outskirts of Minsk. The spectators (about 50 people) sit on improvised benches made of car tires covered with wood boards. "Eleven Vests" by Edward Bond is just about to be performed. The French theatre group Alfortville, invited to Minsk by the Belarusian Free Theatre, will play in "the last European dictatorship" for the first time.



The Police are taking down the names

The curtain is not raised – there is none. The silence settles in. A bulky man with shaved head comes onto the stage. "What is happening here?" he asks the audience. "Why is the floor black?" he inquires, looking at the dark carpet. "Why is everyone so quiet?" With a stern look he orders everyone to leave the room in order to have their IDs checked at the police station. All this seems like a good start for an absurdist play. Even the fact that the shaved-headed person is not an actor, but a riot police officer may pass for an innovative theatrical trick.

All the fun ends when the fifty guests of the Free Theatre spend a

couple of hours locked up in a room without a toilet. This is when the theatre ends and the usual Belarusian reality show begins. Cops versus artists.

One can only guess what were the riot policemen and KGB officers thinking on that 22nd of August, 2007. In any case, arresting 50 theatergoers is quite different from, say, storming a house with a bunch of drug dealers inside. "Though this be madness, yet there is method in it", wrote Shakespeare in "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark". The persecution of the Free Theatre, the organiser of the disrupted performance, has become a usual practice for the Belarusian law enforcement. The reason for that is the theatre's determination to confront the audience with the most burning problems of the present-day Belarus, which is something that none of the state-sponsored Belarusian theatres dares to do.

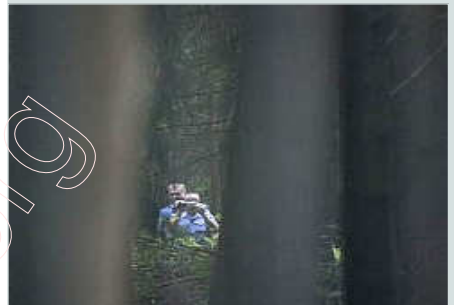
Abroad, Free Theatre is often given the best stage. Vaclav Havel, ex-president of Czech Republic and British playwright Tom Stoppard are Free Theatre's curators.

Nikolai Khalezin, Tom Stoppard, Christian Benedetti



At home, the theatre has remained homeless since its foundation in March 2005 by playwright Nikolai Khalezin and theatre manager Natalia Koliada. Today the theatre has ten professional actors, four

managers and two technical assistants. The stage director and half of all actors were sacked from their jobs at state-run theatres. Free Theatre has no premises for rehearsals and performances, which are always held at random semi-secret locations, such as small bars or private apartments.



The Police watching Free Theatre somewhere in the woods

You can't buy a ticket to Free Theatre's performances – they are always free. All you need to have is an acquaintance or a certain e-mail address in order to receive an invitation via cell phone or by the word of mouth. Most of time it works – the theatre was able to hold dozens of covert performances right under the nose of authorities. However, it would be naïve to think that secret services don't try to monitor these activities. As the police roundup during the last performance shows, the regime certainly takes Free Theatre seriously even though it may not necessarily understand much about theatre in general.

Not being bound by self-censorship, Free Theatre stages plays which depart from the local politically correct theatrical tradition. The theatre's performances are often shocking, the language of the actors full of obscenities, their actions provocative. "Free Theatre has eliminated the boundaries between life and art. If the actors were arrested by the police, and some local drunkards would comment about what's going in their usual

Culture

To Be Free or Not to Be ...

nature, then all this would immediately become the integral part of the performance,” writes Andrey Rasinski, theatre and cinema critic of the independent Belarusian weekly “Nasha Niva”.



Performance “Generation Jeans” by Nikolai Khalezin by Free Theatre



Scene from the performance “Being Harold Pinter” by Belarus Free Theatre

No matter if you like the performances of Free Theatre or not, they make you think, while traditionally, in Belarus, actors are expected to merely entertain the obedient masses. No wonder the authorities get angry. However, the repressive political regime doesn't realize that by cracking down on the homeless theatre it becomes a part of the play. While chasing unarmed actors and their spectators, some with their children on the lap, secret service agents with bulging muscles and loaded guns can't help assuming the roles of grotesque villain clowns. Indeed, you really have to know very little about theatre to make such a circus. But the audi-

ence of Free Theatre sees very well, who's the puppet.

For more information about The Free Theatre, please see:

<http://www.dramaturg.org/index.php?lang=en>

Prepared by

Ales Kudrytski for the Office for a Democratic Belarus



Discussion during live broadcast of the Radio Campus Paris



Improvised stage by the pool



Yana Rusakevitch in "11 vests"



Andrey Liankevich, Oleg Shafanov, Nikolai Khalezin, Mick Jagger, Natalia Koliada, Lavr Berzhanin, Vladimir Shcherban



Natalia Koliada with Michael Billington, patriarch of the British Theatre Critics



Photos by dramaturg.org

We on the WEB

www.democraticbelarus.eu