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Belarussian President Gives Depardieu a Lesson in Hand-Scythe

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Gerard Depardieu

MINSK — The president of Belarus, who has been described as Europe's last dictator, has given French actor Gerard Depardieu a lesson in hand-scything.

Depardieu took Russian citizenship in 2013 in a bid to escape sky-high taxes in France. He has recently attracted the wrath of the Ukrainian government by condoning Russia's annexation of Crimea.

In a June interview with the French-language version of magazine Vanity Fair, he famously vowed his dedication to his adopted homeland, saying: "I am ready to die for Russia because the people there are strong. I absolutely do not want to die a fool in modern-day France."

President Alexander Lukashenko, who is running for re-election in October, hosted Depardieu in his residence north of the capital Minsk on Wednesday and gave him a lesson in scything the grass on the estate. After the scything, performed in front of television cameras, Depardieu was treated to traditional Belarussian food and home-distilled vodka.

Lukashenko has ruled Belarus since 1994 and is expected to be re-elected for the next term.

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