

Left Out, Lukashenko Fumes

April 26, 2011

The  **Moscow Times**

MINSK — Berating him as a “lousy” leader, Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko tore into Ukraine’s Viktor Yanukovich on Tuesday after being left out of ceremonies commemorating the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Asked by journalists why he did not attend 25th anniversary events in Kiev and Chernobyl, Lukashenko said: “Ask Yanukovich that question. Why was the Belarussian president not present at these events?”

“You should ask them. Unfortunately, today’s leadership in Ukraine is rather lousy,” he said, speaking during a tour of areas affected by radiation fallout from Chernobyl in 1986.

“They are simply scoundrels. So I don’t want to talk about all those Barrosos, other bastards and ... others,” he said, Interfax reported.

Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry swiftly denounced Lukashenko’s attack on Yanukovich, saying: “The offensive comments, which were without precedent, have aroused outrage.”

A Ukrainian statement said such behavior was tantamount to “dancing on the bones” of the

victims of Chernobyl. It denied there had been any politics involved in who took part in the ceremonies.

EU officials confirmed last month that Ukraine had been told European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso would not attend last week's international donors' conference on Chernobyl in Kiev if Lukashenko were present.

The United States and the European Union have blacklisted Lukashenko because of a police crackdown on an opposition rally against his re-election on Dec. 19.

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