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Lukashenko and Nobel Prize Winner Alexievich Trade Barbs

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Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature Svetlana Alexievich on Sunday defended herself against accusations that she "poured dirt" over her home country of Belarus, saying her criticism was targeted at the regime, not its people, the Govorit Moskva radio station reported Sunday.

Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko — who earlier this month was re-elected into a fifth term in office — on Saturday took a swipe at the writer while speaking at a cultural award ceremony in Minsk.

"Some of our 'artists,' creative individuals, even Nobel Prize winners ... went abroad and tried to pour a bucket of dirt over their country. That's wrong, that's not being in opposition. It is completely wrong because, like your parents, or your mother, you don't choose your motherland, your land," Lukashenko was cited as saying in a transcript of his speech on the president's website.

"[Belarus] is what it is. If you speak badly about your motherland, are ashamed of her, that means you, above all, are a bad son," he added.

In an interview with Govorit Moskva on Sunday, Alexievich struck back.

"The people are waiting for reforms, there has been a build-up of energy. And they have no ideas at all. Except to maintain power. If that is an insult to the Belarussian or Russian people, I don't know what times we are living in," Alexievich quipped.

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