

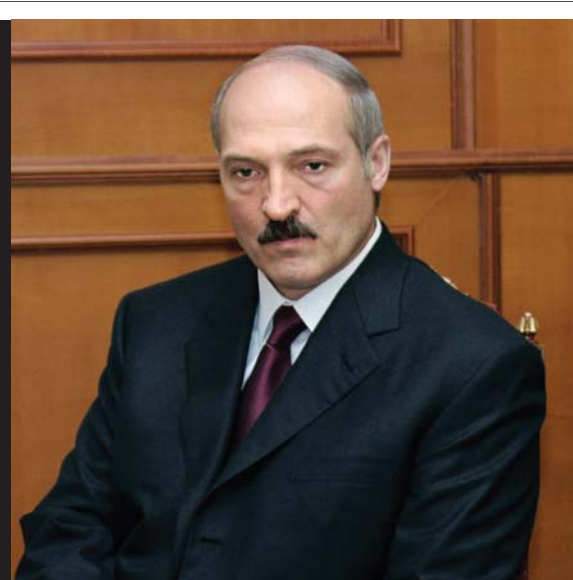
Alexandre Loukachenko

Presidential palace, October Square, Minsk

Born : 30 August 1954

BÉLARUS

President



Training/education

1987: Becomes director of state farm in the eastern region of Mogilev.

1985: Graduates from the national agricultural academy.

1970s: Studies history at the Mogilev Teaching Institute.

Professional experience

Late March 2006: Arrests 20 local and foreign journalists and more than 450 demonstrators against his re-election. Declared *persona non grata* by the European Union as a result.

19 March 2006: Re-elected president with more than 82% of the vote. Western countries refuse to accept the vote, saying it was not democratic. Only Russia, Tajikistan and China congratulate him.

25 December 2005: Pushes through parliament a law punishing any criticism of the president, including by journalists, by three years in prison.

December 2005: Closes investigations into the murder of journalists Veronika Cherkasova (20 October 2004) and Vasily Grodnikov (found dead on 18 October 2005).

September-December 2005: Gags at least 15 independent newspapers three months before the presidential elections by banning their distribution.

2001: Re-elected president for second time. Condemned by international organisations for cracking down on the press and preventing the opposition from expressing itself.

2000: Organises disappearance of Dmitri Zavadski, his former personal cameraman who joined the opposition.

1999: Organises disappearance of former interior minister Yuri Zakharenko, opponent Viktor Gonchar and businessman Anatoly Krasovski.

November 1996: Holds referendum to extend the presidential term to seven years. Expands his powers, dissolves parliament and replaces it with a tame assembly.

20 July 1994: Elected president for first time.

Hobbies/interests

Tennis, skiing, hockey and the sayings of Adolf Hitler and Felix Dzerzhinsky (founder of the Cheka, later the KGB).
