

## **KATARZYNA PUZON / Stop War Initiative / Poland**

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### **video-interview transcription**

*We met last summer during the visit of Condoleezza Rice in Poland when the signature of the Agreement for the U.S. antimissile shield took place. Could you explain to me what is the current situation and what have changed during this year also regarding the US elections and the new presidency program of Obama?*

*How this will affect the signature of the Treaty that took place last summer, in August?*

A year and a half ago we had some kind of opposition all over Poland, there were some protests and people were signing petition and being active on the streets against the instalment of anti-missile shield in Poland. You could hear some voices in the media as well and on the streets people were organizing themselves to protest and to go to Slupsk. So we had this demonstration last year and people from Slupsk could see that there are other people from other parts of Poland who are really interested in it, so they are not left alone, but since a few months ago there has been silence really, in the media as well, so now they just gave up.

This is what Bronek Nowak, one of the people involved in this movement against the instalment of the antimissile shield in Slupsk said. He is an ex pilot and he said that people just gave up, that there is no hope that anything could change, and that the shield will be there. So they are very much pessimistic about it and he also said that now the action is needed more than ever. So they actually need the people to be with them, to check how it functions because they are really afraid of the consequences.

They were promised that the city (Slupsk) would develop and that they will gain real profits, financial profits, benefits in general because of this shield. So the financial profits are actually the most important, and about the soldiers, yes, may be some people will perceive military base as something "prestigious", may be not. It's a very good idea to talk to them, how they feel about it, people from Slupsk personally, but I think there is a huge opposition. You want to be protected, but you don't want to have the military base around the corner, and there are people who remember the past, they had Russians in the 80', we had bases in Poland.

But it can be seen from two sides. On the one hand you can see it like kind of danger that is right around the corner, you have this base, but on the other hand you can be persuaded that you have been chosen. It's you, it's your town, you know, there are so many places, but it's your town, there are so many other towns that could have benefit from this, but it's your town. I think this kind of discourse was very much present from the beginning, in the media as well.

We were just promised so many things, look at Iraq, I don't know why people still believe it, I don't get it. We were promised a lot of things, visas, ...bloody hell, you want to sacrifice so many life's in order to have the visa?

So it was the question of visa, of being a friend of a superpower, many issues were raised, promised, but with the antimissiles shield I think that people, ..I really wonder how it looks like now, it's really out of my personal curiosity, because the general tendency is that people would not believe it, first Obama, second, there is no information in the media, so if there is no information in the media, there is no antimissile shield, obvious because the media just,...

The fact that Obama has become the president of the United States brings no changes for Poland, for the project of the antimissile shield in Poland. I think it has no influence, but on the other hand it could have this kind of impact on the way of thinking of the people because Obama is perceived as a much friendlier president and, more open, people could try to believe that in fact it could have some influence on the program of the antimissile shield in Poland and the Radar in Czech republic.

The Treaty was signed by Condoleezza Rice and her position was taken by Hilary Clinton now, but I don't think it will change something, no, because I think that her role is kind of crucial and for Obama she is an important adviser, may be you can expect that it will not be ratified, but, personally, I don't think so.

Actually they were expecting to do it this year, or next year, you know the information about this thing is,... the fact is that there is no information really. The same thing was with signing the Treaty. So the people were expecting that it was to be much later that they signed the Treaty, so we don't know in fact really, we don't know. Because they did it very much spontaneously, she(Condoleezza Rice) arrived in Poland in Czech Republic out of the blue, people were not expecting that.

*Do you think that there exist the possibility to stop the progress of this project?*

Well, there are always some possibilities but realistically speaking, I think it's on such stage that they will not stop it. You know there is a strong cooperation between United States and Polish Government, so who could do that, the activists, sure, but nothing is going on really, there is no opposition here, I mean in the town in the village and in Poland in general. So actually the people think that it's "démodé"...as I told you the people really believe that Obama could change it, the people from the outside, from Warsaw, from Krakow,... the people here in Slupsk and Redzikowo are sure that the antimissile shield will be here. So it's quite interesting when you compare it, because they don't discuss the issue of just protesting here because for them it has no sense, no purpose at all, because they were said by the Government that the antimissile shield will be here, that's it.

*What do you think is the hidden agenda of anti-missile shield project?*

I hate this question, it's difficult to answer,...

Well one of the things is that it is the military strategy of the United States, to be omnipresent in the world, and for them it is a strategy because they want to keep this position of the superpower, obviously. And while giving the examples of Iran and Russia it is very easy because we have bad experience with Russians, and many people still perceive them as a kind of enemy, I don't really believe that personally, and the second thing is Iran. So the country can use easily the arguments for the instalment of the antimissile shield here, because you know, you have wars going on in the Middle East, you know what is going on in Iran, and with all this terrorists,...well Iran is not given as a typical example, but still, you know, this region is pretty much dangerous, the most "aggressive countries", aggressive in the sense how they are presented by the media and used very easily to say why we want to have it here. It is such a manipulation actually, it is all about that. And we know that in the case of the United States, it is not only the imperial politics, but actually it's the business, right? It's not just being omnipresent in the case of military but being omnipresent economically and military as well, so it's very much connected.

*Today when we have been speaking you told me that there is certain silence at the moment about this issue, why do you think we face this situation? what could you comment?*

Obviously from the very beginning there was the opposition, the people were just signing petitions, they wanted to talk about it. So I think that one thing is the new president of the United States, the other thing is that the people from the media were talking about it, giving different perspectives, different opinion, but still it was in the lives somehow, and now you can find some articles, of course, but it's nothing in comparison with what was going on previously. So here in Redzikowo, in Slupsk, when the Prime Minister met the people last year, he was talking to them, explaining the strategy, then there was as well this visit by American Ambassador and some people believed in this because they felt in the beginning a little bit ignored, that nobody takes care of their opinion, or what they think about it, and then when there was the Prime Minister and American Ambassador visiting them,... and the other thing is that they were clearly said that it will be here anyway, so "protests do not have sense what so ever".