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I had read that the Czech government has started to negotiate with the US government about a possible US anti-missile installation operation sometime in 2001; I was then foreign minister and deputy prime minister in charge of foreign policy and security issues. I did not take part in any negotiations, I was not even informed that they took place; consequently I can not confirm their existence.

In June 2002, we had a parliamentary election and in that political campaign and even in the subsequent election campaign in 2006, no political party went into the election campaign with a proposal to approve the installation of a US military base. The people were never asked if they wanted the US base or not. In September 2002 the social democratic minister of defense in the coalition government announced that he was involved in technical consultations with the US about a possible missile defense base in the Czech Republic, at the same time when questioned he agreed no political decision was taken by the government let alone by the parliament. However, a few hours after the new government was installed in January 2007 it received a formal US request to install a radar station in the Czech Republic as part of its anti-missile system, which would also install ten interceptors in Poland. They were very quick; it was 2 hours after the government was sworn in. The Czech government then hired a PR consultant formally involved with a US technical company to run an explanatory campaign to persuade the people that a US military base was necessary and that the radar will protect the US and the Czech Republic from a possible missile attack from rogue states such as North Korea and Iran. That campaign cost a lot of money and received huge publicity but was very short on concrete arguments; its major shortcoming was an absence of any explanation why Iran is such a threat to the US and the Czech Republic. It was acknowledged that Iran does not possess long range missiles capable of hitting the US, but it was argued it was possible to produce them in 10-15 years time and the world has to be prepared.

As the late Wolfgang Panofsky pointed out in September last year, a ballistic missile has its return address written on its trajectory, such a launch would risk annihilation of the country and its leadership through retaliation by the USA. I believe that there are suicidal bombers but I know of no suicidal countries. Both Panofsky and Chomsky stress that for a terrorist group and country supporting such a group it would be far easier to deliver a nuclear weapon by truck, aircraft, commercial shipping and other clandestine means, than to use ballistic missiles. I am aware that one should not compare incomparable things, but I recall during repressive regimes in former Czechoslovakia we had closely guarded borders but I was able to smuggle tons of literature and technical equipment in. We have never had any explanation why Iran would hit the Czech Republic, that applied to Poland too, that is of course unless you do not attract the attention of the Iranians by having a US military base on our territory. Chomsky: Even if Iran had nuclear weapons its chances of them using them against Europe are lower than it being hit by an asteroid. The heart of the argument can be described as emotional blackmail, newspapers made bombastic headlines like: not to participate in the

campaign is cowardice, a base in a country of chickens and yellow bellies, many journalists resorted to recalling the Munich agreement and appeasement. This was taken up by former President Havel only last Monday. Easter Monday he stressed on Czech TV in response to Gorbachev that pacifists who are openly engaged against the radar are committing something equally as dangerous as the pacifism we remember before Munich. He continued to argue that policies of concessions will lead to far greater loss of life than a firm position. He complained that US anti-ballistic missile defense has been developing for 15 years and it cost billions of dollars. Maybe it has some sense maybe it does not, it is not for us to evaluate that, but the fact is that our ally believes this an efficient form of defense, it asked us to cooperate and we are playing hard to get. For twenty years, hundreds of thousands of people remained silent in the face of tens of thousands of Soviet tanks and seventy thousand Soviet soldiers, no one protested against that and now when freedom came thanks to the US we are hesitating, demonstrating we have a kind of sovereignty. He concluded by saying we should be grateful to the US and to give them their radar is very small repayment for what they have done since 1918. I regard his outburst as being fairly irrational because Havel knows perfectly well that not everyone was silent under the totalitarian regime including himself. Everyone is allowed to change his mind, but I think it is sad to see a friend who to such an extent lost his memory and even common sense. Havel the President is now denying Havel the dissident.

It is significant that the opponent of the radar receives support from those Western organizations who helped us to organize protests against the Soviet occupation. I've heard the Munich argument also from President Bush who in September 2002 when I was president of the UN General Assembly asked me to help him get the UN to support his war against Iraq, and he supported his argument by reminding me of Munich and of the dangers of appeasement when he compared Hitler to Saddam. I'm sure President Bush would not understand why the people in Prague today compare Munich 1938 to the 2008 US recognition of the break away state of Kosovo, and as appeasers they perceive those who cowered by US pressure on us are now prepared to agree to the installation of the radar station. It has been argued that the radar station would enhance our security, but never explained how this would happen. The best explanation was given by Alexandr Vondra, Deputy Prime Minister and former ambassador to USA when he told Heritage Foundation that "for us in the Czech Republic, which lies between Germany and Russia, an installation of a certain number of US troops would be good." The Prime Minister Topalanek informed his party congress that we must not allow our country to fall into the geopolitical sphere of Russia; this is the real reason why the US radar base must be built in this country. On the other hand, even Czech top army officers said the radar would be the eyes of the missiles in Poland and it would be understandable that the enemies would want to blind them, and would use another missile or a suicidal commando. It has not been spelled out how the US plans to protect the radar station. The Poles see they must rely on their own defenses and they are demanding to strengthen their own air defense by receiving US Patriot systems and anti-missile system. For many Poles, it is obvious that these weapons should defend them from a Russian threat. I have yet to meet a Pole who sees a threat from Iran. The Czechs are more modest: they ask that Czech firms should have access to US military tenders and commissions. The first offer already came, and a Czech firm was offered a cleaning job.

The other argument in favor of the bases stresses that it will protect most of Europe with the exception of the southeast. Which raises questions why we should not wait for a system which can defend the whole of Europe and be an integral part of NATO European defense operations, if NATO would embrace the Czech and Polish bases and by the agreement by US with all NATO member states, then I agree that some of the political parties like the Green Party would drop their objections or misgivings. I am aware of a NATO statement last summer that asked for a plan to be prepared to protect the fringes of Europe that are not covered by the US system, if this happens the system will become more acceptable to some of the opposition Social Democrat MPs. The government is keenly aware of these facts and looks with hopes to next weeks NATO Bucharest summit. I remember the first alliance meeting I took part in as a foreign minister in April 1999 and foreign ministers of NATO member countries discussed the bombardment of former Yugoslavia and Colin Powell raised the issue of a US anti missile umbrella and the need for Europeans to support it. I remember Robin Cook very passionately warning Europeans of having nothing to do with this form of Star Wars. I don't recall any support for the US position, but of course I am aware that the situation today is different. There are still some skeptical voices from some NATO countries who point out the ever increasing estimated cost of the system and of the unconvincing results of the tests carried out to date.

We have not been given any concrete information about these tests until Dr. Coyle came to Prague recently and we were grateful that he repeated that the ABM system is not effective under the realistic operational conditions. The test was carried out without decoys to defeat the ABM system and with information that would not normally be available such as test missile trajectory and under unrealistic advantageous conditions, 6 tests out of 13 failed. Dr. Coyle informed us that even close US allies such as South Korea and Canada refuse to participate in the ABM system as they do not believe it is effective and fear it would cause instability in the arena of international relations. To compare Dr. Coyle with the assertions made by General Obering, Dr. Coyle said that given the speed of the current tests, it would take about fifty years to complete all the tests of the abilities of the system. Obering, who came with representatives of the arms industry from the US said that there is no problem with the Polish silos to be in place by 2013 and the radar station to be moved from the Marshall Islands to the Czech Republic by 2011. It became clear that the system is not ready and requires further tests and improvements before the target of 1000 missiles by 2013 could be reached. We became suspicious that the bases in Czech and Poland will become guinea pigs who give joy to firms like Lockheed and many others. Failure of the current system and further developments of counter measures means for various improvements would represent a permanent commercial success. The US Congress agreed to reinstate the monies allocated for these bases which were recently cut, only after the US signed voluntary agreements with the Czech Republic and Poland, and second that forty five days later Congress receives the study which will independently evaluate alternatives to the ABM system in Europe. The Polish government is in no hurry, although some hope an agreement will be made before the end of the year or before Bush leaves office, given the desire of the US government to complete these bases, it would be far easier to reach a better deal with the departing politicians than there will be with a new administration. Others look to the new President and hope the Americans will be able to pacify or reduce Russian anger toward the bases which are so close to the Russian border. The Czech government is accelerating the proposal agreeing to everything the

US is proposing, some ministers hope that the deal will be signed on 5th May when secretary of state Condoleezza Rice goes to Prague.

It is clear that the majority of Polish and Czech citizens oppose establishment of foreign military bases on their soil. Czech opinion polls indicate 70 % of people have been unmoved by the government propaganda. Other arguments the major NGOs list are that the Czech Republic could become a target of a first attack without being in a war, it will be come co-responsible for US conduct for preventive wars which the US can carry out whenever it feels like, the decision to use the base is entirely in US hands whenever its interests are in danger, subsequently, there is increased danger of terrorist attack, falling pieces of the destroyed missile could pose dangers to people in the region, the government report of impact of health of people and environment is described as woefully inadequate and misleading. The installation leads to violation of the NATO clear undertaking in 1997 that there would be no foreign military bases in new NATO member states. Installation would be a violation of the EU document approved December 2003, by agreeing to radar bases the Czech Republic contributes to a rise of distrust between great powers and allies within NATO. It is highly doubtful that the base will bring more technological know-how to the Czech Republic; I have dealt with representatives from the arms industry and similar promises being made in investments in aircraft factory none of these promises were ever fulfilled. The Czech constitution does not presuppose the establishment of foreign military bases, it only mentions the need for parliament to approve short term stationing of foreign troops on its territory, if we are to have a permanent foreign military base, and the constitution would have to be changed, since that is impossible the constitution will be ignored.

No one in the Czech Republic or Poland really believes we will be threatened by Iran now or in the future. Some hope the bases will become a deterrent to Russia. Some fear it will unnecessarily provoke the Russian bear. President Putin's Munich speech evoked a new possibility of a new and dangerous arms race. I was not surprised that Putin evoked the 1962 Cuban crisis when Soviet missiles were similarly close to the US homeland and the world was on verge of major war, Putin soon after then backpedaled, but the image has remained. It seems to me the US seriously underestimated Russian sensitivity to US bases in Eastern Europe so close to their homeland. The potential of the crisis to get far worse and the possibility of a new Cold War should not be disregarded, despite recent talks between top representatives of the US and Russia. I can understand the recent offer by Robert Gates that the Czech radar will not monitor Russian territory, although I am not sure how we can prove that. Also that the ABM defense system in Poland will only be activated when the threat from Iran will become real, and these promises coupled with the promise to slow down enlargement of NATO to include countries like Georgia, this could be welcomed by Russia and Europe. I do believe that all possibilities to reduce tensions and reach an agreement should be explored despite the fact that any promises could be broken in the future as they were in the past.

At the same time when the White House was trying to persuade the world of the dangers of Iran, Fred Thompson let the cat of the bag when saying that the ABM station is needed to safeguard the US from the strategic competitiveness of Russia and China. This makes more sense than an Iranian attack that will never come. Terrorists who use bombs cannot be shot at by ABM. This competition is obvious, as is the desire of the US to control the worlds raw

materials especially oil, the question is: what forms the competition will acquire, and what methods will be resorted to. The 10 receptors in Poland do not represent a serious threat to Russia, but military experts do not rule out the possibility of enlargement of bases and of more advanced missile defense. These experts agree with peace groups and NGOs that the main purpose of the base is to negate the deterrent role states expect of nuclear weapons, and thus is open space for the US to carry out military action anywhere. They could not afford to do so if there was a credible threat of nuclear retaliation. The ability to blunt a retaliatory attack by an opponent possessing nuclear weapons will significantly increase the power of the US. The foreign policy advisor to Obama wrote of the desire to extend US supremacy as far as possible in the future before it would have to be inevitably replaced by a multilateral system. Following 9/11, I remember European countries offered to regard the attacks as violation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and therefore an attack on all members of NATO. Washington rejected an offer to help and as it was perceived as a European trap to enable Europe to influence the conduct in the forthcoming conflict; the US preferred the coalition of the willing that was prepared to support a defacto, unilateral military action of the US. The US would prefer today to build European missile shields with the willing Czech Republic and Poland. This dangerous unilateral policy that may pave the way to more wars including ones where tactical nuclear weapons can be used must be strongly resisted. The Czech government is fully aware that 70 percent of citizens oppose the base and will not allow a referendum. The parliament's backbone could be strengthened if Czech opposition parties, civil society groups and peace group receive full solidarity backing from European governments and NGOs worldwide especially from the US. Some support has already been forthcoming, including from groups who before 1989 used to support our human rights groups and Havel.