

International Music Festival volunteer coordinator and representative of Crimea Federal University Polina Bolbochan: Mr President, I have a somewhat personal question for you. Yesterday, President Biden got quite tough in his interview, including with regard to you. What would you say to him?

Vladimir Putin: With regard to my US colleague's remark, we have, indeed, as he said, met in person. What would I tell him? I would say "stay healthy." I wish him good health. I am saying this without irony or tongue in cheek. This is my first point.

Secondly, taking a broader approach to this matter, I would like to say that difficult, dramatic, and bloody events abound in the history of every nation and every state. But when we evaluate other people, or even other states and nations, we are always facing a mirror, we always see ourselves in the reflection, because we project our inner selves onto the other person.

You know, I remember when we were children and played in the yard, we had arguments occasionally and we used to say: whatever you call me is what you are called yourself. This is no coincidence or just a kids' saying or joke. It has a very deep psychological undercurrent. We always see ourselves in another person and think that he or she is just like us, and evaluate the other person's actions based on our own outlook on life.

With regard to the US establishment, the ruling class – not the American people who are mostly honest, decent and sincere people who want to live in peace and friendship with us, something we are aware of and appreciate, and we will rely on them in the future – their mindset was formed in rather challenging circumstances which we are all aware of. After all, the colonisation of the American continent by the Europeans went hand-in-hand with the extermination of the local people, the genocide, as they say today, outright genocide of the Indian tribes followed by a very tough, long and difficult period of slavery, a very cruel period. All of that has been part of life in America throughout the history of the United States to this day. Otherwise, where would the Black Lives Matter movement come from? To this day, African Americans face injustice and even extermination.

The ruling class of the United States tends to address domestic and foreign policy issues based on these assumptions. After all, the United States is the only country to have used nuclear weapons, mind you, against a non-nuclear state – Japan, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of WW II. There was absolutely no military need for the bombing. It was nothing but the extermination of civilians. I am bringing this up, because I know that the United States and its leaders are determined to maintain certain relations with us, but on matters that are of interest to the United States and on its terms. Even though they believe we are just like them, we are different. We have a different genetic, cultural and moral code. But we know how to uphold our interests. We will work with the United States, but in the areas that we are interested in and on terms that we believe are beneficial to us. They will have to reckon with it despite their attempts to stop our development, despite the sanctions and insults. They will have to reckon with this.

We, with our national interests in mind, will promote our relations with all countries, including the United States. This is generally all I want to say about this.