

*Memorandum of the Conversation Between the Reich Foreign Minister and Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka in Berlin on March 29, 1941*

Aufz. RAM 19/41

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In reply to an inquiry by Matsuoka for further details on the Russian conditions, the Reich Foreign Minister responded that German resistance to the Soviet demands with respect to Finland was based on economic considerations, and also on sentiment. Germany had fought on the side of the Finns in the World War. Matsuoka put in here that the Finns apparently laid great stress on being considered as belonging on the German side. The Japanese Minister in Helsinki, whom he had recalled in connection with the recent shifting of diplomats, told a newspaperman at Manchuli on the trip homeward that Finland now appeared to have placed herself on Russia's side. Some time later, the Finnish Minister in Tokyo protested officially to Matsuoka against that statement and declared that Finland would never place herself on Russia's side.

The Reich Foreign Minister pointed out that the Social-Democratic governments in Finland had always been against the Führer, so that there was no reason for Germany to help them during the Russo-Finnish War. Besides, Germany had to assume an absolutely neutral position, because in the conversations with Molotov and Stalin, Finland had been designated as not lying within the German sphere of interest. But when the Finns defended themselves so valiantly against the Russians, strong feeling for them sprang up in Germany, so that it was now impossible to give up Finland, since an occupation by Russia would lead to complete destruction of the country, as was shown by the example of the Baltic States.

*Source:* Nazi-Soviet relations 1939-1941. Documents from the Archives of The German Foreign Office. Washington, Department of State, publication 3023, 1948.