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SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FRENCH—SOVIET PACT OF MAY 2, 1935

French—Soviet agreement on mutual aid signed on May 2, 1935, represented one of the more important feats of the interwar period. The French—Soviet pact was one of the many alliances concluded at that time in order to establish a system of common security in Europe. Reference papers on this pact are numberless. The author had not intended to contribute to the factual information. It was his aim to give an account of the role played by P. Laval, the then foreign minister of France. Chief emphasis was put on the attitudes of French and USSR governments to the pact.

Since the opening of negotiations with Paris, USSR had put much hopes in the treaty as a restraint on the imperialistic tendencies of Nazi Germany. France on the other hand approached the matter with much reticence. By means of talks with USSR Laval attempted to compel Germany to seek possibilities of cooperation with France — this being the chief aim of his policies. Negotiating with USSR, Laval maintained at the same time close contacts with Berlin. Hitler's exorbitant ambitions alone, his military proceedings of March, 1935, as well as the pressure of French public opinion, finally obliged Laval to sign a treaty with USSR. Nevertheless, he took great care to avoid giving it a form of a military alliance, so as to leave an open route to a possible rapprochement with Germany. Therefore, the treaty had not been supported by any military amendment.

At the time when Laval became the foreign minister he had two alternative choices; either a close cooperation with Great Britain, inclined then to grant concessions to Germany; or else a formation of a powerful anti-German bloc in collaboration with the Soviet Union. Laval did not take his chance of either of these opportunities. Under these circumstances the French—Soviet pact could not yield any notable results.