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- Q. In going back to the subject of liaison conferences, I would like to ask what weight the liaison conferences had in the final decisions of the Japanese government.
- A. The matter must be viewed both from the legal as well as the practical standpoint. The army and navy high command chiefs were directly responsible to the Emperor. The functions of all ministers of state is to "assist and advise" the Throne. The liaison conference is not recognized as a constitutional organ. So from the constitutional point of view, the decisions of the liaison conference do not carry much weight. Therefore, the Cabinet, that is the government, and the steps of the high command and the Imperial Conferences come into the picture; but from the practical point of view, these liaison conferences had weight. The liaison conferences originated with the consultations begun during the 2nd KONOYE Cabinet between the government and the Imperial General Headquarters. It originated from the fact that the military, including the navy were not only interfering in politics, but were exercising such influence as to control and direct politics. Within the government their representatives were the War and Navy Ministers, and outside the Chief of the Army General Staff and the Chief of the Naval General Staff. This organization, the liaison conference, may be said to be a very clear manifestation of the influential position occupied by the armed services.

The formal setup of the liaison conference included as secretaries the Chief Secretary of the Cabinet, who acts according to the ideas of the Prime Minister; the Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau for the army; and the Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau for the Navy. The Foreign Office had no such person among the secretaries, but after I became Foreign Minister I did as much as possible to have a Foreign Office bureau director included.

Decisions relative to the Tripartite Pact, the military advance into South French Indo China, and the decision of the September 6 Imperial Conference were decided upon by the liaison conference. Those decisions were pushed by the army and navy and so established the military dominance in the conference that when it came to the question of war it became increasingly difficult to curb their idea that war was unavoidable.

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Regarding the composition of the liaison conference, I might say that when I became Foreign Minister the only change in membership which took place was the Navy Minister SHIMADA, the Finance Minister KAYA, and myself; all the others were the same. In my thinking there is what you call a momentum that when the question of relaxing our conditions in our negotiations with the United States was brought up, views would be expressed on the basis of the decisions of September 6 saying that conditions could not be relaxed beyond the conditions set forth in those decisions. As I explained before, at my strong insistence and persuasion I had these conditions relaxed but with extreme difficulty. As I have said, the military, or the army and navy, are almost all mighty in the liaison conference. At one time I thought that to entrust such grave decisions to such a body was not just or legitimate under the constitution. I thought that other methods or other means should be used for the purpose. But because of the tremendous influence of the army and navy, and because of no signs of willingness of other ministers of state to strongly oppose the army and navy, my idea did not materialize.

In short, because of the momentum of the military and naval influence which was strong even before my entry into the Cabinet, the decision of the liaison conference which they led in arriving at were, practically speaking, such that it was approved by the Cabinet and even by the Imperial Conference. In other words, practically speaking, the decisions of the liaison conference had such decisive weight. Viewed in the light of the situation, it should be said first of all that the army and navy, and between the two the army had greater weight, and that among the members of the liaison conference those who were members longer exercised more weight than new comers. Therefore, the weight of each member in leading the decisions, as well as the degree of responsibility of the members must be viewed in the light of this situation in the liaison conference.

- Q. In other words, any agreement reached at the liaison conference when presented to the Cabinet would be nothing but a formality for the Cabinet to pass on.
- A. There were exchanges of views on occasions, but there was little if no important changes made in the decisions of the liaison conference.