

CHAPTER FOUR : THE PEACE POLICY OF GAO ZONG

I. REASONS FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Since the beginning of Gao Zong's reign, he already knew that he would be forced to negotiate for peace with the Jin due to the situation of the time. During the early days of the Jianyan and Shaoxing era, no matter whether the country was in the state of war or peace, Song had never stopped dispatching envoys to Jin for peace negotiations. Although Gao Zong occasionally had the intention to confront the enemy by force, his main target was the Qi regime under Liu Yu. In dealing with the Jin, however, he had never given up hope to negotiate for peace. This could be seen in his decision to continue to pursue peace even though Jin was in a weaker position after the dethronement of Liu Yu and when problems arose within the Jin government. Instead of making use of this opportunity to recover the lost territory, Gao Zong persisted to negotiate for peace and suppressed opinion that was not in favour of peace negotiations.

Gao Zong was far from being an ineffectual ruler; he therefore had his own reasons for deciding to negotiate for peace. Viewing the circumstances objectively, the financial situation of his regime was not very strong at the time and most of the national expenditure went to the military. Therefore, Gao Zong hoped that once the peace negotiations were successful, he would be able to reduce the military expenses and the army allowed to rest.¹ Also, many historians hold the opinion that Gao Zong should not have negotiated for peace but should have fought to recover the lost territory from the Jin during the Jianyan and Shaoxing era. This was because the Southern Song was blessed with capable ministers in its internal administration and

¹ *YL*, ch. 156, p. 2523.

famous generals who could fight the war externally. However, since Gao Zong opted for peace negotiations, the opportunity for restoration (*zhongxing*) was lost.² Nevertheless, if one were to examine the situation of the time from the report of Luo You (see pp.58-59), one would not be so optimistic. During the early years of the Southern Song, there was not a single chief councillor who had the ability to help Gao Zong to accomplish the mammoth task of restoration.³ Later, when Zhao Ding (1085-1147) and Zhang Jun were jointly serving as chief councillors, their differences prevented them from working out a convincing plan for the emperor to follow. Zhao Ding was a more moderate advocate of war whereas Zhang Jun was more radical in his approach. Each was supported by his own followers who frequently disagreed and criticized the members of the other group. Although basically they were both against the peace policy, they failed to offer a concrete plan to support their war policy. Thus Gao Zong had no confidence in the plan for restoration whatsoever. With regard to the military, although the Southern Song's military power had improved a lot they were still not strong enough to fight the Jin troops in a full-scale attack. The Four Armies led by the four generals, Zhang, Han, Liu and Yue were effective in suppressing internal rebellions and pacifying the south-east, but fighting the invincible Jin troops was another story. Whenever they were confronted by the Jin army, they were either defeated or forced to flee.⁴ Even though they had won several battles, they had not been able to recover a single inch of their lost territory, and there is no evidence to prove that they had the ability to recapture Song territory in the north. Therefore, falling short of funds for the military and lacking a strong military force, it would be

² Lin Tianwei, "Yili yu shishi zhi zheng", *Songdai Shishi Zhiyi*, p. 134.

³ *YL*, ch. 78, p. 1286.

⁴ Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian Tongkao*, (Taipei: Xinxing Shuju, 1959) ch. 154, pp. 1343-1344.

extremely difficult for Gao Zong to retrieve the land conquered by the Jurchen. The Song Confucian scholars were fond of talking about recovering the lost territory (*huitu*), but Gao Zong had to make his decision according to the situation at hand. From Gao Zong's point of view, instead of taking the risk to fight and putting the country's fate on a war they were not sure of winning, it would be better to suffer humiliation by negotiating for peace.

The discussion above aims to analyze the reasons behind Gao Zong's peace policy by looking at the objective circumstances of the time. From the subjective point of view, it can be seen that Gao Zong had his personal reasons for wanting to negotiate peace with the Jurchen. The most important factor that most scholars agree upon was the fact that Gao Zong himself was afraid of the Jin. Ever since Gao Zong had been held hostage in Jin previously, he had witnessed the formidable power of the Jurchen, and seeing that the Jin had won battle after battle and were coming nearer each day, he was psychologically gripped by a great fear of the Jin. The attack of Zongbi forced Gao Zong to flee to the sea and the fact that he was nearly captured by the Jurchen had increased his fear. In 1134, Gao Zong had declared his intention to fight and said that "he would be too ashamed to rule the country if he had to flee to the sea again to evade the Jin forces",⁵ however, he had never given up his residence in Hangzhou which is close to the sea, so that he could easily flee to the sea again if he was forced to do so. In 1161, the Jin ruler Wanyan Liang (r.1149-1161) had invaded Song. The first idea the emperor and his ministers had in mind was to evade the enemy by fleeing to the sea.⁶ All these show that Gao Zong was truly afraid of the Jin.

⁵ *YL*, ch. 77, p. 1271.

⁶ Tao Jingshen, "The Personality of Sung Kao-Tsung (r.1127-1162)" *Liu Zijian Boshi Songshou Jinian Songshi Yanjiu Lunji*, (Taipei, 1989) p. 538.

Furthermore, long before the establishment of the puppet Chu and Qi regimes, Gao Zong had realized that the intention of the Jin was not necessarily to gain direct control over China. In other words, if the Song were willing to lower themselves to the position of Qi by submitting to the Jurchen, the Jin would probably agree to replace Liu Yu with Gao Zong and would return the territory under Liu to the Southern Song. This indirect indication on the Jin part had further strengthened Gao Zong's intention to bring about a peaceful solution. The northern campaign against Qi in 1137 was to defeat Liu Yu so that Gao Zong himself would be the only party for the Jurchen to negotiate peace with. Although the northern campaign was abandoned due to the dismissal of the chief councillor Zhang Jun, the subsequent dethronement of Liu Yu by the Jin was indeed a pleasant surprise for Gao Zong as peace negotiations seemed to be possible now. Nevertheless, there were rumors that after the fall of Qi, the Jin were planning to crown Qin Zong as the new ruler in the territory previously under Qi. Although this had to some extent pacified the people in the Central Plain,⁷ it was indeed bad news for Gao Zong. If the Jin were to crown Qin Zong in Kaifeng, the legality of Gao Zong's regime in the south-east would be in jeopardy. Therefore, Gao Zong was even more desperate to reach a peace settlement with the Jin from now onwards.

Besides, most of the anti-peace ministers in court had made severe criticism and given many suggestions, but they could not offer a better or more practical alternative to Gao Zong. The military generals were even worse, since most of them were only concerned about their personal interests and were unwilling to sacrifice for the nation, and there existed great disharmony among themselves. Gao Zong fully understood that he could not rely upon such an army to fight the war for him. Furthermore, within

⁷ *YL*, ch. 117, p. 1884.

the first ten years of his reign, he had encountered two major rebellions from his own army.⁸ In addition to that, the generals at war in the front-line frequently disobeyed court orders. Therefore Gao Zong was naturally suspicious of generals who held military power in their own hands. This, combined with the Song dynastic tradition of curtailing the power of the military, convinced Gao Zong that it was necessary to bring about a change to the situation, and that it was also essential to withdraw the power from the military. However, as long as the country was at war, he had still to rely on the help of the military. On the other hand, once peace was established, he would be able^{to} accomplish his aim of withdrawing military power from his generals.

Lastly, another factor that forced Gao Zong to negotiate for peace was the fact that his mother was under captivity in Jin. The general opinion is that this was merely an excuse used by Gao Zong to divert the criticism of public opinion. However, if one puts oneself in Gao Zong's position, one could understand his longing for his mother. He was the only person among the members of the imperial family who had not been captured by the Jurchen; besides, his only son had died of sickness.⁹ Therefore, when he heard that his mother was still alive, it was natural that he should desire to bring his mother back from captivity. However, since it would be impossible to fulfill this desire by force with the limited resources of the Song military, he could only do so by negotiating for peace. This diplomatic approach was found to be workable and in 1138 when the first treaty of peace was signed, the Jin promised to return Empress Wei. Although the treaty was broken within a short time, and the empress was unable to return to Song, the initial success of peace negotiations had made Gao Zong realize that

⁸ These two rebellions were the Miao-Liu coup of 1129, see *ibid.*, ch.21-22, pp.414-467; and the mutiny in Huaixi in 8th/1137, see *ibid.* ch.113, pp.1826-1828.

⁹ The son of Gao Zong, Zhao Fu, was born in 1127 and died at the age of three in 1129, soon after the Miao Liu coup, see *ibid.*, ch. 25, p. 510.

peace negotiations were the only way to bring about the fulfillment of his wishes. This had therefore strengthened his desire to negotiate with the Jurchen.

2. PRINCIPLE VERSUS REALITY

During the Shaoxing era, most of the civil and military officers were against the idea of peace as they thought that the Jurchen were not sincere about peace negotiations. Further, when the Jurchen sent their envoy to the Southern Song, the latter came under the name of the Pacification Commissioner of Jiangnan (*Jiangnan Zhaoyushi*) which means that they did not treat the Song as an equal power, and their conditions for peace further demanded Song to be a vassal of Jin. It can thus be seen that the Song opposition to peace was due to their patriotic sentiments for their nation. Nevertheless, the Qing historian Zhao Yi points out that their arguments were purely based on the question of principle and their sense of justice and that they had totally disregarded the political reality of the time.¹⁰ Among the well-known war advocates during this time, the Compiling Official (*Bianxiuguan*) of the Bureau of Military Affairs, Hu Quan (1102-1180), had criticized and condemned the peace negotiations as a cowardly and shameful act. In his memorials to Gao Zong, he had used highly emotional and sentimental words which greatly aroused the people who supported his arguments.¹¹ However, looking at the political situation of the day, Zhao Yi expressed his doubt as to whether Hu Quan would be able to bring about a successful restoration of the Southern Song, if he were given the chance to hold a commanding position in government. He also put forward the question that if the court had put its trust on generals such as Han Shizhong and Yue Fei to recover the lost land, would they be successful? According to Zhao Yi it was definitely impossible. Therefore, with regard to

¹⁰ Zhao Yi, *Nian'er Shi Zhaji*, (Shanghai: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1937), ch.26, p.500.

¹¹ For Hu Quan's memorials, see *YL*, ch. 123, pp. 1997-1998.

all the emotional statements and righteous arguments put forward at that time, he concluded that "It is easier for people who are not in the position to express their opinions freely but much harder for those in position to implement these matters."¹²

If we were to evaluate the objective circumstances of the time, we find that although the military power of the Song in the Shaoxing era was much stronger than that of the Jianyan era,¹³ there were still many who doubted the ability of the Song in fighting the Jurchen. Even those who were strongly anti-peace did not have much faith on the country's ability. For example, the Assistant Commissioner of Military Affairs Wang Shu was against peace and stated that if the Jin were keen to negotiate with Song, there must be some conspiracy behind it, because "even a small child knows that the Jin is strong and the Song is weak".¹⁴ The Correcting Editor of the Imperial Library (*Bishusheng Zhengzi*) Fan Rugui (1102-1160) was another war advocate, who held the opinion that ever since the dethronement of Liu Yu, the Song people had become even more afraid of the Jurchen and "never ever dare to point an arrow toward the Jurchen", and thus there was no reason why the Jurchen should be cautious and opt for negotiations with the Song.¹⁵

Although what these people wanted to stress above was their doubts concerning the sincerity and motives of the Jin, however, at the same time they had also exposed the fact that the Song military were not able to fight the Jurchen. Some of the other anti-peace ministers were of the opinion that even if they were able to recover the land

¹² Zhao Yi, *op.cit.*

¹³ In Qian Mu's opinion, the Southern Song during the Shaoxing era was much stronger in terms of military leaders, territorial conditions, morale and financial power if compared to the early days of Jianyan. See Qian Mu, *Guoshi Dagang*, (Hong Kong: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1991), pp. 461-465.

¹⁴ *YL*, ch. 123, p. 1984.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2000-2003.

lost in Henan (which the Jin hinted that they would return to Song), they would not have sufficient power to keep it under their control.¹⁶ Further, they were afraid that in the event of any peace settlement being breached, the military generals would blame the government for wrong judgment in deciding in favour of peace, and the generals would be reluctant to defend the Song in future.¹⁷ All the arguments above did not serve to enhance the position of the anti-peace ministers in the eyes of the emperor; on the contrary, these statements further proved that the Southern Song did not have the ability to fight the Jin. On the other hand, in 11th/1132, when the officials were debating on the issue of war against the Jin, the Minister of Rites (*Libu Shangshu*) Hong Ni (1071-1145), was the only one who differed from the opinion of the majority, stating that the situation in the country only allowed them to defend against the enemy and not to attack them. He also stated that “although to follow the opinion of the majority would be a better choice but it was a decision that would put the country’s position at stake”.¹⁸ One could see from the above situation that there existed many opportunists even among the war advocates who were actually just following the decision of the majority.

With regard to the military generals, during the first negotiations for peace in 1138, among the four generals, only Han Shizhong had strongly rejected the option to negotiate. He believed that the Jin had another motive behind their negotiations. He had assured the government that if war were to break out, he would volunteer to defend the most dangerous front-line, to fight to his death in order to encourage and

¹⁶ This was stated by Wang Zhidao (1093-1169), see *ibid.*, ch. 119, pp. 1931-1932.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 60, p. 1036.

raise the morale among the troops.¹⁹ From this, it could be seen that he did not have full confidence that the Song military would win in the battle. Zhang Jun had not made any comment on this matter. Yue Fei, on the other hand, only submitted his protest after the conclusion of the peace negotiations. From his protest, however, it can be seen that he recognized there were certain advantages from the peace negotiations, although his major fear was that it would lower the status of the Song. Yue also expressed with great emotion his desire to recover the lost territory, but he did not provide any concrete suggestions that could be put into practice.²⁰ This shows that he was not fully confident of his own military power if war were to break out immediately.

The only more realistic and constructive opinion of the time was that held by the chief councillor Zhao Ding. His opinion was that the peace negotiation with Jin was only a kind of diplomatic tactic. If Song were able to ensure the return of Hui Zong's coffin and the emperor's mother, they would have benefitted from the treaty even if the Jin were to breach the terms of the treaty later. Thus, this would be to the advantage of the Southern Song.²¹

Therefore, putting aside Gao Zong's personal concerns, let us look at the whole situation of the Southern Song in 1138 from different aspects. Economically, the country was still not stable; the rapidly increasing number of soldiers had used up more than half of the country's expenses. The bandit rebellions had recently been suppressed but the political situation in various regions was still not stable. The central

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 123, p. 1986.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 125, p. 2034.

²¹ *Ibid.*, ch. 120, p. 1944.

government did not have total control over the military and discipline was lacking in the various armies, with military leaders frequently violating court orders. Furthermore, most of the ministers at court merely expressed their dissatisfaction over the negotiations with the Jin without considering the actual situation of the time and did nothing constructive to solve the problem. All these factors had increasingly prompted Gao Zong to think that negotiating for peace would bring more benefit than fighting to regain the lost territory after all. Besides, it was deemed that apart from the problems regarding the lowering of the country's status and diplomatic position, Gao Zong's regime would not be losing much in actual fact.

It was thus felt that peace negotiation was not a bad idea after all. It had really brought some substantial benefit to the Southern Song at that time. With the signing of the 1138 treaty, the Song did not have to sacrifice a single soldier at war and the Jurchen had promised to send back the coffin of Hui Zong and Empress Wei, and to return the land of Shaanxi and Henan. Even though the historian Lü Zhong did not agree with the idea of peace negotiations, he had nevertheless not denied the fact that the 1138 treaty had brought the Song certain benefits that could not be easily attained by any other means.²²

On the other hand, although the terms imposed on the Song in the Treaty of Shaoxing in 1142 were harsher than the previous one, since the Song were not only forced to return the territories of Henan and Shaanxi to the Jin, but they also had to pay an annual tribute of 250,000 units of gold and silk each to the latter and to become a vassal of Jin, nevertheless, the weak Song administration had to adhere to the Jin's demands as the country was still in a precarious situation. Gao Zong was indeed

²² *Ibid.*, ch.124, pp. 2028-2029.

more than happy that the Jurchen were willing to negotiate for peace, and for the Southern Song regime too, it appears to provide an opportunity for respite and recovery.

3. THE TREATY OF SHAOXING AND THE RECLAIMING OF MILITARY POWER BY GAO ZONG

Due to the fact that the Southern Song was in urgent need of its military generals to defend the country, the government had to tolerate and accommodate these people despite their disobedience and recalcitrance against the government. The court was willing to ignore their recalcitrance for the time being and wait for a suitable moment to implement its plan to reclaim the power given to the generals. When the negotiations for peace with the Jurchen in 1137 had shown that there was hope for a peaceful solution, Gao Zong realized that if the Jurchen were to live in harmony with the Song, he would not have to rely on his generals anymore, and would be able to reclaim the military power bestowed on them if the peace negotiations were successful. This not only meant the restoration of dynastic traditions and policies of the Song, it would further guarantee the safety of his throne. Therefore one could see that the focus of Gao Zong's policy was based upon the issue of "security". To establish peace with Jin would guarantee safety from external invasions, and having concluded peace with the enemy, it would be able to restore military power to the central government, so as to ensure internal security.²³

Ever since the beginning of Gao Zong's reign in the Jianyan era, he was aware of the potential danger posed by his own military generals. Nevertheless, due to the threats of external invasions and internal rebellion, he could not introduce any drastic

²³ Liu T. C. (James), *China Turning Inward. Intellectual-Political Changes In The Early Twelfth Century*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University, 1988), p. 98.

reforms to limit their power. After the Miao-Liu coup, Gao Zong no longer had faith in the Commissioner of Imperial Encampment (*Yuyingsi*) created by him, and brought about some reform by establishing another palace army called the Imperial Guards (*Yuqianjun*)²⁴ to balance the power of the *Yuyingsi*. After the uprising of Zhang Bao,²⁵ Gao Zong decided to abolish his personal guards (*Qin weijun*).²⁶ When peace negotiations started in 1137, Gao Zong immediately attempted to reestablish control over the armies held by the generals. The chief councillor Zhang Jun was put in charge of this matter and his first target was to take over the military power held by Liu Guangshi as his army was the most undisciplined among the troops. However, as this was not properly carried out, it led to another mutiny.²⁷ The defection of Song general Li Qiong (1104-1153) to Qi on this occasion had further exposed the problem of the military discipline of early Southern Song. Therefore, after the success of peace negotiations in 1138, Gao Zong and his ministers at court took it as their immediate task to solve this problem. A proper plan was drawn and carried out step by step to reclaim the military power. Apart from disallowing the military generals to increase the number of soldiers under them, and promoting deputy generals to share their power, the most important change in policy was that the government had decided to adhere to diplomatic and political tactics to deal with the Jurchen, instead of using military force to bring about restoration of the country. After the defection of Li

²⁴ *YL*, ch. 25, p. 506.

²⁵ The rebellion of Zhang Bao occurred in 12th/1129. That time Gao Zong was in Mingzhou and was contemplating using the sea as a means to evade the Jin troops. His personal followers and guards led by Zhang Bao numbering about a hundred men had rejected the idea of escaping into the sea, and had the intention to kill the chief councillor Lu Yihao. This was however a small rebellion. Zhang Bao and the other sixteen leaders who were involved were immediately captured and killed. See *ibid.*, ch. 30, pp. 584-585.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 587.

²⁷ This was the mutiny in Huaixi. The subordinate of Liu Guangshi, Li Qiong, had rebelled against the Southern Song and had taken about forty thousand soldiers with him when he defected to Qi. *Ibid.*, ch. 113, pp. 1826-1828.

Qiong, Gao Zong had dismissed Zhang Jun from the post of chief councillor²⁸ and sent the general Zhang Jun to Huaixi to stop the forces from continuing their military campaign to the north.²⁹ Then, the emperor decided to return to Lin'an.³⁰ All these reflected on the fact that Gao Zong had decided against using military force so as to prevent his generals from becoming too powerful.

The biggest obstacle against peace negotiations in 1138 came from the civil officials in court. Nevertheless, despite the fact that their opposition led to some uncertainty among the people, it did not produce any concrete results. Therefore, Gao Zong easily took care of them³¹ and the treaty was signed without any obstacle. However, before Gao Zong could take a further step to fully restrain the power of the generals, the Jin had breached the treaty and made another invasion into Song. Gao Zong once again would need his generals' help in defending the country.

Although it was the Jurchen who breached the treaty, Gao Zong in the process of peace negotiations had realized the benefits that could be obtained from the peaceful approach. Therefore, during the war in 1140, even though the Song army was reported to have won several battles successively, Gao Zong only harboured the intention to defend and keep the land in the south-east. He had ordered intensive defense to be carried in the Huai region but warned the troops not to engage in any offensive campaigns so that the option for another peace negotiation would still be open. After the victory of Liu Qi at Zhegao, the Song-Jin war came to a stalemate. Gao

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ch. 114, p. 1844.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1840 and p. 1853.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, ch. 118, p. 1908. In his plan to invade the government of Liu Yu earlier, Gao Zong had personally gone to Jiankang to inspect his troops. See also *ibid.*, ch. 105, p. 1707.

³¹ See the illustration given in Chapter Five, p.120.

Zong took advantage of the situation by negotiating for peace. Envoys were sent to negotiate terms for the conclusion of another peace treaty.³² This was carried out because on the one hand Gao Zong did not want to continue with the confrontation that would drain the country's resources, overburden the people and eventually destabilize the state; what was even more important was that the emperor wanted to make use of this opportunity while negotiating for peace externally, to simultaneously gather power from the military internally.

The initial peace treaty of 1138 was signed after Gao Zong and his chief councillor Qin Gui (1090-1155) eliminated the anti-peace officials in court. Even though the peace proposal on this occasion did not lead to great commotion in court as previously, there was however, a certain amount of resistance, and this came mainly from the generals, who were holding great military power. While Gao Zong could disregard the proposals from the civil officials, he could not ignore the opposition of the generals, especially Zhang Jun, Han Shizhong and Yue Fei, and had to deal carefully with them, so as to avoid any untoward incident. The greatest opposing power had come from the two generals Han Shizhong and Yue Fei who controlled the strongest troops in the land; they had strongly opposed peace all the time, and were both upright and uncompromising. They had occasionally strongly indicated their opposition to peace negotiations by their words and actions. The rugged behaviour and rash action of Han Shizhong especially had troubled Gao Zong. Not only had he submitted memorials stating his ^{dis}satisfaction over the peace negotiations, he also plotted to capture the Jin envoy to sabotage the negotiations.³³ Although the plot to capture the Jin envoy was not successful due to leakage and the Jin envoy had taken another route

³² *YL*, ch. 141, p. 2276.

³³ *Ibid.*, ch. 125, p. 2037.

to avoid capture, this incident nevertheless clearly shows that the opposition of the generals towards peace could be transformed into real action to obstruct Gao Zong's plan. In 9th/1139, during the time the Jin were busy solving their internal problems, Han Shizhong had proposed breaching the 1138 treaty and carrying out an attack on Jin.³⁴ As this was not the time yet to withdraw power from his military generals, Gao Zong had merely commented on Han's proposal, stating that "Shizhong is a military man, he is unable to evaluate the political situation as a whole",³⁵ and no punishment was imposed upon Han. Due to these incidents Gao Zong was therefore cautious in dealing with his generals and had to use a few tactics to stop these military generals from obstructing his peace negotiations with the Jurchen in 1141.

In 4th/1141, when Gao Zong was confident of the success in the peace negotiations, he took the suggestion of Fan Tong (1097-1148) to reclaim the power vested in the Song military generals. The preliminary step taken was to use the victory at Zhegao as the reason to promote Zhang Jun, Han Shizhong and Yue Fei to the highest military positions in the central government, namely, the Commissioners and Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau of Military Affairs respectively.³⁶ From the surface, it looks like a promotion but in reality this was used as a tactic to disarm them. Ever since the Song Dynasty adhered to a policy of "civilian supremacy over the military" (*zhongwen qingwu*), the position of Military Commissioner was mainly taken over by civil officials. Therefore the promotion of the military generals to these positions was seen as a great honour. Nevertheless, at the same time, the power over

³⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 131, p 2109.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ch. 140, p. 2247.

the troops originally controlled by them would be dismissed by this promotion.³⁷ Their former troops would then be transformed to be the Imperial Army and the generals who remained would only receive direct orders from the central government.³⁸ With this move, the great generals would not have the chance of controlling their troops directly. Further, the government would also promote the subordinates of those generals to be the leaders of the troops and they would only receive direct orders from the central government.³⁹ This tactic of buying over the subordinates was very successful, for even though great changes were made with regard to the position of their former leaders, the former subordinates remained quiet, and some of them were even pleased with the promotions they themselves were getting. Although there did remain some army personnel in Yue Fei's troops who hoped that Yue would return to lead them,⁴⁰ but the chief councillor Qin Gui had circumvented them by buying over and making use of certain former subordinates of Yue Fei to spy and report on those who had the intention to restore their former military leader,⁴¹ so that these people could be eliminated before they could raise any objection. On the other hand, in order to avoid incidents such as the defection of Li Qiong, the court had come to a mutual agreement with Jin not to accept refugees and defectors from either side.⁴² Having implemented the above measures, Gao Zong then moved against Yue Fei by throwing

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2248.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2250 - 2252

⁴⁰ Among them were Yue's sub-commander, Zhang Xian (d. 1142) and his son, Yue Yun (1119-1142). See *ibid.*, ch. 142, p. 2282. Another example was one member of the imperial clan Zhao Shiniào (1084-1153). See *ibid.*, ch. 141, p. 2271.

⁴¹ For example, Qin managed to bribe Wang Gui (d.1153) and Wang Jun (date of birth unknown) to spy on Zhang Xian. See *ibid.*, ch. 141, p. 2271.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ch. 142, p. 2293.

him into jail and imposing the death penalty on him,⁴³ as a warning to the other military generals. Prior to that, during the time these three military leaders were promoted, Zhang Jun had willingly submitted by transferring the control of his troops to the central government⁴⁴. After the death of Yue Fei, Han Shizhong was afraid that he would be the next target of Qin Gui, and made it a point not to discuss military matters any more.⁴⁵ Therefore, with the help of Qin Gui, Gao Zong had successfully reclaimed the military power from the generals. Since then, the private armies which originally belonged to these military generals had been transformed into the regular forces of the central government. With that, the emperor regained his status as the supreme military leader of his troops and all civil and military personnel would swear loyalty to him only.

In 1142, a more permanent peace treaty between the Southern Song and the Jin was signed. By then Gao Zong had successfully kept the internal situation under his firm control, and externally, attained what he had long desired. Therefore, it could be said that Gao Zong's decision to negotiate for peace with Jin and to reclaim the military power from the generals, was to reestablish the dynastic principle of "strengthening the trunk and weakening the branches", so that the system of imperial absolutism could once again be fully implemented. Following the conclusion of the peace treaty, the most obvious advantage for both Jin and Song was the twenty years of peace enjoyed by both nations. Although peace was achieved by lowering the country's status to that of a vassal state of the Jin, and alienating territory and giving annual tribute to

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ch. 143, p. 2298.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, ch. 140, p. 2248.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 142, p. 2285.

the enemy, the fact that Gao Zong was able to ensure the return of Hui Zong's coffin and the safe return of his mother, was to a certain extent a great consolation to him.