Khalid's jealousy of al-Muhallab and his prejudiced and unfair attitude towards him, apart from being detrimental to the course of the war against the 'Azāriqa, ultimately recoiled upon himself. 'Abd al-Malik was indignant at the disartrous results of his refusal to recognise the superior merits of al-Muhallab and to give him his due. He was so disgusted with Khalid that even at a later date he rejected outright the suggestion to confirm him in the governorship of al-Baṣra, to which he had succeeded once again provisionally after the death of Bishr b. Marwān, saying that 'Khalid had bungled with the administration and had proved his incompetence to govern al-‘Irāq.' (1) The principal factor that turned 'Abd al-Malik against him was, no doubt, his arbitrary choice of 'Abd al-‘Azīz, in preference to al-Muhallab, for the leadership of the campaign against the 'Azāriqa.

Khalid was dismissed in disgrace and al-Baṣra also was handed over to Bishr b. Marwān, 'Abd al-Malik's own brother and his governor in al-Kūfa. According to reports in Tab., the event of Bishr's entry into al-Baṣra is variously placed by some in the year 73 and by others in 74. (2)

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(1). Anon. 267, 1-2.
latter year, however, seems to be the correct date. According to Anon. 26, Bishr died within four or six months of his entry into al-Basra. The death of Bishr occurred at al-Basra in the year 74 not long before (1) the arrival of al-Hajjāj at the beginning of the following year 75. Thus reckoning backwards from the event of his death, the entry of Bishr in al-Basra can only be placed in the year 74 A.H. It does not seem far from probable that the appointment of Bishr should have taken place in 73 and that he should have deferred his entry into al-Basra till the following year.

‘Abd al-Malik’s cherished hopes of establishing cooperation and harmonious relations between al-Muhallab and the government of al-Basra as represented by the new governor, were not to be fulfilled. Bishr, far from being favourably disposed towards al-Muhallab, proved even more antagonistic towards him than his predecessor.

No sooner was al-Basra made over to Bishr than ‘Abd al-Malik set about giving effect to the purpose which had necessitated the change in governorship. While Bishr was yet at al-Kufa, ‘Abd al-Malik wrote to him to the effect

(1) According to Anon. 270 al-Hajjāj entered al-Kufa in Rajab, 75. The tenure of office of the interim governor, Khalid, whom Bishr had nominated to succeed him, is said to be about two months. (Anon. 266). Surely, it must have lasted much longer than that because the death of Bishr is almost certainly an event of the year 74. (The report of al-Waqidi in Tab. 2/352, 8 that Bishr died in 73 is incredible. Wellhausen has also rejected it as impossible. Well. p. 228, note 1). Yet the report is a clear hint that the death of Bishr occurred only towards the close of the year 74.
that he should be considerate to al-Muhallab and appoint him to the command of the war against the Azariqa because he was a brave and experienced chief, and also reinforce him with eight thousand men from al-Kufa. *(1)*

Although Bishr also appears to have had some previous grudge against al-Muhallab *(2)* yet it was this letter from 'Abd al-Malik which was directly responsible for his developing a virulent enmity against him. Bishr resented very keenly that al-Muhallab should receive his command directly from the Khalīfa and not from him. He became so spiteful against al-Muhallab as if the latter had done him any wrong *(3)*. In indignation he said, "Surely I will kill him." *(4)* Mūsā b. Nuṣair, his minister who was friendly disposed towards al-Muhallab, counselled moderation to him saying that al-Muhallab was a man of honour, proven bravery and loyalty." Yet Bishr's animosity remained unabated so much so that Mūsā b. Nuṣair and 'Ikrima b. Kiblī felt it necessary to write to al-Muhallab to advise him that on Bishr's entry in al-Basra he should see him only in such a manner as would not disclose his identity to him. Accordingly when Bishr entered al-Basra al-Muhallab rode an ass and greeted him in a multitude of people. A little later when

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*(1)* Kam. 662.

*(2)* cf. the words in IS. 2/76.

*(3)* Tab. 2/856,5.

*(4)* Kam. 662.
Bishr missed al-Muhallab among the people who came to visit him, he inquired, “What has happened to your Emir al-Muhallab?” He was told that al-Muhallab had already greeted him and that he was ill.

Bishr would not lag behind Khalid in his disregard for the express orders of ‘Abd al-Malik. While al-Muhallab kept away from him, Bishr appointed (1) Walid b. Khaliq to lead the campaign against the ‘Azraqites. Walid met the same fate as had befallen ‘Abd al-Aziz on a previous occasion. Bishr then appointed another man who also failed to achieve anything. ‘Abd al-Malik now wrote to Bishr in a similar strain as he had done to Khalid on the defeat of ‘Abd al-Aziz, denouncing him for his indiscretion and chastising him for neglecting his orders. Bishr, however, remained unaffected and stuck to his own view. When the menace assumed alarming proportions and Bishr was constrained to look for a capable commander his proclivities were still against al-Muhallab. He thought of choosing ‘Umar b. ‘Ubaidullah b. Ma’mar for the task(2), but before doing so he was wise enough to confer with his advisers on the subject.

(1). Thus IS. 2/76 al-Mas‘udi also mentions (5/290) that one or two (vide variant under note 1) expeditions were sent and defeated before al-Muhallab was approached to accept the leadership. Al-Mas., however, ascribes the initiative for these unsuccessful expeditions to ‘Abd al-Malik which seems improbable.

(2). Kam. 663.
'Asmā' b. Khārija encouraged him in his defiant attitude saying that he was fully entitled to act according to his own discretion. Mūsā b. Nuṣair (1) was conscientious enough to warn him that the Caliph would not tolerate insubordination and that there was no denying the fact that al-Muhallab stood unequalled as regards honour, prestige and experience which remained unaffected by Bishr's opposition or disfavour. Mūsā also advised him that if he had any complaint against al-Muhallab, then the proper course was to ask for an explanation from him so as to be sure of his guilt or innocence. The third adviser, 'Ikrima b. Rib'ī (2) hit upon a via media and suggested a plausible move which at once commended itself to Bishr. Acting on his suggestion, Bishr wrote to 'Abd al-Malik informing him that al-Muhallab was ill and that it was not difficult to find an equally worthy substitute for him. Bishr also dispatched a mission under the leadership of 'Abdullāh b. Ḥakīm al-Muẓahhī to take this letter to 'Abd al-Malik. On reading the letter, 'Abd al-Malik spoke privately to 'Abdullāh b. Ḥakīm and after expressing his confidence in his honesty and prudence, invited him to suggest a man who, in his opinion, was best fitted to conduct the war against the 'Azraqites. 'Abdullāh unhesitatingly suggested

(1) IS. 2/77. Mūsā's advice is not mentioned in Kam.

(2) Thus in Kam. 663. According to IS. 2/77. 'Ikrima's view was identical with that of 'Asmā'.
the name of al-Muhallab and also assured 'Abd al-Malik that his illness would not prevent him from assuming the command. The intrigues of Bishr were now clearly laid bare before 'Abd al-Malik. In disappointment he said, "Bishr wanted to do the same that Khalid had done." Then he wrote to Bishr enjoining upon him to invest al-Muhallab with the command, emphatically setting out his superior merits and prescribing, most probably as a precaution against his intrigues, every detail of the manner in which help was to be rendered to al-Muhallab. In the letter, which reflected very vividly the high esteem in which al-Muhallab was held by 'Abd al-Malik, the latter gave the following instructions to Bishr:

'Send al-Muhallab at the head of the people of his town to fight the 'Azraqites and allow him a free hand in the choice of chiefs, distinguished horsemen, and men of rank and experience from among the people of his town because he knows them very well. Leave everything about the war to his unfettered discretion for I have full trust in his experience and in the sincerity of his wishes for the Muslims. Also you should dispatch a powerful contingent of the Kufans under the command of a strong and prominent noble man of outstanding prowess and experience in war. Then the people of the two cities (al-Basra and al-Kufa) should pursue the 'Azraqites wherever they went till 'Allah exterminates them.'(1).

(1). Tab. 2/355.
Bishr now realised that he could not with impunity go against the repeated orders of the Caliph. He, therefore, extended the offer to al-Muhallab who readily accepted it notwithstanding his illness.

According to the report in IS. (2/77), al-Muhallab's constant friend and benefactor, Mūsā b. Musair, had succeeded in his attempts to bring about a reconciliation between Bishr and al-Muhallab and it was only after al-Muhallab had cleared his position to Bishr that the latter agreed to appoint him to his former post. But the enmity of al-Muhallab was already so deep-rooted in the malignant heart of Bishr that the reconciliation could only be a case of making virtue of a necessity. Ever since his first outburst of indignation at the direct appointment of al-Muhallab, Bishr had never relaxed his determination to kill al-Muhallab only if he could lay his hands upon him.

During the days of his estrangement with Bishr, al-Muhallab once happened to be all alone in some lonely quarter of the land which was his own property. A man went up to Bishr and informed him of the unique opportunity to kill al-Muhallab when he was unguarded and unaccompanied by any of his tribesmen. Bishr at once dispatched a body of horsemen for the purpose. Al-Muhallab, however, was saved only through the prompt action of Mūsā who happened to be with Bishr at the time and who dispatched a slave, promising him freedom if he outstripped the horsemen of Bishr, to al-Muhallab to warn him in the nick of time against the danger to his life. Al-Muhallab had already fled when the horsemen of Bishr reached the spot. This
incident in conjunction with the origin of the enmity and other circumstances makes it clear that it was not a case of genuine misunderstanding which could be removed by bringing both sides together. The subsequent conduct of Bishr as recorded in Kam. and Tab. leaves no doubt that it was only under duress that he tolerated the appointment of al-Muhallab whom he had opposed so vehemently and consistently. The fire of enmity still remained smouldering under the ashes of helplessness and expediency.

Al-Māṣūdī also records (5/291) the conclusion between al-Muhallab and ʿAbd al-Malik of an agreement not very dissimilar to that concluded between him and al-Qubāʾ and the Basran chiefs on a former occasion. It is said that al-Muhallab demanded from ʿAbd al-Malik two guarantees as a condition precedent to his acceptance of the leadership of the campaign against the ʿAzāriqa. He asked, first, that he be granted the entire revenue of all the land wrested by him from the hands of the ʿAzāriqa, and, secondly, that he be assured of a supply of troop reinforcements. ʿAbd al-Malik objected to the first item on the ground that it was derogatory to the prestige and the prerogatives of a king because it was tantamount to the grant of a share in the kingdom. Al-Muhallab, thereupon, agreed to whittle down his demand first to two thirds and then to a half of the revenue and firmly refused to lower it any further. As for the second item, it could not obviously be objected to on any reasonable ground. Al-Muhallab categorically affirmed that if there was any hitch in the supply of reinforcements then he will consider himself absolved
of all responsibility for the conduct of the campaign.

It was quite consistent with the nature, the methods and the past character of al-Muhallab to have insisted on the fulfilment of the above conditions before he agreed to take upon himself the leadership of a major campaign. These terms were essentially the same as put forward by him to the Basrans at an earlier date with slight modifications to suit the changed circumstances of the time. Even the circumstances were not very different. On either occasion, the Azraqites had defeated more than one expedition sent against them and had advanced as far as al-Thawāz and al-Furāt. Bishr was all alone in his enmity of al-Muhallab and in this respect his position was analogous to that of Malik b. Nisāma. Even now as before, the general cry of distress on the lip of the Basrans was no other than "al-Muhallab." 'Abd al-Malik stood in as great a need of his services as did al-Qubāz and the Basran chiefs. It is thus clear that in the present case al-Muhallab was in as strong a position to dictate terms as he was on the former occasion. The main purpose underlying the terms cannot be said to be selfish. Al-Muhallab's chief anxiety on both the occasions was to ensure that his plans for the conduct of a prolonged campaign should not suffer either from lack of material resources or from interference by any other authority. The recent experience of the jealous intrigues and the obstructionist tactics adopted by Khalid and his successor Bishr must have done a great deal to strengthen his belief in the necessity and
wisdom of such a course. In the present case, no doubt, it was particularly necessary that al-Muhallab should secure for himself immunity from the intrigues of Bishr and the means to conduct the campaign unhampered and independently. Al-Muhallab’s emphasis on the second term that ‘Abd al-Malik himself should guarantee a supply of reinforcements betrays an apprehension of an attempt on the part of Bishr to withhold or to delay them which was amply justified by the subsequent attitude of Bishr.

‘Abd al-Malik’s objection to granting the entire revenue was indeed very different from that of al-Ahnaf on the former occasion and it may very well be taken as characteristic of the spirit of the Umayyid sovereigns. Unlike al-Ahnaf, ‘Abd al-Malik was anxious not to see that the wealth of the whole Muslim community be not appropriated unlawfully by a single individual, however great and serviceable he may be, but to safeguard his own imperial authority and interests against the least semblance of encroachment from any quarter. Al-Muhallab who had never had such wild and preposterous aspirations was ready to make an allowance for it and hence he lowered his demand to one half of the revenue. In practice, however, al-Muhallab seems to have been left in control of the entire revenue. It is just possible that ‘Abd al-Malik should have allowed the agreement to remain practically a dead letter. Towards the end of the campaign, we hear of al-Muhallab’s authority being circumscribed to the two districts of ‘Iṣṭakhr and Darābjird but we never hear of his contributing one half of the revenue to the State.
treasury. On the other hand his warning to Yazīd at the conclusion of the campaign that the position had changed from what it had been before so that thenceforward he could have only such amount out of the revenue of Karmān as al-Ḥajjāj was pleased to allow him (infra p. 249), is a proof to the contrary. As for the second demand, ʿAbd al-Malik's keen personal interest in arranging reinforcements for al-Muhallab as evidenced in his elaborate instructions to Bishr, shows that its validity was accepted without question.