

The Future of the Valley Alliance

Tersius, Leitha Fae, and Shard have already provided detailed reports on recent adventurer activity on Murandir. My wish is not to elaborate on these reports, but to raise some pressing matters concerning the future of the Alliance itself.

My current understanding, gained from Duke Hanrow, is that the Alliance will endeavour to retain each of its current Towers on Orin Rakatha, but also to re-colonize Murandir. The King intends to reside on Murandir, along with his court and advisers, and to nominally be the leader of the Alliance as a whole. (I say 'nominally' because it is unclear precisely whom has sworn fealty to the King.) The Towers will then be the responsibility of their respective Stewards.

So momentous decisions have been made that will affect all of us, but without any genuine consultation or discussion. It is therefore my aim to encourage others to express their opinions to their respective Guild and/or Craft leaders, and make their voices heard.

It is true that there is some wisdom in this plan. It is a good idea for our people to keep a 'bolthole' on Orin Rakatha as we return to our traditional homeland, and many of us do indeed want to return to Murandir. But the current plan also raises several serious problems, some of which I will enumerate below.

Food Provision (or “How will we feed those who dwell in the Towers?”)

The majority of the farmers in the Alliance are eager to return to Murandir, and will no doubt do so as soon as Murandir is reasonably secure. (The King has promised that any farmers may return if they wish, so I do not think that the numbers will be restricted.) But how, then, will we feed those who still reside on Orin Rakatha?

The most obvious solution will be to transport provisions from Murandir, but this will be fraught with difficulties. First, it will take the work of many craftsmen to do this (which will therefore reduce the number able to work the fields, and may reduce our overall food production capacity). Second, it will result in serious security risks. This is bad not only in itself – do we want to put ourselves in a position where we can be starved into submission by a canny opponent who somehow manages to prevent travel between Murandir and Orin Rakatha? – but also because guildsmen will be required in order to guard the caravans. The number of guildsmen available for active service on Orin Rakatha will therefore be diminished.

We could purchase food from others on Orin Rakatha, and/or rely on third parties to guard our caravans, but this would prove expensive and potentially leave us in an even more vulnerable position. Our inability to feed ourselves (on Orin Rakatha) could be exploited by wily merchants, as well as by our traditional foes.

Schools and Guilds (or “Is freedom of movement an illusion for guildsmen?”)

If all are free to return to (and dwell on) Murandir, then Guildleaders and Assistant Guildleaders are free to do so. And presumably they are also free to take crucial training equipment – such as magical teaching scrolls – with them when they do so. (They will also, of course, take their own expertise.) But what this means, in effect, is that Guild members requiring access to that equipment (or expertise) will need to be resident on Murandir in order to train and/or teach themselves (i.e. for most of the time).

(On the flip side, if the equipment/expertise remains on Orin Rakatha then those who wish to dwell on Murandir will not be able to do so!)

The promise of the 'freedom to choose where one resides' is therefore a false one, from what I can discern. The 'freedom' is only really to be extended to some of us, namely particular commoners and senior members of the Alliance.

Racial Fragmentation (Or “Will we revert to dividing along racial lines?”)

The Goblin King has returned to Murandir, along with many of his kin. This will further weaken the strength of our forces on Orin Rakatha. But worse than that, it appears to indicate that we may return to a situation where we divide along racial lines.

Some will recall that before we left Murandir there were 'Goblin' and 'Elven' camps, in addition to the so-called 'Good camp' which (roughly) became 'The White Retreat' (and was predominantly human), and so on. And now we run the risk that our people will again fragment. No doubt many of the elves among us already intend to return to the Deep Woods.

So I ask this. Does allowing us to split along racial lines (and reside separately) promote the unity of our people? I would suggest that it does just the opposite.

An Empire State (Or “Are you a subject of the Empire?”)

It would also appear that when on Murandir, at least, we are now subjects of the Empire. While we fail to resist the Empire, however, they can devote their forces elsewhere and inflict harm on others in the same way that they once did on us. Furthermore, what we will do when the Empire calls on us to perform a service, e.g. tries to conscript our people into its Armies? We will have few potential allies left to resist the Empire, having sat by and let them continue to conquer other planes and peoples.

It may be said that adventurers were responsible for making the deal with the Empire. That is true. But those adventurers were under the impression that the King they appointed would only be a King of the White Retreat, and they were apparently lied to by a White Seer concerning this.

It may be said that the King lost his family to the Empire. But with all due respect, this does not equip him to forgive the Empire on my behalf, when I too lost the father that adopted me, or on behalf of the other countless Alliance members who also lost family or friends.

Finally, it may be said that we can best fight the Empire by influencing it from within. There is perhaps some wisdom in this viewpoint, but it is doubtful that this is what the King and his council intend.

Closing Thoughts

One of the ideas behind having a King is to promote unity. But while I share this aim, I question the way that fundamental changes have been imposed upon the people of the Alliance, yet again, without those people having any real say in the matter. In short, imposed autocratic and unrepresentative leadership can bring about divisions and destroy, rather than sustain and protect, the Alliance.

The King and his council will claim that what they are doing is in the best interests of the majority. But how have they determined that? There has been no survey. You, the reader, have not been asked what you want. (Was it intuited? Did the White Seers see it?)

It may also be suggested that sometimes we do not know what is best for ourselves. That may be true. But this is no argument that the King and his council are better judges of what is better for us than we ourselves are. There is no necessary link between power and influence on the one hand and wisdom and intelligence on the other.

I am a military elf. (It is, though, a way of life that *I have chosen*. It is not a way of life that I take it upon myself to 'choose' for others.) I obey the orders I am given by my superiors, and strive to interpret them in the manner in which they were intended. But when I am given an order that I consider to be foolish or incorrect, I draw this to the attention of my commanding officers. That is no less than my duty than it is to obey.

I therefore encourage the people of the Alliance to speak out about what they want, and what they think is in the best interests of the Alliance. We should not fear informed debate. It will make us stronger.

Quicksilver

Leader of Spirior