

S – We've started recording, listen and learn a twink is speaking as they say. So this is comrade one. We will start with just give a general political descriptor of yourself and how old you were at the encampment and how old you are now.

C1 – I would just say I am a communist.

S – Just a communist.

C1 – how old was I? 22, I guess. And 23 now. It was like a year ago.

S – Just about a year and a half, yeah. So, when did you first go to the encampment?

C1 – The first day. I was there when, well I say I, *we* were setting it up. So I had been to all of the planning meetings for the encampment proper but not the previous occupation planning meetings that I heard existed. So I was there from the first second basically.

S – Damn, ok. Feel free to elaborate on anything you like as well, I should have said this before we started recording but that's mostly the point.

C1 – Isn't Comrade One what they used to call Pol Pot?

S – [laughter] Potentially yeah. I don't know too much about Pol Pot myself but...

C1 – I might be wrong

S – I can change your designation from comrade one to Pol Pot

C1 – Yeah if you want

S – New Codename. So, what first drew you to the encampment and what was your first major impression of the encampment?

C1 – Depends what you mean by drew me but the first thing was...

S – Anything you like, literally anything

C1 – Comrade Maryam coming to me and being like we are going to. sorry they sent me a message, on signal I think, which was very weirdly worded they were like: ‘oh do you want to come to a meeting I can’t talk much about it we are planning to sit down and not move for a while’ or something like that. They phrased it very cryptically. I had obviously seen what was happening at Columbia and especially [California University] where they had like occupied the whole university and shut it down basically. That’s the one where they were bonking people with the woggle.

S – Right, ok, that’s Humboldt? Berlin, right?

C1 – No California

S – Ah ok, ok, great. Keep going.

C1 – and yeah it was just like cool, I’ll probably get to fight with the police at some point. That was my thinking. Yeah. So that was my first impression as well?

S – Yeah, so you’ve answered what drew you to the encampment what was your first impression of everything?

C1 – My first impression of everything was when the meetings... I don’t know. It was somewhat intimidating because I didn’t know anyone at this point other than Maryam but...I can just say their real name actually.

S – did you not even know Steffanie?

C1 – No.

S – No?! Or Vogel?

C1 - No Carling did. No I knew Vogel.

S – sorry, I am distracting you. First impressions...

C1 – yeah, I can't even really remember that well. I remember talking about... having arguments with people over whether we should be occupying inside or outside and there was a clear split in the room. Where all of the what are now Red Storm People at one end, all sitting in a corner like this [sits with arms folded] first of all, and then... we obviously all wanted to be inside and I pretty much agreed. And pretty much all the liberals were on the other side of the table, I don't think this is co-incidental, and they were all like we should all go outside. And then I remember, that's the first... only thing I remember from this meeting, and then I remember it might have been my idea to go outside and then inside. But I can't remember, I definitely agreed to that. And then there was another meeting where there were way more people and my first impression was that a lot of people thought they knew what they were doing but didn't because they were clearly talking out of their arse half the time. That was fun, just in general.

S – So was this meeting with more people another planning meeting?

C1 – Yeah this was two days before, I want to say.

S – Damn, ok, wow.

C1 – or something like that. It didn't have that many people but it was, I think the first meeting was just Leonardo off campus people, and then the second one was: oh we are going to get neag people and whatever other groups. I think Yunus was there.

S – Oh... Who were some of these groups who were represented there? I know you've said NEAG and SDR, through our favourit person

C1 - there was probably someone from PSC there but I don't really remember. I think there was someone from UCU there, I can't remember who. That's all I remember. That meeting was more practical stuff, I don't remember many details other than I remember really trying to push for people making shields and everyone saying no we need to appease the Uni. I can't

actually remember what day of the week we encamped one but it was a bit of a shit show because we were like we will meet out at the bus station, you know the one outside the uni? I can't remember which one it is, you know the one opposite the uni basically?

S - Yes, I think I know which one you're talking about.

C1 - People were like: turn up masked up so there was maybe like six of us all fully masked up just sitting on a bench outside the bus stop just waiting for people to show up and at some point someone decided, got paranoid, that we were gonna get got and we need to go somewhere else and hid in a car park behind the uni, if you know where I mean? Which I think was, it just felt like no-one knew what they were doing. We stood there for a while, whilst Millie was sitting in the car doing some comms stuff. It was cold, I remember that, and then we had to carry a load of shit over to the..., we ran with tables and stuff and tents over to where the encampment was gonna be. We were like fuck where's the security we are gonna get arrested any second. I think everyone thought that the police were gonna come and arrest us all or beat us because this was like the first encampment in the UK and I think it was Manchester or warwick? And they had had some problems with the police. We assumed it was going to be like Columbia and then it just obviously wasn't. And the encampment was pretty pathetic to begin with, it was a few tents we had put in a circle with a few mats in the middle. Then we made some signs for the rest of the day. It was not what I was expecting so it was a bit jarring. I think we were still expecting to get kicked out fairly quickly.

S - So what sort of mass support were you expecting, in terms of the general public?

C1 - I am not sure I thought about it too much. I think I expected people would get interested and come and have a look, which broadly turned out to be true. I thought that if we got violently kicked out we might be able to come back with more people because that is what happened at Columbia basically. I thought that us getting repressed would get us more support

which maybe could have been true but it didn't happen. I wasn't expecting much to begin with, I was more concerned with am I going to get beaten and arrested today?

S - so how did you across the 80 odd days of the encampment...

C1 - god it was that long?

S - yeah I think it was about 84 days. How did you spend most of your time? What were you doing day to day in general?

C1 - for the first part, I had essays due which I ignored for a week or two. I spent quite a bit of time just sitting in the SU doing that which is terrible opsec. Aside from that just menial tasks. I spent a lot of time just walking around and talking to people. We would just stand on the edge and just walk in a circle because there was nothing else to do. We did quite a lot of like.. we made a few signs.

S - What did your sign say?

C1 - I cant' remember, I think I helped Maryam make a sign that said something like queers for Palestine or some shit. I helped with the controversial 'combat liberalism' sign.

S - that's the one that got moved a bunch didn't it?

C1 - yeah they took it down, someone tried to rip it in half which was probably a camp member because others had been ripped in half by others. I'm not sure I know they tried to damage it but mostly it just got moved. Yeah, we kept putting it back up and they didn't like it. I don't know who was moving it. I did the first few night shifts, when everyone was like super paranoia. I did stay up all night when everyone got woken up.

S - Was that 'Fash Night'? So to speak.

C1 - Were you there for that one?

S – I was not, I was there during the day but had left at about eight o'clock so I missed all the paranoia. Could you give a brief synopsis of what all *that* was?

C1 – I can't remember if I agreed to do night shift or not that night. Maybe that was unrelated. At some point every got woken up. It was quite early, I don't know the time, middle of the night basically. I can't remember who it was, probably child molester H shouting alerta alerta anti-fascista and then I got out and everyone was running around, no idea what was going on and managed to corner someone who was like someone saw some fascists over there running around or something. Some people went out to look for them, they said that everyone has to stay up and look for them. It wasn't that interesting but yeah, I think because some alleged fascists had been sighted at some point people had formed the defence committee and decided to take watch and had been up every night because they didn't delegate or anything...

S - Jesus.

C1 – for some reason. So it was interesting but that was fine. That was when more people theoretically started doing night shift but in practice only a handful of us because no-one else wanted to do it or people would agree to do it or not get. I did night shifts quite a lot. At some point we decided to put up barriers. It was just lots of fuck all.

S – I do appreciate lots of fuck all. SO how did you interact with the, I probably know the answer to this one from being there, but how did you interact with the factionalism on the encampment? What was it like from your perspective? How did you perceive the conflict there?

C1 – So I knew about it from very early because basically I got, at some point, acquainted with Alaska and Brunswick, I can't remember why. Alaska was talking about notes from below at some point so we were talking and then at some point we had the idea that: oh its

been three days we should go and occupy, we should just get a group and do it because its not gonna happen otherwise. And then we didn't do anything for age because we didn't have anyone, we listed a few people but nothing materialised. Then eventually, I don't remember what the catalyst was, but when the ilyas clique started doing more, it got more people involved and that's when it got started. My feelings on it were... I didn't even necessarily view it as factionalism to start with, I did later on, I didn't think this is an organisation, we were just, to begin with people who wanted to do something different. Then later on it was more specifically factionalism, we talked about staged a vote and things like that. I don't think I ever thought about it negatively, I just though it was what we needed to do because the leaders are idiots and politically bad. I never viewed it as a negative thing.

S - so would you say you didn't view it as conflict so to speak?

C1 - I viewed it as a political conflict, I didn't view it as personal until much later. It was more like a political disagreement. I would say it was a conflict though because we were trying to outmanoeuvre them, it wasn't like we were just disagreeing we were trying to win. It was a conflict but not an interpersonal conflict to begin with. I know at one point it became a big thing that, when the group chat got leaked, we were calling for people's deaths but I don't remember that happening...

S - Me neither.

C1 - I think I might have just ignored it or maybe one person said it once. I vaguely remember saying a certain someone should be sent down to the country but I didn't think that was a very credible threat.

S - Describe to me how the first meeting at the bandstand went, if you can remember that.

C1 - Was that the first faction meeting?

S – To my recollection yes though I came to it very differently to you, I met Alaska in the smoking area and we got to talking and I said ‘this is a bit shit, init?’

C1 – I think that was the first official one, we had ‘meetings’ beforehand but they were moreso just a chat. It wasn’t a formalised group. I think the groupchat was made for organising an occupation because I think if it were made in any other context I wouldn’t have been made an admin. So yeah, I think the group chat somewhat proceeded the first meeting. The first meeting, I don’t really remember. I didn’t know a lot of people at least initially. I can’t remember anything, its like a blur. We had quite a few of these meetings. My first impression was kinda like who are some of these people and some of the people I did recognise was like I am surprised you would be in this faction.

S – who did you think wouldn’t be in the faction?

C1 – Ember, I don’t think I thought that she would be there. I can’t really remember who was there.

S - I struggle to remember that as well. Its also a huge blur for me. Is there anything else you’d like to add about the factionalism?

C1 - it was probably necessary but we didn’t go about it very well. It became too interpersonal. It became a complaining group which was probably necessary but degraded our ability to act and we were too timid, we were forcibly critiquing them. We should have been sneakier. We should have said the meetings are illegitimate and just gone ahead with the plan. We should have had a plan in advance so we had one for later. That’s all I’ve got to say.

S - ok great, so what was your first impression of the comrades you work with now who you first met under the bandstand? Because in my reckoning of things, SAI/Red Storm traces its genesis to the bandstand. Tell me how you feel about that.

C1 – I don't know who I met for the first time at the bandstand. You probably. I am trying to remember who was there. Everyone else in the group I didn't already know. Just generally?

S – be as specific as you feel the need to get

C1 – I knew Carling, Maryam, Fred, Alaska and Brunswick already. I also met Steffanie and Vogel before. Everyone else I met there. I am not sure I really thought about my first impression or I don't remember. I was like who are these people where did they come from? You could somewhat tell who was more based and who wasn't. I think that was partly my immediate distrust with Forrest for being a member of the SWP. I was lukewarm on the explicit anarchists. I don't really have too many first impressions of later SAI members. No one made a particularly strong impression on me to begin with, other than this person is more liberal. There were some people as well who just didn't speak and I didn't get an impression of.

S - If you could as briefly or as expositionally as you would like, tell me what your experience of King's Gate-gate was, so that would have been may the eighth.

C1 – Was this before or after we thought Christ Day was in the SU building?

S - I am not entirely sure. I spent a lot of that day preparing for an exam

C1 – I remember... this was very early on. I remember hearing stuff about negotiations. I remember hearing he hadn't shown up to something, because of course he hadn't. I can't remember if it was after a standard rally but someone just said we are going to blockade King's Gate. I was at the door nearest the encampment and it was just a bunch of standing. Not much happened at that door. We just kinda did some speeches to about five people, we did some chanting. I heard screaming at one point. I had some idea what was going on. It was pretty uneventful for me. We did have some bother from security. They told security they couldn't do anything. We had a few people ask to be let in for well-being appointments and

we were like they've locked the door. That's all I remember. I remember someone later complained about that. I remember it was someone who came to our door.

S - you didn't go to the catalyst, if I am correct, on that day?

C1 - was this the separate secret crack team who went to the capitalist? Sorry the catalyst, bit of a Freudian slip there.

S - Yeah we sent our crack team after the capitalists. They'll love that you refer to them as the crack team.

C1 - I have no idea who was really in that team, I think it included Alaska. I know that there were videos taken but no-one posted them. I remember people coming to me and whispering that we had people going to the catalyst so we had to distract security. I can't remember if we did any distracting.

S - so moving on from our first incident, we have again, as long or as short as you would like, what was your experience of al-Shifa Hall/may 29th/black Wednesday/our 9/11.

C1 - 9/11 (good). I can't remember how the planning went I remember it was over one day, maybe two. I was somewhat involved in it. Somehow the liberals were like we are going to plan everything. I was in the distraction group. Was this before or after the nuisance group stuff?

S - I believe we did one nuisance on the night of the 27th at the Herschel Building.

C1 - the first nuisance was the day before yes that was like an engineering exam.

S - and also did the library, which we shan't mention

C1 - I was definitely not there for that one. Thank god.

S - me neither

C1 – I guess I was in the distraction group which was my suggestion to begin with. I was heading it to some extent. You were involved in this one because you were going in... you were involved in the other one.

S – yeah I was in a different group.

C1 - I remember asking you and you said no I cant which is fair. There were a few of us and we organised a distraction which was difficult because people in the other group didn't want to tell us their plans. I remember jumping in on the planning group when they were being annoying. On the day we did a distraction, which the uni quickly recognised as a distraction but it did seem to work. We basically ran around a bit and went to King's gate and were just messing about which got two security over there. Some people started shanking there. I went over to Maryam and said we should just start running, which we did. We ran straight to the henry daysh. I was out of breath because we were sprinting all the way. Security were chasing us. we went into the henry daysh and just ran up all the stairs. They would block the hall and say we had to leave but we would just go under their arms because they couldn't touch us.

S - I had no idea you were doing looney tunes-esque antics with security.

C1- we just ran around with two or three quite heavily built security guards chasing us up and down the stairs. At various points we just ran up four storeys and then back down. We were chalking inside the building on tables and causing a ruckus. We generally distracted a few of the security guards but as it turns out it probably didn't matter too much. Then we just ran out but some people got lost in the art building because Momo was there. They showed up after having done some chalking or were already there and got everyone lost in the art building. We ran out though and were directly opposite al-Shifa hall. At this point people were already in the hall and security had already locked it down so we went to one of the side doors, the one near the percy building and were trying to force the door open. Later security were trying

to get in this way and we were trying to block them from getting in. we were just trying to sneak in whenever they let someone through. Forrest said there's a window open at one point and we all tried to climb through. At some point there was the big kerfuffle around the back, where someone had a seizure. I was at the edge of that huge crowd and they were trying to make the police let the paramedics through. We were also trying to sneak in through the main doors and we were just trying to annoy security who kept saying 'stop trying to get in we aren't going to let you in'. we would peek in through the windows too. We were threatened with tear gas at some point.

S – so that's where that came from?

C1 – it happened a few separate times. At some point I was aware of the threat of tear gas, I don't remember being directly threatened with tear gas

S – we had heard about that in the hall that's why we made a barricade inside our barricade, because we had heard from outside that people outside were being threatened with tear gas.

C1 - I think we knew we weren't gonna be tear gassed because the police in the uk haven't used tear gas in decades. At some point someone came and was like there was no one at the gate to the courtyard, we should go and sneak in. there were already people in there, so we banged on the door and were like its us let us in. security were trying to stop us and injured a few of us. the door was locked then so we were just in the courtyard with at least one person who was injured. I remember trying to get into the building. We did get into the building but people were chased out by security. This happened at other doors, people would get in and then get dragged out. I think we got in and couldn't work out how to get round. There was talk of climbing to get in through a window as someone was climbing to the window from inside. We were just hanging out in the courtyard and at some point a massive crowd gathered outside. At some point police showed up and tried to open the door which we held and they

forced through eventually. Then they formed a line inside the courtyard. The crowd had gathered when the door was closed. Some security had come in the back way...

S – I do know they let police in through the building, from inside the hall we could see that.

C1 – I think that might have been later. At some point we were trying to hold the door while the police were trying to open it. we were chanting ‘keep it closed’ and the big crowd on the other side were shouting let them out. We were shouting ‘no’ through the door but eventually they figured it out. At some point other people were trying to get in and the doors blew open and people rushed in but then the police stepped in and formed a line that we repeatedly pushed back. They were not happy, they got their batons out. We were there for ages, staring them down. It chucked it down and I got completely soaked. Eventually we got let out one-by-one including the people in the courtyard.

S - we were still in the building after you had been forced from the courtyard.

C1 - maybe once we had heard they would let the people in the building out and we one-by-one left. We all thought we were going to be arrested. I went home and got changed, some people went to the bridge but I was not in a condition to do that, I was completely soaked through.

S – did you end up going to the arrestee support at forth banks?

C1 – no I went and slept. I thought about going but didn’t have any dry clothes. Carling didn’t want go either.

S – Fair. Fair. It is my understanding as well that you made a cop cry? Is this true?

C1 – Well, yeah. Me and a few other people because there was this one cop who looked already very unhappy so I just stared at him non-stop for two hours and a bunch of other

people joined in because I told them too, he was crying at one point because he had people staring at him without saying anything for hours and that got to him. That's all I remember really. It's a bit of a blur, I don't remember the timeline that much.

S - it's a completely insane day really. So we have three questions left. They should be significantly shorter than the al-shifa hall one. If you could now describe your last experience of the encampment, what was that like, when was it?

C1 – at some point a few of us had been told don't come back for a while because of the police and then we didn't but people started getting pissy with us and saying why aren't you here, why aren't you helping. So I kinda came back a bit before that. I was there on the last day for the final rally. At this point I was kinda sick of rallies but it was an alright one. I was just hanging around cleaning stuff out. I had moved my stuff out a while before, like a week or two maybe. The last thing I remember is just clearing stuff away and helping people move stuff.

S - what's it like to see the grass as is then?

C1 – it was weird because for a long time it was just fucked up and protected by fences because they thought we were going to come back. It was less weird then but you can still kinda see the damage a bit. It is slightly strange because it doesn't look like the same place, it looks smaller somehow. I wasn't sad because by the end I was begging for it to end. At least at the end, our faction had become the 'stop the encampment' faction which is weird because in a lot of places the more radical faction was the one that was like we need to keep the encampment until we get the demands which didn't make any sense really.

S - no it doesn't make sense to me either. What would you say, if you had to distil the encampment into one experience or feeling or moment, what would that be for you?

C1 – one feeling would be extreme exhaustion all the time because of night shift or waking up in the middle of the night. Similarly being kept awake by [old codename] FM or whatever it was called. That was the primary feeling. Lots of frustration, a few moments of excitement and feeling like we could have done something and lots of boredom and tiredness.

S – what would you say those moments were when you felt like you could do something?

C1 – King's Gate-Gate somewhat because a few of us were like this is really good and people were like this is really terrible because we have effected our image. The occupation somewhat, there's mixed feelings about that but it did feel like we did something. The day we showed up, knowing it was going to happen, that was more exciting, I guess. When we started doing the faction meetings as well because I thought... yeah. Some of the nuisance stuff as well.

S - just to wrap up, what have you been engaged with since the encampment and what lessons have you taken forward?

C1 – I think I have built an inherent aversion to rallies which is sometimes bad because I think they're sometimes useful. I've learned that most of the time you just can't work with liberals, a little bit but you can't on their terms because they won't, despite claiming to be democratic or whatever, they just will not be. they're schemers, they're liars and cheats.

That's probably two of the main lessons. I think when doing, with things like the encampment, is momentum, if you lose that you're fucked. I think I've learned that. I don't know what I've been doing, not very much. I've been doing lots of meetings...

S - one more meeting.

C1 – yeah, I did some stuff around the strike, we did some rallies. I have not done much actually, I've been pretty lazy. We actually haven't done much since the encampment now that I think about it.

S – there's always time. Is that everything you wanna say?

C1 – Death to the West?

S – Death to the West.

C1 - Maybe there's something else. I think at the encampment, once people started to treat it like an activist campaign, rather than what it was which was a very spontaneous thing, was when it started to get really bad. People brought in the logic of the activist campaign into something completely different which is where the negotiations came in and stuff and it just didn't work in that context. That's my general thoughts on the encampment, I think, like what went wrong was that it was using the wrong tools for what it actually was. But that's my last thoughts on it.