Battering Ram—III

By Michael Freitag

Many members of the academic council—mostly academic deans—were drifting out of the room when he arrived. It appeared that the academic council had met earlier that morning, and the meeting had been unknown to FAG/SAG.

Keshner had been in the occupied offices earlier, and had given the occupants a poster. Now, in the war room, he gave one to Simonides:

Simonides' face fell. He found Johnson and offered him the poster. Johnson became furious. For a long moment, he stared at the poster proffered by Simonides, then he turned to Keshner. There was a rather horrible silence. Johnson began to speak, then stopped. There was a long pause.

Here we have been consulting with you students, Johnson finally said. Why had the students gone off on their own and done something like this?

I hadn't thought of this until two in the morning, Keshner offered. I didn't think it would be important enough to wake you up over. The reply that the administration had never consulted with the student body before calling a faculty meeting never occurred to Keshner. Neither did he wonder why the administration thought it had any right whatever to participate in decisions to hold student body meetings. He did ask: why were the administrators upset?

Johnson repeated that he was disappointed that he had not been consulted.

Howard Johnson:

I'm not surprised I was opposed to it. I don't quite remember the specifics, but it is a fact that it was, and I suppose one could say to, potentially impossible to have a student body meeting. We had a graduate student council, we had an undergraduate organization, and it is clearly a reflection of experience that we get the slow groups that were being talked of—if you have problems in terms of the faculty—very difficult to have discussion, very difficult to keep the meeting from becoming sort of regulated by relatively few people. Unless as a cheering group, I can't imagine what that meeting would have been. I think there was much a meeting. I'll leave it to you to judge if I don't remember what happened. But I think it can be easily mobilized in that particular situation—could have been, and would seem then to the man on the street, who's looking at it simply, well, it looks as though there was a consensus, and so many consensus didn't take place. I would be no part of that kind of what I consider maneuvering.

and Constantine Simonides:

I felt very much put out at the time simply because I didn't know and we had nothing to do with any kind of planning of that, or not asked at all what we our presence was to their meeting. And to the extent that I felt that the meeting had been planned by people who had spent all the night, virtually, with us, in there—I said, "Well, why in the world didn't we talk about it at a meeting like that?" because my own instinct was very much against—the best advice I had gotten from the people who would talk to me, and certainly all who would speak for, who would say that they spoke for how it went inside, which see all unselected and therefore it could be all called because, it could be discarded—neat all that I had gave me an instinctive impression that the less we did after Thursday night, the more chance was that this group would become on its own, and that there would be avoided difficult confrontation or escalation of numbers of people here, and so on. So I felt that on Friday morning, the idea of a meeting in Creps could only purpose, no matter what plans there were for leaving. And therefore I was against it. But it was presented to me on Friday morning—very early, too, at about 6 or 9:00—so a last minute, because what had happened is hundreds of signs had been sent all over the campus, and that's how I found out, when I first saw the sign.

I thought to myself, well, that may mean that things will flare up again if there is a new meeting.

Johnson asked if the meeting could be called off. No, Keshner did not think it could.

Keshner found himself guided by Simonides into a room in the complex of offices adjoining the war room.

Simonides began speaking. Keshner suddenly thought he understood the anger. As Simonides spoke, it seemed to Keshner that Simonides was saying that he and another—seemingly Gray—had convinced the academic council to continue to wait, and not take any precipitate action. Apparently, there had been considerable sentiment in the academic council to take action on the occupation, and it had only been assurances that it seemed very possible that the demonstrators were losing support and would be leaving of their own volition reasonably soon that had pacified the council for the present.

If the radicals could attend a meeting in the afternoon with hopes of proselytizing the student body, there would be no inclination to leave the occupied offices before the end of that meeting. And if they succeeded at the meeting in galvanizing student support . . .

A second exchange with Johnson and Simonides occurred minutes later. How well had the meeting been publicized, they wanted to know now, as they each began toward asking again if the meeting could be called off. It now seemed to Keshner that the administration was seeking a path of least resistance out of this crisis by choosing a cosmetic method of dealing with immediate events without much, if any, thought to long-range problems, and without bothering at all with doing something about the basic issues that had precipitated these events, in particular a disciplinary system that had become abhorrent to most of the undergraduates.

Keshner made no attempt to argue with the administrators' choice of short-term crisis management. He repeated that he did not think he could call off the meeting.

Simonides left the room. Keshner had work to do in preparation for the student meeting. He decided to leave, and return if he could for whatever part of the meeting he could find time for.

Suddenly, Keshner noticed that Kenneth Wadeleigh was in the room, speaking on the telephone. As Keshner listened, he realized that Wadeleigh was speaking with the Institute's legal counsel. It seemed he was confessing to the progress of an attempt to obtain a temporary restraining order, an injunction. Keshner looked up. "That—"

Welcome to the big time, Wadeleigh drawled.

Wells Eddleman had been awake all night.

Eddleman had returned to the occupied offices after the intermittent FAG/SAG meeting. Everyone was sleeping. One person was sitting up in the secretarial area, looking at the door from Johnson's office to the occupied area; that was the extent of its protection. The floor was almost completely covered with sleepers, from the socialist realist painting into Killian's office.

One campus patrolman stood in the corridor, two in Johnson's office.

Eddleman returned to Baker. He began examining 8:04, Principles of Quantum Physics, having borrowed someone's lecture notes—Keshner's, as it happened. He had slept perhaps three hours in the past 72.

When he was not staring at the scattered sheet crawling with scrawled equations, he paged. At 4 am, he was back in the office, having ingested quantum physics for about three hours. The quiet was to be at 10 the morning.

He remained at the offices until about 6:30. At one point he spoke for about half an hour with a campus patrolman who stood in the corridor. A few people he knew were in the purple-painted second floor lounge around the building seven lobby; be spoke with them.

At 6:30 he was back in Baker for an eventful breakfast. In his room, he took two sixteen-ounce bottles of Coca Cola from his refrigerator, imbibed them, and waited for them to take effect. Shortly, he felt heat quickened, and he sensed his downward