Captain of Industry
(The true story behind the founding of Microcomm)
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The war was running hot when I arrived at ATI.
Don't get me wrong; I'm normally a peaceful kind of guy.
But war is kinda good when your employment is defense.
It pays for cars and groceries, for furniture and rents.
So I was *glad* the war was hot. Does that make any sense?

ATI had hired me as a circuit engineer.
Their product line was weaponry. They made it very clear
That my inherent pacifism wouldn't stop the war:
"We'll hire another guy and boot your sad ass out the door."
So silently, I did my job there on their factory floor.

At night, when not designing stuff to blow the world to bits
In order just to save it from the godless communists,
I had a peaceful hobby, and I liked it very much
To dabble in ham radio, and satellites and such,
And bouncing signals off the Moon, with microwaves and such.

The day came that the dreaded war was finally winding down
And everyone at work was wearing neckties and a frown,
And adding to their resumes, what they've done and where they've been.
Soon contracts would be cancelled, and the layoffs would begin.
And no one had to wait long for the layoffs to begin.

My best friend at the company, a QC tech named Jack
Ran up and down the hallways patting colleagues on the back
And smiling when the pink slips sent our buddies out the door.
"Cheer up," he'd tell the terminated. "There'll be other wars,
"Of that you can be certain. There are always other wars."

They closed my lab, but kept me on the payroll to take stock
Of all the test equipment destined for the auction block.
Those Hewlett Packard spectrum analyzers, Dumont scopes,
And lovely Fluke multimeters, now little more than jokes,
All soon to be dispatched with just a dozen pencil strokes.

And so, I hatched a plan to squeeze a quart of lemonade
From all the lethal lemons that my friends and I had made.
I knew what worked, what didn't, where the bargain bits were hid,
What was the best of all the stuff that's going out for bid.
I stole my old lab's treasures for a thousand dollar bid.

When my own pink slip finally came, I didn't shed a tear.
The test equipment I'd been storing up for half a year
Was everything I needed to begin a new pursuit.
I built a lab and looked around for colleagues to recruit,
So I might end up solvent, instead of destitute.

That thousand buck investment cost me everything I had,
But set me up with California's finest circuit lab
For building and designing any microwave device
The nerdy radio amateurs were thinking would be nice.
What fun it was to make that stuff! (The cash was also nice.)

Whoever could imagine that a geeky guy like me
Could go from laid off engineer to Captain of Industry?
My Silicon Valley startup seemed like adolescent's play.
Of course, old Jack was right; there would be other wars some day.
But that's another story, for another poem and day.