

*“Ten Literary Accounts of a War that Was Never Fought”*

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As the son of a Department of Defense civilian, my family and I spent many years abroad during the Cold War. In the mid-1970s we lived at the U.S. nuclear submarine base at Holy Loch, Scotland, and for most of the 1980s the West German city Frankfurt was home. As far from our minds as it was at the time, the presence of American military and civilians in Europe represented a commitment to NATO should war break out.

Years later, after the Cold War ended and the long-standing American military communities in Europe began to be disbanded, I started to reflect on the reasons that my family and others like us had been overseas. It was during this time that I came across a used copy of *The Third World War: August 1985* by the British writer General Sir John Hackett. Written in 1978, Hackett described, in a seamless blend of fact and fiction, the likely causes and outcomes of another world war in Europe in his immediate future, in 1985. The book piqued my interest. The destructive conflict that Hackett imagined would have occurred during my junior year of high school in Frankfurt, and the calamitous events he described would undoubtedly have impacted me, my family, my community—in short, everything that I knew at the time. This was the impetus for my collection.

With Hackett's work on my shelf I went looking for other, similar books from the last decades of the Cold War. I was pleased to find that Hackett followed his original work with a 1982 sequel, subtitled "The Untold Story." But to my surprise, I also came across approximately twenty other books in a similar vein. Most of these were written in the 1980s, at a time of uncertainty in political relations between the East and West blocs. With one exception, Bidwell's *World War 3* (1978), all were works of fiction. Several, most notably Macksey's *First Clash* (1984) and Zaloga's *Red Thrust* (1989), were similar to Hackett's books in that they told their stories with the stony-faced, detached exactitude of a journalist reporting a current event. These works did not seem like fiction.

Nine of the ten books in the collection submitted here describe the military efforts NATO's member nations, including the U.S., U.K., and Canada. Not surprisingly, the stories reveal a palpable Western bias. The exception is Peters's *Red Army*, which, while written by a U.S. Army officer, sympathetically tells the story of a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict in Germany from the perspective of Soviet protagonists.

My small collection of books describing a Cold War "turned hot" represents a fascinating-and overlooked-subgroup within a larger body of popular military fiction from the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. These works might also legitimately be regarded as successors to the earlier Cold War novels (e.g. Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* (1959), Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* (1962)) that contemplated mankind's future in the Nuclear Age. Ultimately, I would like to further develop this collection.