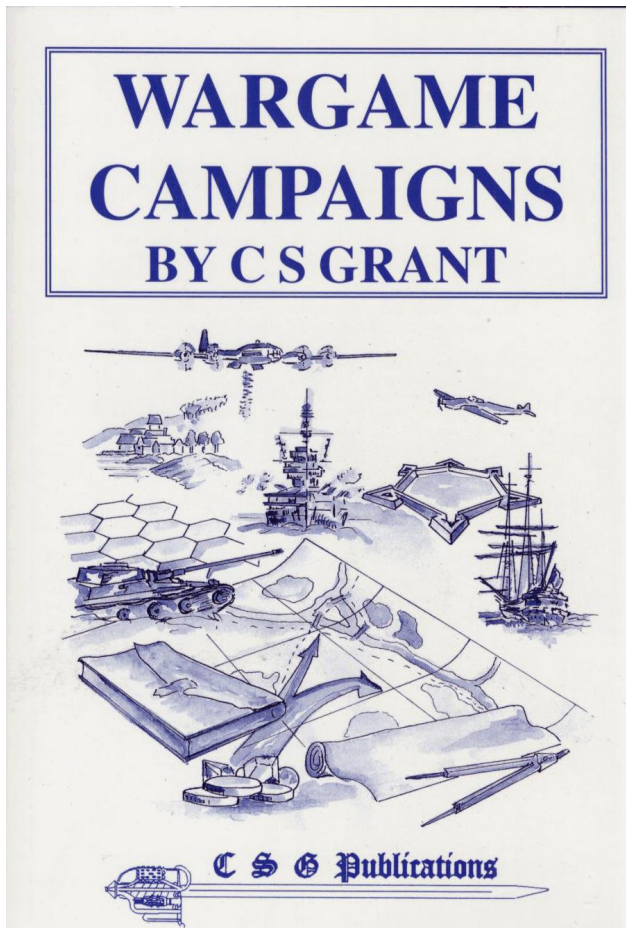


'Wargame Campaigns'

By C S Grant

Review by Paul Le Long

This is one of the three books dealing with setting up wargames campaigns in a generic sense, the others being 'Wargaming Campaigns' by Donald Featherstone and 'Setting Up a Wargames Campaign' by Tony Bath. This present volume has much in common with the latter, in that both concentrate on giving the reader advice rather than presenting a set of rules. Both are pitched very much in the 'have you thought of doing this?' style rather than 'do it this way.'



The chapters in this book are jumping-off points and you can adopt a pick and mix attitude to the rules ó you will undoubtedly reject some ideas immediately, adopt others as presented and tinker with the rest. The aim is to inspire and provoke you to think for yourself about what a wargames campaign should include and how it should be done, rather than to tell you how to do it. Well suited to the temperament of solo wargamers, I feel.

Solo campaigns are not mentioned specifically which is disappointing initially from the author of 'Programmed Scenarios for Wargames' ó one of only three books devoted to soloing ó but the author explains at the end that most of the ideas presented throughout are adaptable to solo gaming and that he is leaving it to the ingenuity of soloists to tinker and adapt.

Having explained the tone of the book, I'll move on to the contents. There are 25 chapters which sounds a lot but most are quite short ó half a dozen pages on average. The introduction is all about why we would want to play a campaign game in the first place. Then we move on to 'The Start Point,' which is a checklist-type chapter on the sorts of things you might want to include in a campaign. Then we have chapters on maps (making them and using them), movement, armies and playing mechanics ó all the basics really on getting a game off the ground, creating forces and moving them around and into contact.

Then we have personalities ó to populate your campaign setting ó royalty, generals and so on. We move on to casualties, prisoners, recruiting, weather, rivers and boats, politics and finances. Some of these themes are integral to campaigns while others are peripheral ó it's up to the reader which to adopt or to ignore.

The tone then changes a little when we consider more general topics like war diaries and journals, scenarios and settings and postal campaigns. Then we jump back to one of the campaign basics ó orders and communications. This chapter is out of place but nevertheless it's an important one. Then we move on to naval and air campaigns, subjects not often covered in wargames literature and which therefore could have been expanded; I expect space constraints prevented this but nevertheless the author should be congratulated for including them at all.

The next chapter is 'Random Happenings' which being a staple of campaigns should have been placed earlier in the book but is nevertheless a good chapter. Next we have a chapter on technology ó this is interesting, talking about things like canals, railways, airlifts, communications ó including satellites, radio and telegraph. It's all too brief which is a shame but it is thought-provoking, which is clearly the point.

Then we move to the final chapters ó using computers to run campaigns, adapting boardgames and a chapter on sieges; this last is interesting as it looks at sieges in campaigns and as campaigns in themselves. The final chapter is entitled 'Other Aspects' and is a potpourri of ideas, including civilians, social unrest, spies, refugees, corruption, assassination and producing a campaign newsletter or newspaper.

This is a very good book, packed with advice. My problem with it is that it is too short; I don't dislike the 'have you thought of including this?' approach rather than the 'you must do it this way' attitude, but I would like a little more detail on some of the topics. The author writes well and has lots of good ideas but he is too constrained by space to flesh out some of those ideas adequately, which is a shame. So the reader really is left to use the book as a starting point on the way to developing his own systems.

Nevertheless, this is still a book well worth reading. If you are new to campaigns, then you really should pick up a copy. If you are a veteran, then you might not learn a great deal but may still benefit from some of the content as an exercise in encouraging you to think about some of the more esoteric aspects of campaigns that you might like to include. Either way, this is a very readable book which should make you think.

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