



## **The Jungle Is Neutral (Classics of World War II: The Secret War)**

*F. Spencer Chapman*

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**The Jungle Is Neutral (Classics of World War II: The Secret War)** F. Spencer Chapman  
THE JUNGLE IS NEUTRAL makes *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* look like a tussle in a schoolyard.

F. SPENCER CHAPMAN, the book's unflappable author, narrates with typical British aplomb an amazing tale of four years spent as a guerrilla in the jungle, haranguing the Japanese in occupied Malaysia.

Traveling sometimes by bicycle and motorcycle, rarely by truck, and mainly in dugouts, on foot, and often on his belly through the jungle muck, Chapman recruits sympathetic Chinese, Malays, Tamils, and Sakai tribesman into an irregular corps of jungle fighters. Their mission: to harass the Japanese in any way possible. In riveting scenes, they blow up bridges, cut communication lines, and affix plasticine to troop-filled trucks idling by the road. They build mines by stuffing bamboo with gelignite. They throw grenades and disappear into the jungle, their faces darkened with carbon, their tommy guns wrapped in tape so as not to reflect the moonlight.

And when he is not battling the Japanese, or escaping from their prisons, he is fighting the jungle's incessant rain, wild tigers, unfriendly tribesmen, leeches, and undergrowth so thick it can take four hours to walk a mile.

It is a war story without rival.

## **The Jungle Is Neutral (Classics of World War II: The Secret War) Details**

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Author : F. Spencer Chapman

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## **From Reader Review The Jungle Is Neutral (Classics of World War II: The Secret War) for online ebook**

### **Ian Hallam says**

An interesting read but deals more with Chapmans 3 years surviving in the jungles of Malaya, than any fighting or events of the Japanese occupation of Malaya.

It describes his meeting up with various groups of bandits and resistance fighters, and vague references to caches of weapons left for the bandits.

I was hoping for a more detailed account of the Japanese occupation of Malaya.

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### **Stephen McMahon says**

Fascinating insight into a very courageous individual. It is a wonder how he managed to survive so many imminent threats to his life. Quite apart from the Japanese, illness and the many physical inflictions suffered, it must have been very difficult to deal with mentally. I can also imagine that readjusting to normal life must have been quite an ordeal for him.

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### **Michael Romo says**

The story of Colonel Spencer Chapman's survival during the three years he spent as a guerrilla fighter in the Malayan jungle. His tale is a fascinating one; he survived chronic illness, malnutrition, the jungle and the Japanese. His tale is a testament of how much the human body and psyche can endure. Most Allied soldiers when faced with survival in the jungle quickly perished and a major reason was because they saw the jungle as a hostile and forbidding place. Hope rapidly vanished for those that feared the jungle. Those that survived saw the jungle as a neutral place that provided opportunities to live rather than a place to die.

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### **Rob Markley says**

Touted as a classic of guerilla warfare. Indeed I learned more about the true nature of guerillas from this than any other source. There is the very short period when Chapman is engaged in true sabotage and irregular warfare against the Japanese supply lines. Then he drops into the murky world of communist guerillas for years of intermittent malaria and tedious boredom. Certainly the communists aren't in the least interested in any actual endeavours against the occupying power - simply they bide their time and build up control over territory - not at the expense of the Japanese but against any legitimate authority. This is the true nature of things - guerillas do not fight they form governments of oppression and exploitation and thus the evils of communism begin and take root.

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### **Peter says**

A humbling book. Spencer Chapman dismisses in a paragraph the sort of adversity that would define a normal life. This is a remarkable tale of triumph over adversity, with delightfully few lapses into the inner-psychology of the sort that ruins so many books these days. It is laborious imparts, but they are worth getting through. At the end, I am left wondering what happened to him after the war. How did a man who endured so much finally conclude that it was not worth it?

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### **Abhuston says**

Starts off good, but gets bogged down in trivia about each trek through the jungle. No overview of what is going on in Malaya at the time.

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### **Khairul Azlan says**

Is an incredible story by a British soldier spencer chapman who worked at Malaya for about three years and a half. An unforgettable experienced told by the colonel during the world war 2 about how the Japanese army treat them in captivity. An amazing story best suited for those that like history and non-fiction type of book.

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### **Zayn Gregory says**

The Jungle is Neutral: The memoir of a British lieutenant in WWII Malaya who conducts guerilla warfare against the Japanese. It's not a very gripping story. All the successful guerrilla work takes place in the first quarter of the book, and from there on it is one long anticlimax of malaria, dysentery and thrashing through the jungle. Managing not to die in the jungle for a few years is a pretty good feat for a foreigner but he's surrounded by locals who do it with less effort, and he doesn't have much interesting to say about it beyond the bare facts. His major accomplishment between all the not succumbing to illness is training up the Malayan Communist Party cadres in tactics. The book ends with the war so I'm left wondering to what degree the post-war MCP insurgency against the British was more effective because of the good lieutenant's training.

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### **Nina says**

A thrilling account of one British officer's jungle adventures in Malaysia with Chinese guerilla fighters during WW2. A fast, fun read.

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### **Judith says**

A fantastic & fascinating book - lent to me by my daughter who had it recommended by one of her lecturers for insight into what Malaya went thro' during WW2

Why anyone ever reads fictionlised accounts of any historical event, however well researched, is beyond me.....

And my only carp about this book is that Spencer Chapman kept diaries thro' the war - some of the entries are quoted - why didn't he use more? The entries have a vividness & immediacy the rest of the book doesn't quite live up to.....

The forward by Earl Field Marshall Wavell - is equally good....

As far as I'm concerned this is well worth reading.....

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### **Anoop says**

This is brilliant account of author wherein he describes his years behind enemy lines in Japanese occupied Malaya.

The author stays there for better part of second world war, organises resistance, participates in acts of sabotage, lives off the land, faces severe illness many a times, almost dies at least once, moves through jungles, rivers to survive n ultimately meets up with a submarine to escape. In between he is also a prisoner of war for sometime.

An excellent account of survival n small team action, the book is must read.

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### **Steve Merrick says**

As ripping yarns go this ones a doozy, its also got the reputation for being some kind of jungle warfare manual, I think quite unfairly..... Its all about stay behind parties in the deepest jungles, tricky enough in peacetime but when as googolplex of Japanese over run the islands well they didn't count on nutters like Spencer F Chapman, all I will say is that if the Australian army breaks and runs well any sane person would try and run faster than they can, but hell no, one man turned and strolls into the jungle to commence a random sort of guerilla warfare on them. So whilst the British and entire commonwealth military scarpered or surrendered (very bad option with hindsight!) he set up a kind of scratch force and decided to fight back, slowly and rather painfully Chapman ended up on a massive jungle learning curve and after a lot of suffering cracked it. Its well written and funny with a particular British cruelty to the gallows humor as well.

On the brighter sides I have almost finished the researches into into the second world war and can go back to comic books soon??? However this book is really worth the read just for the sheer balls of the stay behind parties of force 136.....

Worth a read if you are into guerilla warfare :-)

If Not then it is still worth a read just for some of the descriptions of the jungle.

If you don't want to read it for the war or the jungle it equally works as a rather insane example of victory snatched from the jaws of defeat.....

It has some very good advice about off road cycling too. (Although it only a paragraph but as an environmentalist cycling type it was a very gripping paragraph indeed. LOL)

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### **Josef says**

A bit dense and sometimes show, otherwise an interesting story.

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### **Gina Gallyot says**

and so I finished it! though I did not want it to end. a journey through my country through the eyes of a foreigner forced to adapt to ways so familiar to me. I enjoyed his narrative style, precise recollections and optimistic plans even in the throes of raging fevers and grip of dysentery. His hope sttengthened because he had faith in the goodness of people. the jungle is indeed neutral but can become anything you want it to be.

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### **Eleanor says**

This is probably one of the best non-fiction's I've read for a while. Chapman's narrative is very straightforward and easy to understand. His intent is to communicate, rather than impress, and that is a huge relief (not to mention even more impressive). I don't mind books using the more complex vocabulary that seems to be disappearing from the English language (because how do we prevent them from disappearing?), but I do get irritated when they are used excessively, and when a much simpler sentence would have been more effective.

Anyway, onto the review. Chapman's story is focused entirely on the three years he spent in the Malayan jungle just before and during the Japanese occupation of Malaya (Malaysia today). During that time, he trained and lived with Chinese guerillas, was captured by and escaped from the Japanese, collected plant and flower samples, wrote training manuals and newsletters and most of all, gives us a very real account of the jungle being your home.

Chapman admits that due to circumstances, he suppressed a lot of his emotions during his jungle stay. For obvious reasons, he had to find positive, hopeful and practical reasons to continue his everyday quests, and this attitude is reflected in his narrative. The most striking parts of the book do not come from his recounts of combat, (there's actually very little of that), it comes from those moment when deeper thoughts peek out - for example: the joy he finds in the simple acts of looking for orchids, and the guilt and shame he feels at being a British soldier who has failed to defend Malaya and Singapore (it doesn't help that his Chinese guerilla buddies like to remind him of the fact, but it does mean that he tries his best not to make war on Japanese allied Malay soldiers when they fire on him).

(SPOILER - Skip this paragraph if you don't wish to read it) - One of the more memorable parts for me was Chapman recounting his capture by the Japanese and the very cordial, polite and engaging conversation which followed with their English speaking Officer. Chapman's tone hints that this conversation was perhaps the most engaging he has had the opportunity to indulge in for a time, probably because he was never bored (he bores easily). Between coming up with believable lies and exchanging genuine pleasantries about his Japanese friends from Cambridge, it seemed to me that Chapman formed a genuine bond with his captor. Later when Chapman says "I hope my Japanese friend was not beheaded for letting me escape." ...I'm not entirely sure how sarcastic he was being, or if he was being sarcastic at all.

Personally it was a revelation to read Chapman's account. As a young Malaysian, it was revealing to read about the places Chapman traveled to - places that have been developed, urbanized and look completely different today. His story gives me a sense of the heritage that is slowly disappearing, but also drives home how far we have come in a very short amount of time. Mostly it comes as a reminder that despite what people say about existing race relations in Malaysia, we truly have made exponential progress with living together and recovering from war. There is a bit of hope in that at least. Otherwise I hope that we do not further lose our heritage and history, something that is further driven home when I read about Chapman's time with the Sakai and their hospitality.

I would recommend that anyone read this book. I originally found it in the Singapore National Library and bought my own copy (it's in the reference section on the 11th floor if anyone is curious). The lessons that Chapman tries to teach us about cooperation, understanding and survival are still relevant even in our relatively peaceful and modern lives.

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