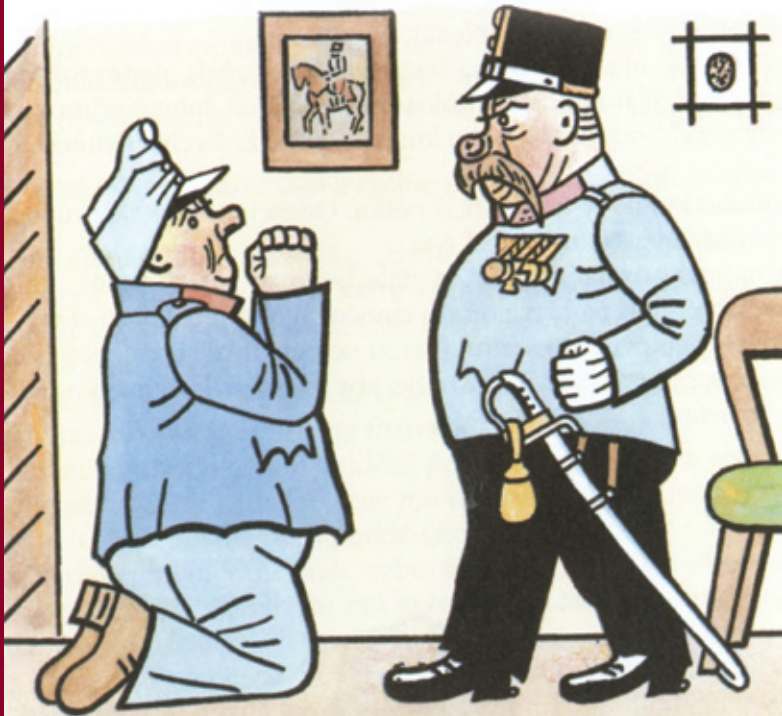


Jaroslav Hašek
The Good Soldier Švejk

Read by **David Horovitch**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



1	'And so they've killed our Ferdinand...'	7:13
2	Švejk looked beautiful...	6:56
3	Back in his cell...	7:23
4	After Švejk's beautiful, sunny days in the...	7:06
5	And so Švejk found himself at liberty again...	7:22
6	On that memorable day...	6:54
7	The next day on his round...	6:57
8	Chaplain Otto Katz never prepared his sermons...	6:52
9	The keen gaze of the judge advocate...	7:42
10	In the morning these two had led Švejk...	7:05
11	It was during these days...	6:41
12	That evening they received a visit...	7:37
13	Polaks Ltd. was a very efficient firm.	6:34
14	Lieutenant Lukas was a typical regular...	6:18
15	Next day, soon after Lieutenant Lukas...	6:49
16	Next day, when she went out for a walk...	7:05
17	Švejk's new friend told him...	7:53
18	Lieutenant Lukas crossed to the opposite...	7:28
19	With that the lieutenant took a newspaper...	5:57
20	Meanwhile one could see passengers...	5:35

21	Švejk looked at him...	7:02
22	Now the sergeant greeted Švejk.	7:59
23	It was past midnight...	6:59
24	It was late in the evening...	6:35
25	In the dark spaces of the dungeon...	6:58
26	Recalling this, Colonel Schroder smiled...	6:49
27	During the three days which Švejk spent...	6:47
28	After some time Švejk, looking in a friendly...	7:20
29	As the inspectors departed...	6:19
30	The senior chaplain smiled.	7:42
31	Suddenly the door opened...	7:34
32	Now it was for Švejk to experience...	6:54
33	The colonel turned over the pages...	7:05
34	Lieutenant Lukas strode angrily...	6:29
35	At first he heard nothing...	6:45
36	For a long time Švejk vainly searched...	6:38
37	After a while Sergeant Fuchs phoned him...	7:31
38	Vanek, sipping black coffee...	5:34
39	In the door appeared the pale face of...	7:44
40	But the soldiers' busy hands didn't rest...	8:20

41	When the train stopped at the station...	7:34
42	Shortly before the signal to embark...	6:39
43	As he left the station building...	6:50
44	As the train had already been standing...	7:00
45	Serenely calm, Švejk answered once more.	7:23
46	War demanded valour even in pilfering.	7:06
47	The general grew meditative...	7:17
48	Marek, having attained the rank of battalion...	7:06
49	Half an hour later...	7:18
50	This diplomatic speech went some way...	7:12
51	The further they went, the more the dogs...	7:12
52	From brigade a courier came riding up...	6:47
53	His puffy eyes noticed Švejk...	7:08
54	One thing was certain...	7:01
55	The general was bellowing like a bull...	7:05
56	Everyone recognized the symptoms...	6:25
57	Soon Švejk found the battalion office.	7:12

Total time: 6:55:41

Jaroslav Hašek

The Good Soldier Švejk

Jaroslav Hašek was a natural satirist, a man with no sense of belonging but a keen awareness of the absurdity of the times in which he lived. He laughed where empty despair might have been a more rational response; was a prankster, anarchist, Communist and joker; was irresponsible and drank to excess. But he created a new genre, and in *Švejk*, a new hero; one who was able to point up the grotesqueries of his world in a manner that is still as pertinent today – and, importantly, still as funny.

The idea of an anti-war novel seems rather obvious now; books like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Goodbye to All That*, *Slaughterhouse Five* and perhaps most especially *Catch-22* are so much a standard part of the canon that it is difficult to imagine a conflict (or a library) without them. And there is of course a long history of anti-war sentiment in songs, poetry and drama, either directly

– by opposing a particular event – or indirectly, by looking at the effect war has on the combatants and their friends, lovers and families. The First World War – for English-speakers, certainly – has almost become the property of poets, such was the power of Sassoon, Owen and their literary comrades in bringing the truth of its nature to the readers at home. Equally, the notion of the wise fool has a history almost as long as literature itself, with Voltaire's *Candide* and perhaps Sancho Panza as the forebears of Švejk.

But Hašek's stories predated all the other novels of its type, and created a central character that can be traced from these ancestors, but is less easy to define. Švejk is obedient but cunning, bumbling but knowing, patriotic but self-serving, duplicitous yet charming. Just how innocent is he? He is a kind of Everyman, but also a catalyst illuminating the stultifying, inhuman bureaucratic

mess that was the army (quite apart from war itself). Hašek was angry at what the soldiers were being made to do, and more than aware of the craven nature of the officers; in his series of tales about the innocent Švejk he made his readers laugh at what they knew to be only too true.

Hašek was born in Prague in 1883. For centuries before Hašek's birth it had been an area fought over by combating empires and continued to be so for some time afterwards. At Hašek's birth it was part of Austria-Hungary, a new name for an old Empire that was struggling to hold together its constituent parts. When he was born, the world was on the brink – or perhaps precipice – of monumental change, and Hašek was alive to the profound social shifts threatening Europe. But there were some equally profound shifts to be accommodated at home first. His father was an alcoholic maths teacher, and the family was extremely poor, often having to move house when he was a child. This instability was made far worse when the father died, and Hašek's mother could not cope with her ill-disciplined son. He was taken in by a pharmacist, finished

his education early, trained briefly to follow in his foster-father's steps, became (again, briefly) a bank clerk, but found himself drawn, perhaps inevitably, to a less structured life; although Hašek's lack of structure amounted to something nearer fracture. He was a dog salesman, involved in stealing dogs and forging pedigrees – both of which his later character Švejk would also do – but for a time was essentially a vagabond. He gradually moved towards becoming a journalist, an editor and a short-story writer; but also a fraudster and hoaxer (he was sacked from a magazine about animals because he invented some of the entries), a cabaret performer and a jesting, political figure. But it was not just his endless moving that he carried from childhood into adult life. He, like his father, drank heavily.

He was outside almost every aspect of the social and political establishment, and his politics perfectly mirrored his nature and his attitude – a kind of satirical anarchist, or ironic Communist. As a result, he was frequently the subject of the attention of the police, and went to jail several times. On one occasion,

aware of the attention his political activity had occasioned, he and some similarly-minded friends created The Party of Moderate and Peaceful Progress Within the Limits of the Law and put Hašek forward as their candidate in 1911. The group was a party in another sense – the funds raised for it meant that Hašek and his friends could carry on drinking at the pub where they met.

But by then he had started to focus more on his writing, and was editing an anarchist journal. This was in part because he had married; but here too he was restless – the marriage was not a success and ended, though not formally, after three years. Hašek lived for a time with Josef Lada (the man who would eventually illustrate *Švejk*) and when the war came, he was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army. When he was captured by the Russians, he was eventually allowed to join a volunteer regiment to fight against the Austro-Hungarians, and was employed as a propagandist. After the war, he stayed in Russia and became a Bolshevik; but found the regime there even more repressive than the one in what

had by now become Czechoslovakia, and he returned to his homeland. He had also married again, without troubling any lawyers with the formality of divorce proceedings.

Although Švejk had made an appearance in his short stories before the war, it was in response to Hašek's experiences in various armies that the character took full form. Hašek had always written quickly. His sarcasm, hyperbole, caricaturing, parodies and irony seemed to flow easily in response to the brutal confusion all around him: the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the revolution in Russia, the end of the old order throughout much of Europe, and the new systems imposing their new subjugation. But he was already extremely unwell. He was very overweight and had contracted tuberculosis, as well as continuing to drink heavily. He had to dictate most of the tales that make up *The Good Soldier Švejk*, and even then could not finish the task before he died in 1923. The tales were hard to publish – after all, Hašek was a traitor and a bigamist. But they were written

in Czech rather than German, which made them accessible; and they were scatological in their satirical attacks on the incompetence and hypocrisy of the ruling classes, which pretty much guaranteed them popularity.

But Hašek created something more than a folk-hero for the Czechs, although that would be achievement enough. He can also be counted among the first modernist writers, taking his wide-eyed anti-hero through the horrors of a life lived at the behest of the State machinery, both civilian and military. He does this using language that is at once immediate and approachable but also witty – parodying the manners of lawyers, priests, soldiers, officers and doctors, propaganda and government double-speak. At the same time, there are moments of casual horror, made all the more startling by the objective calm he uses to describe them. Hašek can rightly be placed alongside authors like Kafka in the development of European literature, placing the hero and his human concerns in the path of the bureaucratic juggernaut. But he also deserves a place

beside Cervantes, Voltaire and Rabelais for creating a true survivor who still manages to relish life both for and in all its absurdity.

Notes by Roy McMillan

Sir Cecil Parrott and Czechoslovakia

by Jasper Parrott

It was in 1966 that Penguin first asked Sir Cecil Parrott whether he would be prepared to produce a complete translation of Jaroslav Hašek's great classic *The Good Soldier Švejk*, which had first appeared in Czech in 1923. This was to replace the much shortened first English version by Paul Selver, which had appeared in 1930.

Sir Cecil was ideally placed to interpret this Czech work to an English-speaking readership. A proficient linguist who could speak Serbo-Croat, Russian and Czech, Sir Cecil was deeply imbued with Slav history, literature and music.

In his twenties he gained a unique insight into the royal court at Belgrade when he was appointed tutor to Prince Peter of Yugoslavia. During the war he employed many Eastern European refugees in a press-reading bureau he set up in Stockholm, which analysed newspapers from countries occupied by Germany.

In 1945 he joined the British Foreign Office and was appointed to Prague as Press and Cultural attaché, leaving in 1948 on the Communist takeover. In 1955 he was appointed Minister and Charge d'affaires in Moscow, two years after the death of Stalin, and in a period when there was a short-lived but remarkable opening-up of the Soviet Union to contacts with the West – soon to be frozen again as a consequence of the repression of the Hungarian Revolution by Soviet troops in 1956.

This period of relative openness was perfectly suited to Sir Cecil, who revelled in the increased access to musicians and artists, and to the visits by Western orchestras, composers and theatre and dance companies. With his excellent Russian, which was also shared by his wife Ellen, he took the opportunity to travel extensively in European Russia, visiting and photographing the great cities

of Vologda and Ryazan, and the Crimea. But he also experienced the senselessness of Soviet control: the bugging and spying; the constant secret police escorts; and the occasional 'spontaneous' anti-Western demonstrations, some of them aggressive and even frightening.

This experience of totalitarian bureaucracy informed his reading when it came to revisiting *The Good Soldier Švejk*, Jaroslav Hašek's anarchist satire on the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1960 Sir Cecil was appointed Ambassador to Czechoslovakia – a country, under Antonín Novotný, still in the grip of the Cold War and slavishly subservient to Moscow. Memories of the show-trials and executions of Rudolf Slánský and others – the local imitations of the great Stalinist purges – were still recent, and the country seemed doomed to be forever frozen in a permafrost of political and social stagnation.

Below the surface, however, there were still strong traces of the old Austro-Hungarian and even Hitlerian bureaucracies, and so, every now and then, the shadow of Švejk would

re-emerge. Ironically, the book was freely available and indeed much read in Communist Czechoslovakia, perhaps because the authorities thought that its mockery of the old regime was somehow helpful propaganda in support of the ruthless destruction of the Masarykan democracy. Instead Švejk, with his naive anarchism and slavish wish to please those in authority, was treasured by those who could see how much of the book still applied to the stupefyingly oppressive bureaucracy of the Communists.

But by 1962, partly because of economic stagnation, Novotný felt obliged to make some largely cosmetic changes – especially in order to placate the Slovaks – and in due course the voices of younger, more reform-minded people began to have some influence and credibility. Of these, Alexander Dubček became the most prominent, and in early 1968 he replaced Novotný as First Secretary of the Party, soon ushering in the reforms which established the first principles of the Prague Spring.

Old rigidities were eased, the power of the secret police was restrained,

and some degree of open and critical commentary was tolerated in the press and in broadcasting. Sir Cecil – with his excellent Czech and his profound knowledge of and interest in Czech and Slovak literature, music, film and the arts in general – revelled in the first timid signs of this re-awakening, and was ideally placed to report on them to the Foreign Office in London. The beautiful, baroque Thun-Hohenstein Palace, the home of the British Embassy, became the meeting place for artists and intellectuals starved for so long of contact with their counterparts in the West, a process much enhanced by Sir Cecil's efforts to bring from the UK to Prague the widest selection of writers, musicians, artists, scientists, politicians and union leaders.

In 1966, after an unusually long tenure as Ambassador in Prague, Sir Cecil took early retirement, having accepted an invitation from the University of Lancaster to set up a new Russian and Slav Department. This was a task he undertook with enormous energy and dedication, building up around him a formidable team of scholars and experts

drawn from different backgrounds and representing many different Eastern European countries. In August 1968 he took his car to Prague to meet up with colleagues and friends, and also to stock up the department's library. But only a few days after his arrival he was awakened by the sound of incoming Soviet aircraft bringing troops to occupy the key buildings, including government and media offices, while at the same time putting Dubček and the other leading reformers under house arrest.

Sir Cecil shared those days of disillusion and despair with much anger and emotion, and went himself to Vaclavsky Square to remonstrate with the Soviet tank drivers and commanders as they sat impassively in their vehicles of occupation. The treachery and brutality of the Soviet suppression of this attempt at Socialism with a human face (and we should remember the waves of rebelliousness and demands for a more Socialistic society which spread rapidly throughout the West and in Japan during the same year) had a profound effect on Sir Cecil, and from then on he

largely turned his back on any further involvement with Russian studies.

Instead, with the agreement of the University, he converted the faculty into a Department of Eastern European Studies, setting up the Comenius Centre after the great sixteenth-century Czech humanist Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius is the anglicized version of his name) and concentrated until his retirement on Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland.

The invitation from Penguin to make the first complete and unbowdlerised translation of *The Good Soldier Švejk* absorbed him for three years, and he was fortunate to have around him in his department Czech colleagues with whom he could discuss the finer points of Hašek's rich and often ribald language. He became much absorbed with the problems of translating the special linguistic character of the Czech versions of Austro-Hungarian military and bureaucratic speech, seeking to find equivalents which would be understandable to modern readers while at the same time retaining a degree of 'period' atmosphere, as might be required

in an English novel portraying ordinary speech during the First World War.

He spent therefore many hours savouring and trying out all sorts of different vulgarities and even obscenities, a curious occupation for someone who was otherwise highly disapproving of the lazy argot of the times. The translation was very well received and became immediately the standard translation throughout the English-speaking world.

Today, forty years after its completion, it still sells steadily in all international markets, and this fine abridgement by Naxos Audiobooks further reconfirms its longevity. Following on from *Švejk* and the interest it aroused, Sir Cecil was commissioned to write a biography of Hašek – a life in some ways as bizarre as the pranks and adventures of *Švejk* himself – which was published under the title *The Bad Bohemian*. There followed further translations of some of Hašek's short stories, as well as many broadcasts and articles, even though Sir Cecil also found time for a large output of books and general writings about a wide range of literary and musical topics connected

with Eastern Europe and Russia.

By the time of his premature death in 1984 Sir Cecil had indeed served Jaroslav Hašek and his creation *The Good Soldier Švejk* remarkably well. Even if the Austro-Hungarian Empire, at which we can laugh through Švejk's simplistic attitudes, is long gone, and the Hitlerian and Communist systems are also thoroughly eclipsed, this fine translation can still remind us that the next ruthless and authoritarian system may still be somewhere around the corner – and that humour and satire may still be among the best defences against it.

Notes by Jasper Parrott



David Horovitch trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. He is well known by television and theatre audiences, having appeared in over thirty productions for both the BBC and regional television in programmes such as *Goodbye Mr Chips* and *Poirot* and over thirty-five stage productions including *Cymbeline* for the Royal Shakespeare Company and *Charley's Aunt* at the Apollo Theatre. His latest film credit was *102 Dalmatians*. He has also read *Judaism, A Very Short Introduction* and narrated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

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Translated by Sir Cecil Parrott

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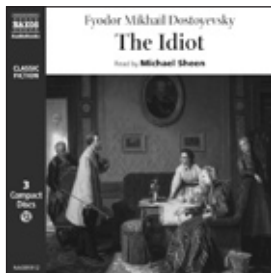
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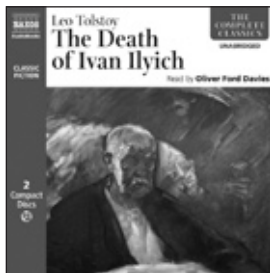
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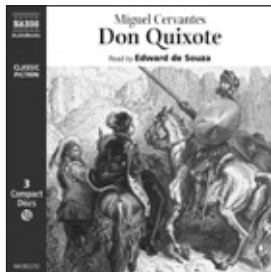
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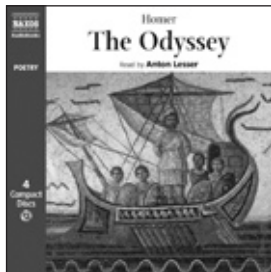
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Jaroslav Hašek
The Good Soldier Švejk

Read by **David Horovitch**

Too old, too fat, too drunk – Švejk really shouldn't be in the army at all.

And it doesn't take long before his superiors wish he wasn't ...

Officially certified as an idiot, the cunning but good-natured innocent wreaks glorious havoc and leaves confusion in his wake. And at the same time, he brilliantly exposes the hypocrisy, horror and absurdity of war.

The Good Soldier Švejk is the forerunner and inspiration for every anti-war book since its first publication in 1923. This classic translation, newly adapted, brings the man and his world freshly to life; and shows that some things never change.



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FICTION**

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