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Culture: Serbian Vampire Hunters 'Slay' Former Dictator

Deceased Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, who died in captivity in Haag last year standing on trial for War Crimes in a UN War Crimes tribunal, still seem to haunt the Serbian nation.

Recently his grave in the eastern Serbian town of Pozarevac was desecrated in a bizarre incident, when Serbian vampire hunters in accordance with old folklore and tradition wanted to make sure the late president remained dead, and drove a three-foot wooden stake into the grave and through his heart.

The leader of the group Miroslav Milosevic, who by the way has no relations to the former president, gave himself up to police who have launched an investigation.

Milosevic said he and his fellow vampire hunters acted to stop the former dictator returning from the dead to haunt the country, The Register reports.

Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia in a statement condemned the desecration of the grave.

Slobodan Milosevic's daughter-in-law Milica Gajic on behalf of the family responded to the incident by saying she was shocked, and planned to sue the vampire hunters. She also accused the police of failing to protect the grave properly.

Nothing is left to circumstances it seems, when dealing with the task of getting rid of the nation's troubled past.

Geir E. Jansen

www.bitsofnews.com, 6 Mar.

"Vampire" Milosevic Slain, But His Legacy Still Survives

A former opposition activist has desecrated Slobodan Milosevic's grave by driving a metre-long hawthorn stake into it - as if to kill a vampire - days ahead of the first anniversary of the strongman's death on Sunday.

The man called the police from the courtyard of Milosevic's home, where the grave is, to report what he had done, but was only mockingly warned to beware the dead man's hand snapping from the grave, local reports said.

The self-designated vampire slayer now faces a lawsuit from Milosevic's daughter-in-law, Milica Gajic. Had his gesture done anything to clear the suffocating legacy of Milosevic, the act could have been seen as more than tasteless foolishness.

But it has not, and on March 11, a year on from Milosevic's death and more than six years since he was toppled and sidelined, the residue of his rule persists, although several democratic elections have passed in the meantime.

As under Milosevic, murky, mud-slinging politics, pretentiously emotional patriotism

and ad-hoc governing, monopolization and "tycoonization" of the economy through nepotism and corruption remain the way of life for everyone from every-day business to the very top.

Overall, people who were in politics and business close to Milosevic are also very well off today - only very few of them were asked to explain their millions, even billions.

His Socialist Party (SPS) only elected a new leader late last year, Ivica Dacic - one of Milosevic's mouthpieces - and qualified for the new parliament in the January elections by winning more than five per cent of votes - even if its elderly electorate is dwindling.

The SPS has scheduled a memorial service for Milosevic on Saturday in Belgrade's Sava congressional centre.

On a genocide trial since early 2002, Milosevic succumbed to a heart attack in his cell at the tribunal's detention centre in The Hague. His supporters accused the court of murdering him, because it had denied the self-defending Milosevic medical treatment in Russia.

Milosevic was buried in the courtyard of his family home in Pozarevac, 80 kilometres east of Belgrade. Tens of thousands of people attended one or another stage of the funeral ceremony.

The burial itself, on private property and after nightfall, was both illegal and curious.

While his people continued doing business in the democratic Belgrade, his family has been in disarray since his fall from power, even though they are reportedly extremely rich on billions of dollars stashed through a myriad of schemes and para-state businesses.

Milosevic's widow Mirjana Markovic, a pompous neo-communist professor of sociology and allegedly as lethal for her husband's opponents as journalist Slavko Curuvija and former president Ivan Stambolic, has been hiding from justice in Russia since early 2003.

She and Milosevic had not reunited over the last three years of his life. Their Son Marko is also believed to be in Russia, under the wing of Milosevic's brother and Belgrade's former ambassador to Moscow Borislav.

Known before as a brutal and reckless juvenile, Marko is also facing a possible arrest for his involvement in the billion-dollar illegal trade in cigarettes during his father's rule. Milosevic's unstable daughter Marija lives in obscurity in Montenegro and is facing legal procedures because she fired several shots from a gun on the early morning of April 1, 2001, when her father was arrested.

According to some reports, she wanted to kill her father rather than allow him to humiliate himself by surrendering to police after a two-day siege of his home in the elite quarter of Belgrade.

By Lazar Galic and Boris Babic, Dpa
www.playfuls.com, 9 Mar.

Guards to protect Milosevic's body from vampire hunters

Slobodan Milosevic's daughter Marija Milosevic has hired security guards to protect her father's body from vampire hunters.

The self-styled vampire hunters have already made one attempt at driving a wooden stake through the former dictator's heart to 'stop him returning from the dead'.

Milosevic is buried in the front garden of his former home in the northern Serbian town of Pozarevac.

His daughter Marija said local police had refused to act to protect the grave even though they knew it was being targeted.

The vampire hunters' first attempt failed after they drove the stake into the ground without digging up the coffin, and missed the heart.

Vampire hunter Miroslav Milosevic said they believed the spirit of the former dictator could return to haunt the country if the ritual was not performed.

Slobodan Milosevic died on March 11, 2006, while on trial before a UN war crimes tribunal for his role in the 1990s break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

www.ananova.com, 12 Mar.

Thieves Attack Bulgarian Church to Steal Skeleton of Tzar's Killer

The two gates of the Mother Mary of Petrich Church in Bulgaria have been broken in an attempt for the church to be looted, Bulgarian National Radio reported.

The church is part of the historical complex of the medieval fortress of Tzar Assen. Luckily, nothing has been stolen from the holy place.

Treasure-hunters tried to steal a skeleton, which is believed to be the one of Ivanko, the man who killed the tzar, according to Hristo Basamakov, head of the historical museum in the town of Assenovgrad.

The nearly two metres high skeleton of the boyar Ivanko was discovered on March 8. The finding still hasn't undergone a DNA test, but all evidence suggests it is Ivanko's Basamakov said. Thieves could not take it as the skeleton was immediately transported to a safe place.

The head and the feet of the body had been cut off as that was the way in the past to prevent a dead person to resurrect and become a vampire.

Boyar Ivanko, who assassinated Tzar Assen, had been killed in the back with a spear or a sword, preliminary checks show.

Sofia News Agency Novinite, 20 Mar.

Hollywood awakens Faulkner's vampire story

Hollywood awakens Faulkner's vampire story A British vampire story written as a "lark" by William Faulkner, the Nobel Prize-winning author of "The Sound and the Fury," is to be turned into a 40-million-pound Hollywood movie.

The cameras will roll later this year on "Dreadful Hollow," about an evil eastern European countess who preys on a young visitor to her mansion in Victorian England. Faulkner, who died in 1962, was an exponent of the literary genre known as southern gothic and explored the social issues and cultural character of the American South in complex novels dense with allegory. But he also worked as a screenwriter in the 1930s and 1940s, when his credits included "The Big Sleep," starring Humphrey Bogart. Years after his death his daughter Jill Faulkner Summers found the vampire story, written as a traditionally double-spaced Hollywood script, among papers at her home. The hand-annotated document has never been seen publicly before today. "It's a great story -- think of Dracula, only with more women," said Lee Caplin, the producer who had been granted permission to make the film. "It's been waiting its time -- there's lots of room for computer-generated special effects that are only possible now." Faulkner based his script on a 1942 book by the now little-known novelist Irina Karlova. The plot revolves around the mysterious countess Ana Czerner, who possesses "unearthly evil." Although the supernatural content was shocking by 1940s standards, Faulkner wrote it as a bit of a joke, Caplin said. "Before he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1949 he spent quite a lot of time scriptwriting in Hollywood. He wrote this one on spec, as a lark, for his drinking buddy, the director Howard Hawks, with whom he was working on 'The Big Sleep.'" Hawks was serious about filming it -- the script has his handwritten notes in the margins. But then Hawks started making John Wayne westerns and it never got made. Updated, I think it could be a massive hit." Caplin is not only a Hollywood producer; he is also the literary executor of the Faulkner estate, having been a friend of the family since he was a child. His family connections have already helped him produce one blockbuster -- Will Smith's Oscar-nominated "Ali." Caplin has yet to decide whether he will set "Dreadful Hollow" in England or switch to the American Deep South. He has yet to announce the cast but says young actors are discovering Faulkner. "There is one blockbuster star, who I cannot name, who is rewriting a Faulkner short story, and others with southern roots are showing great interest." Stars who have declared their devotion to Faulkner include Brad Pitt, who went to school in Missouri; Reese Witherspoon, a native of Louisiana; and the Tennessee-born singer and actor Justin Timberlake. The bloodsuckers that fired Faulkner's imagination are now a Hollywood staple, but Caplin believes there is room for one more. "The dialogue is pure William Faulkner," he said. "And Hollywood does not have enough film scripts written by adults, never mind Nobel Prize winners."

John Harlow
The Sunday Times, 20 Mar.