

Nigeria: Nasarawa Under the Iron Heel of Ombatse

BY HIR JOSEPH, 25 NOVEMBER 2012

Lafia — In a manner reminiscent of Nazi Germany and German-occupied Europe, where Geheime Staatspolizei, popularly known as Gestapo, the political secret police under Adolf Hitler which was involved in the execution of the infamous Holocaust, Ombatse, a group which claims to be cleansing Nasarawa State of sundry ills, has been born, and is unleashing terror without an end in sight.

The group is barely a week since it made its public debut, but it has recorded astonishing successes in its campaign of violence, crushing everything in its way, in what has made the name so popular that Ombatse now hardly needs any introduction.

Between Saturday, last week, and yesterday, Ombatse has reigned top on government's official discussions and actions, when the members engaged soldiers and men of the State Security Service (SSS), on one hand, and Agyaragu, a town at the outskirts of Lafia, the state capital, on another. Over 10 corpses had been recorded after Ombatse entered town, and meted mayhem on Agyaragu, where they burned down no less than 50 houses, and many shops, and cut down trees to remove shade over the heads of survivors.

Ombatse, Eggon for "time has come", is a spiritual group of the Eggon people of Nasarawa State, said to be born out of the traditions handed to them by their ancestors in the heaven. According to a local newspaper report, Ombatse was founded by six leaders, namely Sgt Alaku Ehe, Zabura Musa Akwanshiki, Shuaibu Alkali, Haruna Musa Zico Kigbu, Iliyasu Hassan Gyabo and Abdullahi Usman, with Zico, a Jerusalem pilgrim, and Akwashiki, the chairman and secretary, respectively.

In the report, Zico, the chairman, who claimed that the group has over 50 branches scattered all over Nigeria, particularly in Eggon land of Nasarawa, the campaign was came from a revelation through a dream where the ancestors directed the male natives to rise up and cleanse the land of sundry societal ills.

Christianity and Islam are strong among Eggons, one of Nasarawa's most populous ethnic group; and who are spread across all parts of the state, but age-long traditional values including Ombatse, still have their place and roots, and are being jealously guarded against incursion.

Ombatse, which practitioners claim as a traditional religion handed to man from heavens, is a mysticism which seeks to cleanse the society of sundry ills, including adultery, fornication, theft, drunkenness, smoking, envy, killing; to pave way for the culture of morality and chastity.

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