

Day Police Burnt Houses In Enwang Over Missing Checkpoint Loot

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The peaceful Enwang community in Mbo, the proposed economic nerve-centre of Akwa Ibom State was allegedly sacked by the police in the area last week. It was another week of madness, where the police displayed self-induced anger against law-abiding citizens.

The place and people would never remain the same again. The existing relationship of mutual respect has been desecrated by the police in the area in a melee of blind anger that was self-induced in the first place, and described as misplaced undefined anger, at best.

When information filtered in that the largely rural Enwang community in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State had been invaded by the police, doubts beclouded the mind of every right-thinking person, given the well noted peaceful disposition of the people, particularly when viewed against the backdrop that calamities of extreme proportion have jeopardised the people.

Compelled by the force of reason, questions were asked; but answers were difficult to get, especially from the police authorities. The police have simply refused to talk; making itself "incomunicado."

But the community and other actors spoke, and their comments came in torrents,



•One of the burnt houses

revealing speculative reason why the police probably did not want to comment on the matter. The facts on ground were appalling.

Information has it that the police, which had created for itself an economic survival strategy of mounting road blocks to extort money from motorists and commercial motorcyclists, made a huge proceed from this conventionally accepted extortion of money from members of the public, this

fateful day. And like they are, they hid their proceeds in the surrounding bush, ostensibly to avoid the prying eyes of those who might be interested in investigating them.

This strategy of stealing from the public to hide in the bush had always worked until this day, last week. Usually at the close of work for the day, the proceeds are counted and distributed along agreed principles and "sharing formula" adopted by those "in-charge."

But the bubble burst. The bribe of N20 for "passage fee" and negotiated sum from mostly traders who were returning from the beach market where they buy fish, crayfish and other seafood products, was allegedly "stolen" from its "bush bank" by unknown persons. And the police promptly declared missing the proceeds from their roadblocks and "police toll gate".

After a frantic search without any hope of recovering the missing money, the policemen, reeling with the angered feeling of being short-changed by some smart people, and for fear of the likely consequences of what the superiors involved in the racket might do to them, the police accused the commercial motorcyclists and youths around the Enwang junction of stealing their money.

The ensuing drama began like the usual police harassment script played out everyday in the community and the state, which the people are very familiar with. So it was that the police, initially wielding their guns, accused the youths and the commercial motorcyclists of "felony"; stealing from officers of the law. Perhaps, this could also pass for perjury!

Believing that it was one of the pranks by the police in the area to extort more money from the people beyond their normal N20 bill, the youths and the commercial motorcyclists called their bluff.

The police changed tactics. They angrily trained the nozzle of their assault rifles at the

hapless and peaceful people, who had gone out to eke a living for themselves, legitimately. Speechless, hounded, frightened and seeing live bullets from the rifle nozzles pointed at them, the Enwang youths were confused beyond reason. They stared at the angry policemen who have lived and worked with them for years, as neighbours. They were shocked!

Harassed and assaulted by the police, the youths insisted that they could not have stolen any money belonging to the police. They (youths) were

actively engaged in their own gainful and productive ventures recognised by the law like fishing, farming, trading, transportation and others.

And when the police realised the mounting resistance to their allegations, they, out of fear and anger, seized the motorcycles belonging to the commercial motorcyclists and other residents, demanding that if the money "stolen" was not returned, the bikes confiscated would be used to replace it. The youths refused to agree, and it snowballed into real crisis.



•A motorcycle burnt by the policemen

•To be continued on Monday