

NEWS

'His death was celebrated by all... including members of his family'

"LIVE by the sword, die by the sword". This saying cannot be truer for notorious Ughelli area boy and gang leader, Isodje Otubu. His life and reign of terror in Ekiugbo enclave of the Ughelli North Local Government Area of Delta State, was a re-enactment of the deadly days of the notorious then Bendel State criminal, Lawrence 'The Law' Anini (aka Ovbigho).

Isodje was the nightmare of residents of the community. Armed robbery, abduction and rape were his leisure. His words were laws and when he appeared, the leaders, elders and law enforcement agents scampered for safety.

No wonder his bestial death last Tuesday was celebrated by all members of the community, including his family members, in the same way *Bendelites*, and indeed, all Nigerians, marked the death of Anini.

Isodje was hacked to death by rival youth group. His head, limbs, arms and bowel were separated and shared among the clans of the kingdom. Unconfirmed report said his blood was later blended with local gin (*ogogoro*) and used as the tonic of jubilation and an all-night party.

The stories about his lifestyle and deeds were mythical, so much that even in death, residents can only mutter his name. Those who did not see his butchered remains doubt his death.

Investigation by *The Nation* revealed that the Isodje was one of the unknown personalities in the Ughelli until a few years ago when he, literally, shot his way into the chairmanship of the local branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW).

A few months after he achieved the 'feat' the 'agbero' scene became too small for him so he set his sights on higher

He lived like the proverbial lord of the Manor, terrorising hapless residents of Ughelli and its environs. While it lasted, Isodje Otubu, a gang leader, seemed above the law until he was hacked down last Tuesday by his kind. **SHOLA O'NEIL** reports.

pedestals.

For starters, he subdued the elders and leaders of the community and declared himself 'President-General of Ekiugbo Community'.

The position of 'P-G', as the name imply is the highest in Urhobo communal leadership. It is usually bestowed on prominent indigenes who had achieved successes in their fields of endeavour and leadership of the community. But, in a weird way, like former Uganda Head of State, Idi Amin, Isodje felt he had done enough to get the highest title in the land.

If the saying, absolute power corrupts absolutely, then unmerited absolute power can only drive the wielder to his death. Riding the crest of his underserved power, the notorious gang leader became uncontrollable: he demanded and got whatever he wanted from members of the community, including businessmen, from whom he collected goods and

services for free.

"On one occasion, he drove to a filling station in the town and asked for the tank of his car to be filled. After doing that, he got in and made to drive away. The attendant, who already knew the game, went to the owner of the station to notify him so that the money could be deducted from her final account of the day.

"But the man would have none of it; he went to Isodje and demanded that he paid him. That must have really annoyed the self-acclaimed 'P-G', because he brought out his gun and shot the man on his feet after which he bundled him into the booth of his car and drove away. The distressed family members later bailed him from Isodje with N50,000.00," a source said.

Perhaps, the height of the insanity of the gang leader was when he allegedly shot a youth in the community for not genuflecting to greet him. Rather than kowtowing and saying

'migwuo', as an Urhoboman would to his superior, the youth merely waved him, much to his consternation.

"So, he brought out his gun and shot the man in the bowel. From that day even his father's age mates bowed when greeting him."

Shortly before he met his Waterloo, it was gathered that he had gone round to warn landlords whose houses were slated for demolition in the Ughelli township road dualisation project.

He reportedly demanded cuts of between N50,000.00 to N200,000.00 from those who are expecting compensation from the state government.

However, what turned out to be his nemesis was when he turned to churches in the community. Apparently never reading the Bible or perhaps missing the command "touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm", Isodje reportedly waged a war of vendetta against churches in the community.

First, he was fingered for the kidnap of Pastor Jones Onori, a senior pastor of the Faith Prophetic Ministries, Ughelli. The cleric was abducted from the pulpit, where he was delivering the Sunday's sermon and taken to an unknown destination. His whereabouts was unknown at press time, over one month after the incident.

To crown his campaign against the churches in the area, the notorious criminal, like Nebuchad-nezzar, ordered all churches in Ekiugbo to participate in the pagan activities in the community.

He was emphatic that all churches in the community must come out and join in the fetish dances and procession round the community or else...

But as he was preparing to effect his 'decree' to the churches, the man who allegedly masterminded the killing of soldiers deployed to the Urhobo community to maintain peace last January, started the trouble, which has now consumed him.

Hapless youths in the community who were fed up with his iron-fist grip on the community mobilised against him.

Among them, ironically, were members of his gang with whom he terrorised the community.

In the heat of the bloody clashes which started penultimate Sunday, no fewer than eight youths were gunned down by both sides.

Isodje, who lost one of his most trusted gunmen in the battle, fled the community the next day. He resurfaced barely 24-hours later, better armed and more prepared.

Fortunately, he was no match for the equally well-armed opposing youth group, who allegedly enjoyed covert backing of security operatives.

On the third day - Tuesday night - his dismember body parts were reportedly being shared across the clans of the community.

Another criminal under the guise of youth leader had bitten the dust.

Many more criminals hiding under various guise to terrorise inhabitants still abound in many communities.

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