

DADDY I'm home, come and open the gate to let me in. Some people have accosted me at the gate and they are armed". These were the harrowing last words of Cynthia Mahonwu to her father at the entrance of their house on 12 Adewunmi Street, Alaro Estate, Meiran, Ojokoro before she was sprayed with bullet by unknown persons. She had just returned from works and had pressed the bell at the entrance of their gate to draw the attention of those inside the house that she was at the gate. Just as she was doing this her assailants accosted her. Since one could communicate with the people inside through the speaker phone by the entrance, she quickly drew the attention of her father, Dr Steve Mahonwu to the presence of these strange, armed men. Within some seconds her father rushed to the gate to let his daughter in and to see what was amiss. Upon opening the gate, what confronted him was an almost dead Cynthia, writhing in pain and in a pool of blood. She had been shot.

The confusion caused by the tragic incident has left the family in low spirit, considering that they had just begun preparation for her wedding which was expected to take place in February next year. When *The Nation* visited the bereaved it was the father that managed to speak on what happened on that fateful day, as the mother and other members were still battling to overcome the shock inflicted by gruesome murder of Cynthia.

According to him, "it was around 8.45 pm when she rang the bell to tell me that she was at home. As I was coming to open the gate for her, she spoke to me in a loud voice that some people have accosted her and they are armed.

Before I got to the gate I heard a loud gun shot at the gate. When I opened the gate they had run away. My daughter was in a pool of blood. I quickly brought out my Mercedes Benz and we rushed her to the hospital. There is an hospital nearby, the Ahmadiyya Hospital. When they received us, they did a lot of extraction of bullets because her assailants pumped bullets into her. It was what I can described as pump action.

One of the legs had bullets which penetrated into the bone. So, it was only the orthopedic hospital that could extract the bullets. Meanwhile, the time was almost 12 mid night. So we arranged for a vehicle to take her to the orthopedic hospital. My wife being a retired matron of the Lagos State Hospital Management Board was to go with them and I believed my daughter was in safe hand. I had to come home so that I could stay with the other members of the family but around 2 a.m or there about I heard the voice of my wife shouting, my daughter was dead. She died on the way to the hospital. She died as a result of the loss of blood."

Explaining further on the gruesome and barbaric murder of his daughter, the retired airways officer said "It's unfortunate that she died like that, when we were still at the Ahmadiyya Hospital, some police officers came to the hospital, they said they were going to the house to see the scene of the incident and said they were coming back. They only came back when we had gone to make a formal police report. They came briefly to see one or two thing but up till today I don't think any thing is being done."

Asked how the police got to know about the incident in the first place he said "I supposed people around in the area had called their attention or it was probably the gunshot that they heard which made them to come. They met us at the hospital, asked questions and I told them I was the father of the now deceased patient at the hospital. They said they were still going around and would be investigating further, that was what they said.

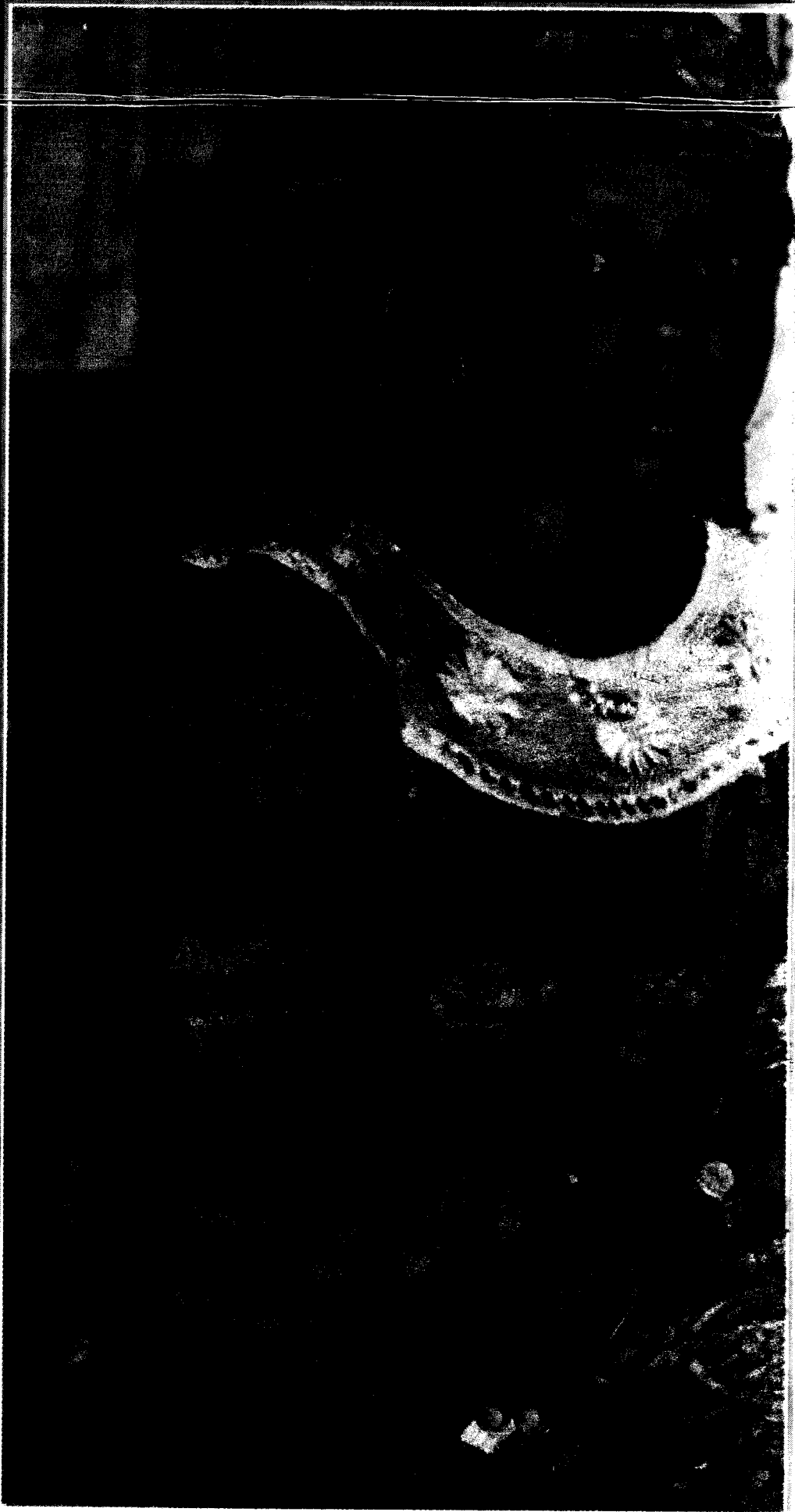
When police say they are investigating you don't need to doubt them. We believed that they were doing an investigation but again the truth of that investigation is always questionable in this country. That was how the episode

■ Seyi AIYEGBUSI and Musa ODOSHIMOKHE ■

happened. We had to take her body home on November 23 to bury at Ishiekpe village, Onicha Ugbo Delta

State. We came back November 26 and have been at home".

In cases like these one could not possibly ruled out the possibility that



A young woman's call for help
was killed at the entrance to

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before she
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the gate

some people might have planned to snuff life out of her since her assailants did not even remove any thing from her when they shot but zoomed off after their victim fell. Again, *The Nation*

sought to know whether she had any misunderstanding with anybody, the father said "I cannot say for sure whether she had misunderstanding with anybody. I cannot say for sure, she did not tell me any thing neither did she tell the mother anything of that nature. I don't know, only God knows."

Before her death, Cynthia was said to have worked as an Internal Auditor with a bank in Lagos. The speculation was that, her murder was linked to the work she was doing in the office. But her father would not want to link her death to her work. "I don't know the kind of job she does at the bank. All I know is that she was a banker. When you are a banker, you are a banker. I don't want to speculate what I don't know. If she was working as an internal auditor and she discovered fraud and somebody took her life, it is just unfortunate; God is to handle the matter for us. Vengeance is His and not what a man can do. I don't want to speculate. But again this is a country where an Attorney General was kidnapped and assassinated in such a circumstance, up till now an authentic investigation result has not been made available to the public and what do I expect from the daughter of a retired officer of my status. I had worked with Nigeria Airways, and retired as Director of Personnel and Administration."

Those who knew Cynthia described her as a quiet and easy going person and wondered what could have warranted her being killed. Explaining the daughter's nature he said "she was absolutely quiet, by our nature we are quiet people. By my job I'm accessible to the people, I talk to the press randomly but I am not confrontational. The mother is not confrontational, we are religious people, we are catholic by denomination and we are christians by faith".

Meanwhile, she has been working hard toward the realization of her marriage which was expected to take place in February next year. "She had been making preparation towards that direction. It was a question of asking for money and she got the things she wanted. She was doing the buying herself, she was not a baby anyway and so she had taken adequate steps towards the realization of it but that was to be cut short. Cynthia had a positive christian life. In fact, the name of this house is the temple of the Holy Spirit. This house was equally built for me by the Holy Spirit after I had retired from public service. I did not take somebody's kobo, I did not embezzle money. By the favour of Jesus Christ, we were able to put up this building I and my family are living in. I had put in about 30 years in service before I retired. My daughter too put in about eight years at the Union Homes, a subsidiary of the Union Bank at the headquarters building, Onipan."

The Mahonwus want government to investigate the tragic manner in which their daughter lost her life in the front of their house having finished the day's job and was already at home only to be killed right in front of their house. "My daughter was killed at my gate, that is the highest act of barbarism that could happen to any human being. She was not going to the club or party but she was entering her own house after the day's job. When she was living in the morning we stood with her at the gate until a colleague came to pick her to work and we said bye and locked the gate".

He stressed further that before their daughter was killed, there was an Okada rider who waited at the front of their gate with another man but he did not challenge the man since the place is a road that any person can use. He discovered this when he was letting out a visitor that had come to visit them. "I did not know they were waiting for my daughter, I would have shouted to draw neighbours attention. It was not quite long after this that my daughter came back from work".

The deceased had a first degree in Bio-Chemistry from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State and a MBA degree from the University of Lagos.