

# NEWS PLUS

BY CHRISTOPHER OJI

**O**shodi, a bustling centre in Lagos, was a theatre of war yesterday. Five persons were killed while many others sustained varying degrees of injury when two factions of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) engaged in a free-for-all. Many vehicles were destroyed in the mayhem during which assorted weapons were freely used.

Already, the police have arrested seven suspects in connection with the crisis while machetes and expended cartridges were recovered from the scene.

Also, passers-by and motorists were robbed of valuables by some gangsters and touts, who hijacked the fight and unleashed terror on innocent citizens.

It was gathered that there had been a running battle between two factions of the NURTW in the area over who should be in charge of some parts of Oshodi.

The battle for supremacy, it was learnt, got to a head about three weeks ago when a notable politician (names withheld) gave the union a huge sum of money and a faction allegedly took the lion's share, an action that angered members of the other faction.

The faction that was not satisfied with the sharing formula was said to have fought the other faction about two weeks ago. Two persons reportedly lost their lives in the fracas.

The fight, it was further learnt, would have claimed more lives but for the quick intervention of the Lagos State Police Command whose men and officers stormed the place and dispersed the warring members.

A member of the NURTW, who simply identified himself as Ayinde, otherwise known as Oluwagbegbe said: "Two of our members were killed about a week now. Some of us were injured. We were fighting over who should be in control of the Mofesajo Motor Park. We were only quarrelling, but we later started fighting when some politicians brought some big money for us to share. We all know the parties that each and every one of us is supporting. So, if a member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) brings money now, those who are supporters of the PDP will want to take the lion's share. The same thing with the All Progressives Congress (APC). My brother, we are quarrelling over the sharing formula."

"Well, what happened this time around is that we were not happy with our men that we lost in the previous fight. Some of our members who were injured during the attack felt that they would have died just like Wasiu and Ibadan. So, after



The battlefield after the mayhem

## WAR IN LAGOS

• Five killed, seven arrested as NURTW factions fight in Oshodi

the injured victims had convinced us, we decided to fight back. We stormed Oshodi about 1.00am and laid ambush for the people. When we saw some of their leaders, we started fighting. I know about four persons that were killed. I also know that 13 of our members have been in the hospital since morning."

Another eyewitness, Adeleke, also told the reporter: "It was not NURTW members that killed the people or robbed

the passers-by. Those were touts and other hoodlums that cashed in on the crisis to smash vehicles and rob people. The real people that were fighting their war had left since 5.00am. It was those hoodlums, looking for what to loot that escalated the fight."

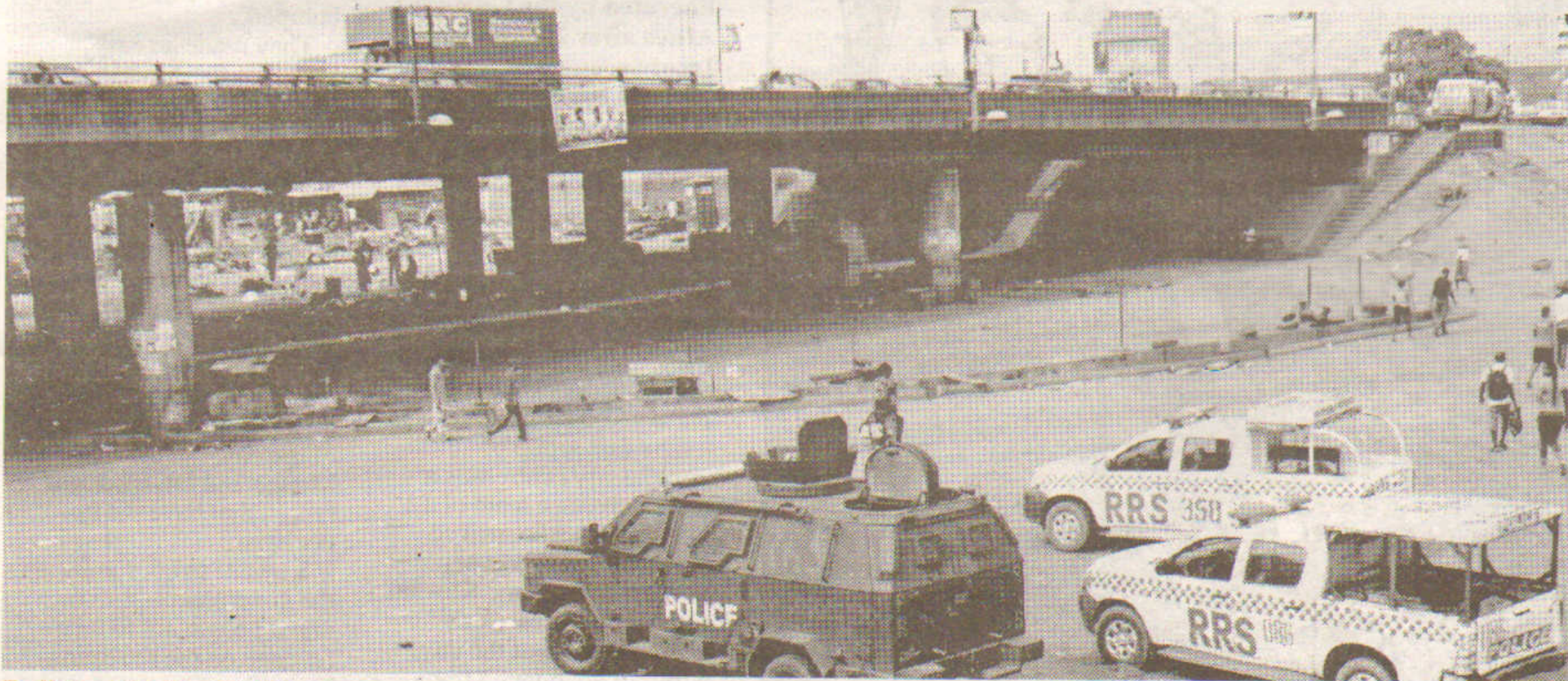
Daily Sun discovered that machetes, guns, daggers, bottles, acid, charms and other dangerous weapons were freely used during the fight.

As at press time, police teams from the Mobile Police Force and the conventional police were on the spot, maintaining law and order to avert further attacks.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Kenneth Nwosu, who confirmed that there was a crisis at Oshodi, said: "Only one person was gunned down by a faction of the warring groups who were fighting a battle of supremacy over who should take control of a motor park. Already, seven persons are in our net over their roles in the breakdown of law and order at Oshodi. We recovered seven machetes and some expended cartridges at the scene."

"Right now, normalcy has returned, as the police are presently on the ground, maintaining law and order. Every Lagosian should go about their normal businesses, as the police are there to protect lives and property."

*'We were not happy with our men that we lost in the previous fight. Some of our members, who were injured during the attack felt that they would have died just like Wasiu and Ibadan. So, after the injured victims had convinced us, we decided to fight back. We stormed Oshodi about 1.00am and laid ambush for the people. When we saw some of their leaders, we started fighting. I know about four persons that were killed. I also know that 13 of our members have been in the hospital since morning.'*



Police vehicles at the scene