



•Suspected cultists arrested by the police

By **Henry Umahi**

**LAST** Tuesday, gunmen killed a police sergeant, Christian Nnamani, at the popular Control Post Junction, opposite the Assumpta Catholic Cathedral in Owerri, the capital of Imo State. A passerby was also hit by a stray bullet from the hoodlums.

The state police public relations officer, Mr. Andrew Enwerem, confirmed the incident. He said: "It is true; we lost a police sergeant. Sergeant Christian Nnamani, attached to Mobile Police 18, Owerri, was on stop-and-search duty with his colleagues at Control Post Junction in Owerri when the incident happened.

"On sighting the sergeant, who was the last guard man, the hoodlums, who were in a green Golf car, shot him dead and made away with his AK-47 rifle. Also, a passerby (civilian) was equally hit by stray bullets and was quickly rushed to the Federal Medical Centre, Owerri, where he is being attended to."

A day earlier, a Catholic priest, Rev. Fr. Jude Nnamani Egbom, of the St. Patrick's Parish, Amucha, in Njaba council area of Imo State, was murdered while coming out of a hair salon. The hoodlums also snatched the priest's car and bag.



•Car thief in priest's cassock

Another priest was killed in the state a few months ago.

#### Corpse stolen

On Thursday last week, the Imo State Police Command paraded two suspects who 'kidnapped' the body of a 90-year-old woman deposited at Jesus Hospital

Mortuary in Akabor, Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, and demanded N5 million ransom from the owner. It was gathered that a relative of the nonagenarian had already agreed to pay the kidnappers N4 million before the deal went up in smoke. A former staff of the morgue was said to be behind it.

Indeed, Imo State seems to have become the heartland of criminal activities. Almost on a daily basis, reports emanating from the state are about one crime or another. In fact, some of them are stranger than fiction.

Take these: On August 25, gunmen killed Mr. Theo Mbakwe and abducted his sister at Amaigbo, Nwangele LGA of the state. It was gathered that the victim, the first son of late Chief T.T.C. Mbakwe, the first indigenous paint manufacturer in Nigeria, was shot dead in front of their country home.

Reacting to the development, Enwerem said: "From preliminary investigation, it is presumed to be a murder case. They are suspected assassins."

However, the abductors of Mbakwe's sister released her about one week later. "The sum of N600,000 was paid by her elder brother for her release. The girl was immediately hospitalised. She was

in a bad state. The shock she suffered seeing her brother murdered in cold blood in her presence and the trauma she went through in the kidnappers' den aggravated her health condition," a source disclosed.

A retired lecturer, Mr. Chris Chikwendu, 60, who worked with the Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, was shot dead in his farm on August 25. A police source said: "We can't say who shot the man. A family source said those who killed him were in military uniforms. We can't say who exactly did this, but we can't narrow our investigation to just murder. We are spreading our dragnet. We can't say it is kidnapping. If they were kidnappers, they wouldn't have killed him. We are investigating whether he recognised his attackers. They may be assassins or anything, so we are leaving our investigation open. All I can say is that we will get to the root of the matter and fish out the killers."

#### Cradle snatchers

The business of buying and selling children is active in Imo. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that an operator of a notorious 'baby factory' in Aba, Abia State, allegedly relocated to Owerri to continue what he knows how to do best.