



ONLY IN NIGERIA

**By Msgr. Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere
Bakersfield, California, USA**

E-mail: nathanielndiokwere@gmail.com

Tel: +1661-634-5473

ROCHAS RESCUE MISSION IN DISTRESS!!

“Rescue mission!” It was a popular and captivating slogan or agenda. Many Imolites like me caught the fever and joined the task force. There was urgent need to join to rescue Imo state from total collapse. Like Goodluck Jonathan’s collapsing and near-comatose administration, there was need to rescue Imo state from impending disaster, a situation the past military administration, including Ikedi Ohakim’s had left the poor state.

It looks like Owelle Rochas original rescue mission agenda is in urgent need of rescue now. The original agenda seems to have lost focus. The Imo state rescue mission that needs to be rescued has the following features: *Despair* – like marooned travelers in the high sea or in expansive scotching desert, most of the projects and infrastructure are in miserable state. *Urgency* – four years may not be enough to repair damages or begin and finish new projects. Usually Nigerian governors don’t perform wonders in their second tenure! *Dedication and effective planning* – If the rescue plans are not sound and of first class value, the situation could worsen. *Failure* – The possibility of failure can never be entertained. Success is the only option!

Imolites, Nigerians, in distress need to be rescued from all forces of evil that have kept them in bondage for long. Such evil forces are numerous and

hydra-headed – corruption, unemployment, insecurity, lack of infrastructure, total collapse of power supply, poor education system and what have you!

Any type of rescue mission that must succeed should of course accommodate only qualified executors and dedicated operators carefully selected to lead. Reckless planning will surely not achieve the desired goal. Perhaps Rochas original rescue mission has lost focus and needs re-direction.

With the 2015 elections lost and won.....,as Nigerians prepare, presumably to reap the fruits of the goodwill of the in-coming APC administration led by Retired Major General Muhammad Buhari....most patriotic Imolites and Ndigbo in general must also be wondering what the APC government of Rochas Okorochoa in Imo state will offer Ndigbo? If no post-election litigations erupt (defeated Nigerians don't usually concede defeat. They go to Supreme Court. They fight to the last man, until the truth is perhaps turned upside-down!)

This time it may not be ONLY IN NIGERIA where there is usually no second position for competitors in any contest. In the last World boxing title championship between American Floyd Mayweather and Pacquiao, didn't the defeated Philipino boxer, when asked to comment on the outcome of the contest declare "*I thought I won...?*" Thank God he only *thought* he won. He didn't go to World Boxing Court to contest the verdict of the Judges. He was not declared winner after all.

Before the last Presidential election in Nigeria, didn't Goodluck Ebele Jonathan repeatedly tell his embarrassed Aljazeera and BBC interviewers when asked about his reaction if he didn't come out victorious in the presidential election? "*I will win! I must win!*" the president insisted, with no atom of doubt! For Goodluck there was no room for speculation or guess work. Thanks! He did not go to the Supreme Court to contest his defeat!

Whatever the situation, the inevitable question is "Which way forward for Rochas and his government"? Thanks be to God that Ndigbo (Old Biafrans), not only Imolites), in Abia, Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi are gradually learning to vote for personalities and not parties. But I wonder whether that most respectable way of choosing or electing political aspirants to high offices anywhere in the civilized world today ever featured in the last election in Nigeria? Whether the Igbo States are running APC, PDP or APGA government, one thing is crystal clear, Ndigbo have no more relevant stake and strong political base in Nigeria today. As a political entity Ndigbo may no more be a relevant group in Nigeria's political enterprise of today.

Igbo leaders just like *Emperor Claudius of the Old Roman Empire* have been playing their guitars while Rome burnt....roaming about on political jamboree looking for any political party or parties that would accommodate them and their personal selfish interests and not Ndigbo as a whole. "If you can't beat them, join them" is their political philosophy. If your chances of grabbing unmerited success at the 'primaries' are slim, decamp and join the likely winning party! If you feel

your political future will look brighter in the Western zone, join the Yoruba party CAN or AG or PDP.

If you wouldn't feel comfortable in the West, seek out your fortune in the Northern zone. Join the PDP or APC. "Don't consider APGA or NCNC. No! It is a dead party. Leave it to rot away. After all Nnamdi Azikiwe and Michael Okpara, Odumegwu Ojukwu, Onunaka Mbakwe are dead. But Obafemi Awolowo, Tafawa Balewa and Saduarna of Sokoto are still alive!! [Shut up! Who is this fool writing this nonsense? He is dreaming and is no more abreast with the modern political development in the country called Nigeria!] Who told you? You must think!

ONUNAKA MBAKWE AND ROCHAS OKOROCHA

But, we leave controversies aside. Our question remains, steering us on the face! Whither Imo state under Rochas Okorocha? The news widely circulated as Okorocha packed into Douglas House in 2011 was that *'Mbakwe Revolution'* in performance was just a *chicken feed* compared to what Rochas had in store for Ndigbo in general, not just for Imolites alone. Rochas would transform Imo state and leave it in an enviable state and status never seen anywhere in Nigeria. No problem. We were all excited and without doubt molites kept their fingers crossed, hoping for the good outcome of the best for Imo state.

Though so far, nothing under Rochas has been lost or gained since there is still room for improvement, as the governor begins his second tenure of four years. But we need to re-visit Governor Mbakwe, the "Weeping Governor" (He was so-nicknamed because he was all the time weeping and begging for crumbs from federal government, to feed his politically and economically battered Igbo people). With the crumbs he got from the scanty federal allocation he started feeding Imo people. With some scraps Mbakwe collected from some unknown friends, he began various construction projects, name them, *his famous MCC Roads, Amaraku Power Station, Avutu Poultry Farm, Owerri Ebeiri, Orlu Cardboard industries, Ceramic industries at Okigwe, Owerri Shoe industries, and of course first class Imo Hotels, to name but a few.*

K.O. Mbadiwe (the man of 'timber and caliber') was federal Minister of Aviation for years in the Old Nigeria. There was no federal presence in Igboland in the nature of an airport. Mbakwe saw that Ndigbo needed an airport (except just one at Enugu). It was long overdue. He started one at Owerri. His enemies and enemies of Ndigbo laughed at him. From where would Mbakwe get the resources to build an airport? A crazy man? Mbakwe started a lot of borehole water projects in many parts of Imo state and pipes were laid for public taps and overhead storage tanks all over the townships and rural areas.

At the end of Mbakwe administration the vultures that took over (in military and civilian uniforms, instead of completing some Mbakwe unfinished projects, abandoned and looted most of them. Public taps have vanished in most parts of

Imo state. In the so-called Orlu International Market, at Umuna, the taps are not running. There is no water. There is no light and they say they have “Market Boards” and the market is of “International Standard” Wow! Traders and shoppers shit and piss in public and at every nook and cranny of the market!

ROCHAS ELEPHANT PROJECTS: MONUMENTS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Completed or uncompleted, Mbakwe did wonderful decent job before the unfortunate military interlopers intervened and overthrew their government and looted whatever they and their henchmen could lay their hands upon.

But all said and done, the present Rochas administration should learn from Mbakwe and his contractors of those days. Why, for example should Rochas road construction companies not use solid materials for their work as Mbakwe did? Often crazy Nigerian road contractors imitate Americans and Europeans sheepishly.

In ‘dualization’ of roads, streets and general ‘pavementation’ why plant grass and trees like in European cities? Where is the water to keep the grass and shrubs green in dry season? Why not plaster the separating concrete bridges? In Europe and America pedestrians rarely march on grass. But Africans and Nigerians (especially roaming lunatics) sleep on paved hedges and street corners.

How do Rochas roads and gutters collect the often menacing flood ravaging the entire Imo roads? Where are the collected erosion emptied? Into which oceans and rivers? What a catastrophe! The Umuna/Orlu erosion disaster, like the Amucha erosion catastrophe of the Shagari era, is still staring Rochas and his contractors miserably on the face!! Masters and pupils should go back to engineering school and learn city and environmental planning.

The amount of money, energy, time and other resources spent by Rochas and his contractors on monuments and roundabouts in Imo cities can be embarrassing and scandalous. The whole lot of money if turned into more realistic ventures, can really make Imo cities look like “Little Paradise”, where the most basic necessities of life can be found, including clean asphalted roadways, well-landscaped hedges, clean well managed motor parks, sports stadiums, and public squares!

In poor African cities with no passable roads, and potable water our leaders are building their own styles of Tour Eiffel, a massive iron lattice tower located at Champ de Mars in Paris, France, Twin City Towers of New York Trade Center and massive American statues of Liberty, the Arches of the divided city of Berlin in Germany, the Kremlin Square in Moscow, Soviet Union, The Clock Tower Big Ben of London, at the north end of the Palace of Westminster in London, The Peter's Square of the Vatican City, the

Pantheon(Temple of all gods) in Rome and many other replicas of famous World monuments.

In most great cities of Nigeria, including Imo state, we find street-Lighting structures in cities with no power supplies! Why do they erect electric poles in cities that rarely get light even for domestic purposes, day and night? Street light are meant to provide lighting during the night, when the daylights are gone. Why do they embark on rural and urban electrification projects and reject the philosophy and culture of maintenance too, name them – refusing to repair broken and fallen electric poles, ignoring the hazards from such structures to public safety, refusing to replace burnt out electric bulbs and fittings, refusing to note that out of the so-called street lightings, perhaps only one or two out of the whole lot may be functioning, surely haphazardly ? Whom are they deceiving? Surely all passers-by know that ‘all that glitters is not gold!’

ARCHWAYS OF ANCIENT ROMAN EMPIRE

Why do they build these arches and archways of the ancient Roman Empire meant to welcome visitors to Imo state cities and villages (with practically no walls and passable roads)? Rochas and his construction companies should stop wasting money on useless flamboyant projects and provide Imo people with simple decently maintained roads (asphalted or not), which can endure the test of season, like most of Mbakwe MCC roads).

Rochas amphitheatre-columns-structures, most of which have been abandoned and fallen into disrepair, like Old Roman Forums and dilapidated Coliseum and Appian Ways must not be preferred to simple village and city roads that can serve our people, motorists and pedestrians in rainy and dry seasons. These massive amphitheatres, big Rochas Centers, Ecumenical Centers, Mosques, Squares and Three-Star Hotels of international standards (wonderful and admirable they may look) may not be the best of structures that spell development and success in poor villages and cities of Nigeria. Massive toll gates at the entrances to Imo cities without roads cannot resolve the problems of movement and even security in Imo cities and villages.

ROCHAS SHOPPING MALLS

Rochas architects and designers must decently consider what is best for the poor masses of Imolites. Igbo traders and market women are used to street-trading, in shanties and what they call umbrella shades. You can't cage them into massive shopping malls. No way! They break loose and construct their own ‘stores’, batchers and attachments!’ Check the Igbo mentality and mindset! They prefer simply ‘shades’ and ‘stalls’ in large spaces of land. Check their Ori, Afor, Nkwo, Eke Market-structures!

Not the best of people as regards decent living and discipline, Igbo traders, from the top executives to market women and hawkers prefer exhibiting their goods in the middle of the roads and express ways, in the walk ways, in front of churches and busy centers to attract the attention of willing and unwilling buyers. If you spend millions of naira and construct the best of comfortable structures for them to sell and buy there, they let the structures lie fallow and rot away. They make mockery of real development and decency!

Every trader wants to occupy the 'best' site or position in the market and the site must be located at an area where every passer-by must see and buy the goods. Motor mechanics and welders want their shops at the busiest corners of city centers. In Nigeria goods must be exposed right outside, not inside the rooms. Who will inculcate the economic philosophy of "Mechanic Village", "Motor Parks" "Electronic & Phone workshop village", "Bottled Drinks Markets"That's how it works in developed countries.

ROCHAS AMUSEMENT PARKS

There is nothing wrong in building massive recreational and amusement parks in Imo large cities. Europeans and Americans we copy from have such places that look like paradise on earth. Both young and old need relaxation and fresh air! But in the overseas amusement parks, running water is provided in abundance. Toilet facilities for male and female are provided. Disposal bins are located at every corner of the park. Relaxation platforms and seats are found ready to accommodate visitors. Lights are there 24 hours a day and one can visit the parks any time of the day and night. There is free entrance generally except in few occasions when bigger groups may want to organize outings and picnics.

Most of the Rochas Imo parks as at the end of four years have remained uncompleted. Most of the structures are real death-traps for kids and visitors. The whole environment often looks unkempt, littered with broken bottles and dangerous missiles, remains of leftover building materials, pure water sachets and plastics, and dirt. Amusement parks! Amusing sites indeed!

Is entrance to Imo amusement parks free or with tickets? In one at Orlu city center, near the UBA I visited one day, I saw 'guards' or security men collecting what looked like *toll fees, or tips or bribes*. I heard one 'security man' arguing with parents who happily brought their kids to enjoy life in Imo amusement parks. The security man told the parents who refused to pay or give tip that they should go to Owerri and obtain tickets from the 'headquarters?' Wow!

INDUSTRIAL LAYOUTS & HEALTH CENTERS

What has happened to the areas Mbakwe's government mapped out for first class industrial development in and around Owerri Township, for example? Why have these areas been neglected or abandoned and weeds allowed to devour them. The

roads leading to these areas should have received priority attention from any serious administration. These layouts that focus on true industrialization (Ceramics, Cardboards, Shoes, Drinks, Food Processing, Clothes, Paper, Machinery etc) can never be left fallow for whatever reasons. What a calamity!

Industrial layouts are areas neatly selected for development, where factories are located, factories that actively make products. Work goes on there day and night. Workers often work “in shifts”. Young and old, citizens and foreigners are engaged in production. Here both professionals and laborers find job. Even street hawkers are engaged as they happily provide hundred and thousands of workers with food and victuals during breaks and recreation.

Jobless and uneducated youths find something doing in these areas, lifting, loading and off-loading industrial materials, opening and shutting factory gates. They earn decent living and spend useful hours in useful business and progressive exercises.

Building of Hospitals and Centers at every nook and cranny of Imo state may not be a bad idea after all. Our people need health care facilities. But what use do they serve if these ‘Teaching and Specialist Hospitals and Clinics’ don’t function and haven’t adequate staff, qualified medical personnel, potable and running water and of course light. What purpose do they serve if only stalled and uninstalled obsolete and useless medical equipments are left there to be used in diagnosing and treating diseases?

Why should a patient diagnosed with high blood pressure or diabetes die and be sent to the mortuary after “treatment” in our “Specialists Hospitals?” Why should a pregnant woman die during labor in our “Specialist Clinics” in Imo state and Nigeria? Answers must be provided for these important rhetorical and disturbing questions.

GOVERNOR ROCHAS & CONTRACTORS - JUST A WORD!

In one of our earlier write-ups titled *“No Room for Politics”*, we made our point clear on the issue of contract awards and executions, on the national and state levels: Namely: *“If winners in the concluded elections made electoral promises to their supporters, contributors and moneybags, and the likes, no problem. These should be compensated for justice sake, but NOT WITH POLITICAL POSTS AND CONTRACT AWARDS. No way!”*

In Imo state, the number of unexecuted and uncompleted projects, mostly roads and structures is overwhelming. Today the incompetent contractors come out with one reason or another for ‘inactivity!’ Rainy season! But what have you been doing during dry season? Another reason (an ‘alibi’ – excuse for not doing their work!), ‘the contractors claim or lament that they had not been paid or given the ‘mobilization fee’. There are more ridiculous reasons for either not beginning the work or for abandoning it on the way. “Governor ordered a ‘Stop’ (because of ‘bad performance!’) Okay. But may we ask the governor: “Why have you not

replaced the incompetent contractors with the best engineers in Imo state? Silence on the part of the master who awarded the contracts may not be the best I think?

Imolites receive a lot of reasons from the so called contractions, as people complain and suffer as a result of stalemate and confusion people have to put up with daily in villages and urban cities as a result of uncompleted road projects in particular. Some contractors claim they had not even received a kobo since they began their road project! Some claim they had not been 'repaid millions they had already invested in the project'. Wow! One may ask the indolent protesting contractors: "Why did you accept the contract? Why begin at all? What were the terms of contract by the way? Why did you affix your signature if you ever went to school? Ridiculous!

For both contractors and those who award contracts, kindly save the suffering masses of Nigerians some nerves as you go along doing your best to serve them. Take the much stuff you can chew and swallow at a time so that you would not be overwhelmed with problems, among which everyone understands and appreciates, financial constraints or resources. In all our efforts to give the best, we may after all be causing irreparable damage to our future business and political aspirations. All contractors and political leaders must take note.

LEGACIES & SERVICES - "WHO WILL GO FOR NDIGBO"

"If an Igbo leader is offered a true ticket to lead Nigerian nation tomorrow, who will go for us?" Such is a big question on the lips of every patriotic Igbo, young and old, male and female. Will he come from Ebonyi or Abia? Why not Enugu, or Anambra? What of Imo state? A divided Igbo nation! A controversial, stiff-necked and rebellious Ndigbo, like their Israelite forebears of the Old, Ndigbo ask a lot of questions and are not-easy-people to lead and control.

Their overbearing ethnic egoism and idiosyncrasies would not even bother me, because I have probably better criteria for choosing an Igbo leader of tomorrow. There wouldn't be need for any plebiscites, opinion poll or official voting. Why not? I don't trust them. The aspirants, their brothers and sisters and entire communities will try a way of "rigging" any system meant to select the best leader. It is in their blood to maneuver, and their devious and evasive movements or shift of tactics are unparalleled! No one may blame or accuse anyone of '**Igbo phobia**', who insists that Igbo man in every situation where a critical decision or choice must be made; usually puts their 'stomach' first! They dine with the angel and devil to achieve their selfish goal. A bitter truth!

So, most Igbo leaders, traditional, political, community and even religious are not always the best that serve the interest of the masses or the majority. No! Those that 'win' and sit on the throne are usually the ones that serve the interests of a few, peer groups or those of the grand masters.

A credible future Igbo leader, I believe must be the Lord's choice, "One of the men who has accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us. One of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (Acts 1: 20-23). That was how Matthias and not Joseph called Barsabbas or Justus was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot.

Only credible Igbo leader with the old Biafra spirit can pull out Ndigbo from the deep dungeon into which their past selfish leaders had pushed them. From this dungeon and seemingly bottomless pit, Ndigbo, since Nigerian independence have been peering curiously, searching for something, difficult for them to discern, namely their political and economic future in the Nigerian community. Their destiny as well as the time it will take them to emerge from the slumber remains a great mystery even today.

Everywhere today Ndigbo are persecuted and rejected by their countrymen in Nigeria, North, West and South. They are called all sorts of names mostly out of hatred and jealousy. But we must humbly admit that Ndigbo are not the best of all tribes in Nigeria. We are greedy, avaricious, money mongers, domineering and of course devious! We even hate our own brothers and sisters and can sell them for 30 pieces of silver! A catalogue of our vices can extend to the depth of Sheol. Truth is bitter, but must be told. When west African youths from Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Cameroon, Benin and others are caught and exposed in their criminal activities all over the world, they claim to be not only Nigerian citizens, but specifically Igbo guys!

But well examined Ndigbo may not be as vicious as their haters, who are needless to say are more tribalistic, treacherous, untrustworthy, predictably unaccommodating of other races and ethnic groups, and of course less hardworking or courageous. During persecution, who speaks for the Igbo people. "Ohaneze Ndigbo?" Forget them! "Eze Gburugburu Ndigbo in Lagos, Abuja and Ugwu Awusa?" What of Igbo "leaders of thought" in USA or London? Forget these too. They are only puppet title holders in name. They crowned themselves and together with the communities they claim to guide or rule carved out their own utopian kingdoms where they parade in Igbo and African paraphernalia. They have no interest of Ndigbo at heart.

ROCHAS OKOROCHA AND MUHAMMAD BUHARI

As Buhari, looks now like the last hope of Nigeria 'renaissance' (a situation or period of time when there is a new interest in something that has not been popular in long time), so can I assert without equivocation that Rochas, as of today looks like the last hope of NDIGBO. You, my dear reader may agree or disagree with me or even rattle in anger or accuse me of blasphemy, I am quick to add and remind you that truth is bitter but must be told.

BUHARI, yes, because the past leaders, since independence till 2015 had never proved their worth in governance and political leadership. There is no need to recount how the past military and civilian leaders messed up their fatherland and made Nigeria look like the most despised and impoverished nation in the world today. Except for the short period of time the same Buhari appeared on the political scene of governance, no other 'Moses' had appeared to liberate Nigerians from slavery and lead them into the Promised Land. Buhari looks like the only hope, if no other catastrophe catches up with the unfortunate nation and people.

ODUMEGWU OJUKWU, yes, for Ndigbo! No other in Imo state except **ONUNAKA MBAKWE**, has been the 'spokesperson' of Igbo people. Name them, the living and the dead, the Igbo political stalwarts and moneybags, their traditional rulers, Igbo senators and lawmakers, name one that has fought for the liberation of Ndigbo from slavery, persecution and hardship. What of **ROCHAS ANAYO OKOROCHA**?

Tentatively, most honest Imolites believe that Rochas stands in the best position to pursue the interests of Ndigbo. He has better 'connections' and looks more enthusiastic to lead. He is the one in the best position to fight for an additional State in the South East zone of Nigeria. If there is any other possible 'messiah', kindly let Ndigbo know.

CONCLUSION: CAN ROCHAS OKOROCHA COME TO RESCUE?

Many like me had hoped that the emergence of **Rochas Okorocho** after Onunaka Mbakwe of Imo state was a sign of hope and a mark of a new beginning of rough but the inevitable marathon race to the Promised Land. No doubt a marathon race lasts an extremely long time and most importantly requires great effort and determination. There is rare strength of character and inner virtues involved, great strength and concentrated effort.

Rochas Okorocho can qualify as a credible Igbo leader in the footsteps of Odumegwu Ojukwu and Onunaka Mbakwe. He can unite various Igbo leaders from the Igbo states and initiate a revolutionary journey of Ndigbo to the "Promised Land". At that moment in time Ndigbo (lost specialists in various medical fields and engineering and computer science, professors of education, businessmen and women.....), from the four corners of the world, liberated from slavery in the various lands of captivity in search of greener pastures would return to their fatherland and fully reintegrated into the Nigerian community. There would be no more weeping, no more exile no more executions in foreign lands, rather songs of victory and fulfillment.

Rochas could still act reasonably well as that expected 'messiah' if he would listen to the elders' counsels now. There is still time for him to convince Ndigbo, especially Igbo youths, future leaders of tomorrow to follow him. There will be no more empty promises and haphazard and mischievous movements and

flamboyant speeches and utterances. Everyone, Tom, Dick and Harry must be made to join the movement. "Blessed is the nation who Yahweh is their God".

Rochas could qualify, only 'if'.....he could curtail his ambitious strides to the top without any strong base. Most other Nigerian ethnic groups will definitely not vote for Igbo candidacy. If Rochas desists from "President for life", African leadership mentality, he may become the much sort-for Igbo leader.

Rochas and lovers of Ndigbo should forget controversies and focus on the issues that can make Imo and Nigeria great. There is little time for hesitation. There is need to drag Imo youths along in this show. Imo youths are not a bunch of rabble protesters roaming the streets for trouble. No! They are the younger generation of parents who will definitely replace us soon and take over the mantle of leadership. They need help now and 'Education for life'.

Let my story not look ridiculous or funny. I am not kidding you. I don't mean to be heard. Only my passion drives me crazy. No! I get upset when I remember Shakespeare Macbeth. Let ROCHAS 'SAGA', a complicated story of mere past 'heroes', not look like a passing show on a stage. Wow! Let tears not flow down my cheeks!

"Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace to the last syllable of recorded time and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death.....Life is but a passing shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his weary hour upon the stage and then, is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"