

# The Epoch Times

'A FRESH LOOK AT OUR CHANGING WORLD'

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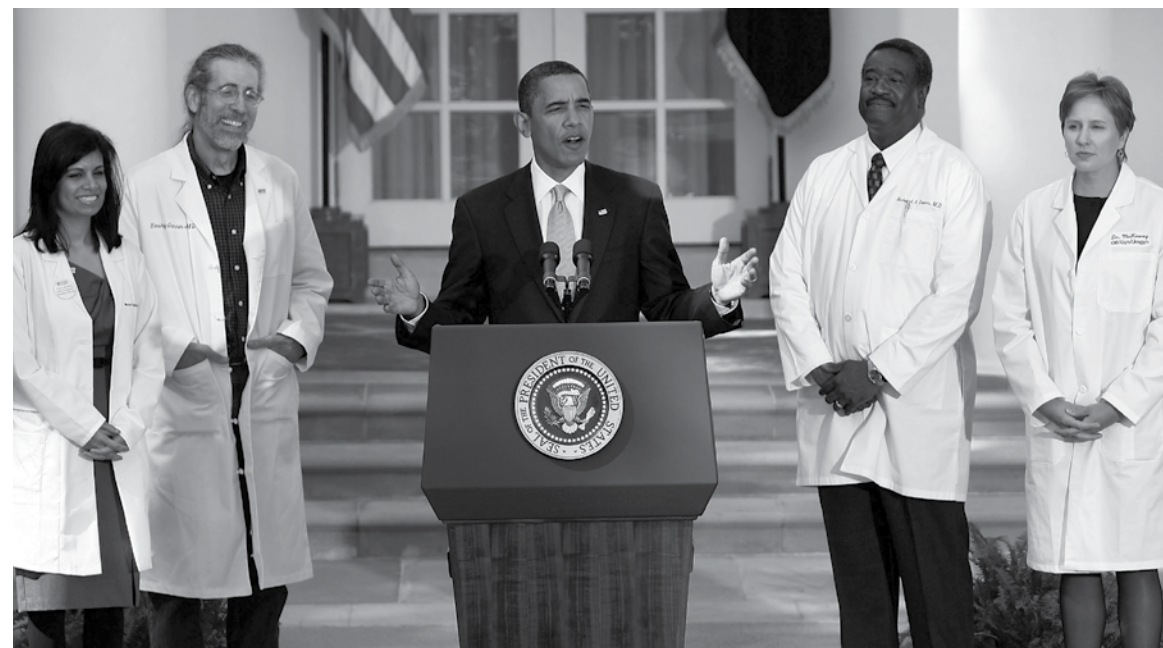


PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: President Barack Obama speaks from the Rose Garden during an event with medical doctors at the White House on Oct. 5 in Washington, D.C., in an attempt to generate enthusiasm for his health care proposals. The White House provided white coats to doctors who did not bring their own. WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

## Health care realism: reduced reimbursement results in rationing

By ARTHUR WIEGENFELD

The topic of health care causes me to feel anxiety on two occasions: when I read about proposed Medicare cuts of half a trillion dollars (though I am too young for Medicare), and when my private insurance company reimburses my doctor at a low level, even though it informs me that I owe nothing.

Both of these events, the first related to a public program, the second to a private one, concern me because of their connection with rationing, the process of allocating goods and services when the demand exceeds the supply. I would like to explain the connection between reduced reimbursements to health care providers and rationing. Since the rationing of services is a bit subtler than the rationing of consumer goods, I'll start with an example of a consumer good and then consider health care.

Suppose a terrific new type of exercise equipment is introduced, one that guarantees fitness with a minimal investment of time. It is likely that the demand will exceed the supply in the short term, meaning rationing is necessary.

This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: arranging sales on a first-come, first-served basis, favoritism, setting up a lottery, and raising the price.

In the longer term, if there is an expectation that people will continue to pay a price sufficient to cover the costs, the required supply can be brought up to the demand by two means: adding more plant capacity, and increasing productivity in the existing plants by upgrading the machinery and training the factory workers to work more efficiently.

These approaches don't work with medicine. Society doesn't want to have medical services offered on a first-come, first-served basis or have

the system play favorites.

Since cost control is the major stated purpose of health reform, politicians cannot very well tell the public that adequate prices ensure a well functioning medical system. Yet medicine depends heavily on a continued supply of highly trained providers who require decades of training and therefore expect their income to reflect the sacrifices they have made by incurring substantial debts, working long hours, and assuming responsibility for life-and-death decisions.

Their income is largely derived from reimbursements. Reducing these reimbursements effectively creates wage and price controls, whose disastrous results are confirmed by centuries of experience.

Can productivity improvements help to reduce costs? My view is that there is no way to make medicine significantly more productive in the foreseeable future. Here are several of the obstacles:

a) Medicine cannot be automated the way factories can. Each patient requires a minimum amount of time for treatment and will differ in symptoms and ability to benefit from the available treatments.

b) Technologically advanced tests may not reduce costs since most patients test negative, and the savings from early identification of an illness in the few who are sick may therefore not cover these costs.

c) Consultants and professors with doctorates have been working on productivity issues for decades and have already implemented the obvious solutions.

d) The government has long been unable to solve the problem of massive fraud.

e) Additional shortages will be created by adding up to 47 million new people to the medical rolls. Not surprisingly, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and Eze-kiel Emmanuel, a major presidential health advisor, have acknowledged that shortages will result from increasing the number of insured.

Therefore, the only remaining approach to reduce costs is to reduce the pay of health professionals by reducing reimbursements. This merely treats the symptom and is analogous to a person turning back his watch because he is late.

Of necessity, surgeons and medical facilities will have to ration tests and procedures since they will be increasingly overloaded with patients. Doctors will increase the percentage of new patients rejected because their insurance reimburses at a low level.

They will also have to rush the patients they are able to treat and will be less able to maintain equipment and invest in new technologies. Increasingly, experienced physicians will retire as their income declines, and fewer young people will choose to enter the profession.

Note that no one needs to change the benefits listed in your contract—there just won't be an adequate number of medical professionals to implement them. Politicians thereby escape the political blame. However, to use an analogy, if someone removes the oxygen from a room, the result is the same as choking the people who occupy it.

Readers interested in a discussion of the causes of the health care crisis, the faults of proposed legislation, and my solution can read my article "Health Care Realism: Facing the Unpleasant Facts" online ([www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/22274/](http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/22274/)).

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## Remembering Dr. Schweitzer and our hopes for peace

By CÉSAR CHELALA

NEW YORK—The long-standing conflicts now taking place in several countries around the world remind me of a visit I made to Lambaréné, in Gabon, a couple of years ago. It was there that the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer carried out his humanitarian work, saving the lives of thousands of patients with total dedication to their health and well-being. His is a lesson that we should listen to today.

I was at Cité Soleil, where a community of lepers still lives, created as a special ward next to the hospital. During my visit, three men were sitting on a bench, one of whom was trying to fix a violin, his hands ravaged by disease. I took out my camera and was ready to take his picture when he told me, "Don't shoot!"

Startled by his reaction, I asked him why he didn't want his picture taken. As he continued working on his violin he told me, "You don't even bother to say hello, you don't ask for our permission, and you want to take our picture?" I apologized, greeted him properly and asked his permission for a photograph. He readily agreed.

That man taught me an important lesson. Although my intention had not been to show him any disrespect, that is what I was essentially doing. I felt I had the right to take his photograph because I thought it was an interesting shot, but I hadn't respected his right to say no. That he was a leper who had probably encountered much disrespect in the past made my insensitivity even worse.

The man's assertiveness about his rights, and the atmosphere of quiet pride in Cité Soleil, I realized, were no accident. Dr. Schweitzer was remarkable because of his devotion to the needs of those less fortunate. He had left a brilliant professional career as a musician and a theologian to become a physician. He then moved to Africa with his wife, built a hospital in Lambaréné from what had been a chicken coop, and devoted his life to treating thousands of patients out of an irrepressible sense of personal duty.

Looking at a herd of hippos in the Ogowe River, close to the hospital, Dr. Schweitzer strengthened his commitment to the need to reverse life: "The greatest evil is to destroy life, to injure life, to repress life that is capable of development."

I couldn't help comparing Dr. Schweitzer's approach to life to what is happening in today's world, when we live in what seems to be a permanent state of war and where the reasons for going to war are becoming more and more irrelevant. To make things even worse, in today's world, many times religion is used as an excuse to destroy, not to improve life.

People today speak of a clash of civilizations, when the real clash is the lack of respect for the other, the lack of dialogue, the lack of effort to understand each other. As the American philosopher Sam Keen says in his poem

"How to Create an Enemy," "Trace onto the face of the enemy the greed, hatred, carelessness you dare not claim as your own."

Today we desperately need people of Dr. Schweitzer's stature. We need to follow his philosophy, based on an essential respect for life. As he constantly stressed, the progress of civilization is closely linked to a conception of the importance of life. Only those who say yes to life, to the world in which we live, are capable of making civilization progress.

The progress of civilization is closely linked to a conception of the importance of life.

Although the medical work at the hospital continues after his death, his message of peace has been lost in today's world, ravaged by sinister wars and unnecessary loss of life. Standing in his room and feeling the force of his personality, I thought that later generations have betrayed his legacy of peace.

When we look up in horror to the destruction of a country through a war based on false premises, at the decades of conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, at the wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, we need to remember Dr. Schweitzer's words in a 1963 letter to President John F. Kennedy: "The goal toward which we should direct our sight from now to the farthest future is that we should not let war decide issues that separate nations, but we should always try to find a pacific solution to them."

We will reach that understanding only through dialogue with those who think in different ways from us, when we learn to listen to their concerns and fears. Perhaps then Dr. Schweitzer's guiding principle will become a reality: "I am life that wants to live, surrounded by life that wants to live."

Dr. César Chelala, a writer on human rights issues, is a co-winner of an Overseas Press Club of America award for an article on human rights.

### 4 PUZZLES PEACE Suggested Solution

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## QUITTING THE CCP



Inspired by the 'Nine Commentaries,' as of October 14, at 9:00 p.m.

61,966,544

Chinese people have announced their intentions to quit the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations on a special Web site established by The Epoch Times. Many others, unable to break through the Chinese Internet blockade, have posted their withdrawal statements on poles or buildings. Others have written them on Chinese currency. Read recent statements of Chinese quitting the Party, the latest news on the "Nine Commentaries," and more at <http://www.NineCommentaries.com>

The 'Nine Commentaries' is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China. This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialized here.

# Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

## Commentary Eight (cont.)

On how the Chinese Communist Party is an evil cult

In the following period, Mao began to punish those dissidents in the Soviet area. In December 1930, he ordered Li Shaojiu, secretary general of the General Political Department of the First Front Red Army and chairman of the Purge Committee, to represent the General Frontier Committee and go to the town of Futian in Jiangxi Province where the communist government was located.

Li Shaojiu arrested members of the Provincial Action Committee and eight chief leaders of the 20th Red Army, including Duan Liangbi and Li Baifang. He used many cruel torture methods such as beating and burning the body. People who were tortured like this had injuries all over their bodies, fractured fingers, burns all over, and could not move. Accord-

ing to the documentary evidence at that time, the victims' cries were so loud as to pierce the sky—the torture methods were extremely inhumane.

On Dec. 8, the wives of Li Baifang, Ma Ming, and Zhou Mian went to visit their husbands in detention, but they were also arrested as members of the AB Corps and cruelly tortured. They were severely beaten, their bodies and vulvae burned and breasts cut with knives.

Under the cruel torture, Duan Liangbi confessed that Li Wenlin, Jin Wanbang, Liu Di, Zhou Mian, Ma Ming, and others were leaders of the AB Corps and that there were many members of the AB Corps in the Red Army's schools.

From Dec. 7 to the evening of Dec. 12, in merely five days, Li Shaojiu and others arrested more than 120 alleged AB Corps members and dozens of principal counter-revolutionaries in the severe AB Corps purge in Futian. More than 40 people were executed. Li Shaojiu's cruel acts finally triggered the Futian Incident<sup>i</sup> on Dec. 12, 1930, that highly astounded the Soviet area.

From the Soviet area to Yan'an, Mao relied on his theory and practice

of struggle and gradually sought and established his absolute leadership of the Party. After the CCP came to power in 1949, Mao continued to rely on this kind of inner-party struggle.

For example, in the eighth plenum of the Eighth CCP Central Committee meeting held in Lushan in 1959,

## Mao gradually sought and established his absolute leadership of the Party.

Mao Zedong launched a sudden attack on Peng Dehuai and removed him from his position.<sup>ii</sup> All of the central leaders who attended the conference were asked to take a stand; the few who dared to express different opinions were all labeled the Peng Dehuai anti-Party bloc.

During the Cultural Revolution, the veteran cadres at the CCP's Central Committee were punished one after another, but all of them gave

in without putting up a fight. Who would dare to speak a word against Mao Zedong?

The CCP has always emphasized iron discipline, loyalty to the Party, and organizational principles, requiring absolute obedience to the hierarchy's leader. This kind of Party nature has been engrained in the continuous political struggles.

During the Cultural Revolution, Li Lisan, once a CCP leader, was driven to the limit of his endurance. At 68 years of age, he was interrogated on average seven times per month. His wife Li Sha was treated as a "Soviet revisionist" spy, had already been sent to jail, and her whereabouts were unknown.

With no other choice and in extreme despair, Li committed suicide by swallowing a large quantity of sleeping pills. Before his death, Li Lisan wrote a letter to Mao Zedong, truly reflecting the sense of Party nature, according to which a CCP member does not dare to give up, even on the verge of death:

Chairman,  
I am now stepping onto the path of betraying the Party by committing

suicide, and have no means to defend my crime. Only one thing, that is, my entire family and I have never collaborated with enemy states. Only on this issue, I request the central government to investigate and examine the facts and draw conclusions based on truth. ...

Li Lisan  
June 22, 1967<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup>Liu Di, a political officer of the 20th Red Army who was accused of being a member of the AB Corps, led a revolt in Futian, charging Li Shaojiu as a counter-revolutionary. They took control of Futian City, released more than 100 people arrested for being members of the AB Corps, and shouted the "Down with Mao Zedong" slogan. For information about the AB Corps purge, see Gao Hua, "Historical Investigation of Mao Zedong's Purge of the 'AB Corps' in the Soviet Area, Jiangxi Province."

<sup>ii</sup>Peng Dehuai (1898–1974) was a Chinese communist general and political leader. Peng was the chief commander in the Korean War, vice-premier of the State Council, Politburo member, and minister of defense from 1954–1959. He was removed from his official posts after disagreeing with Mao's leftist approaches at the CCP's Lushan Plenum in 1959.

<sup>iii</sup>From "Li Lisan: The Person for Whom Four Memorial Services Have Been Held."

## Letters to the Editor



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