

# SEWER TANKS' SCHEMING SHILL

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*"The Charles Koch Institute has announced major grants (\$4.5 million) to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and \$2.5 million for the International Crisis Group that are aimed at expanding the marketplace of ideas around the U.S. foreign policy and supporting new talent." Jan. 19, 2021. With \$51-billion in assets, Charles Koch is the 11<sup>th</sup>-richest man in the world.*

When an American holds strong opinions on politics, the economy or about the way Americans live, and has an irrepressible urge to express himself he might write a letter to his newspaper or to the politician he voted for, or try to get on talk radio. If in the same boat, a multimillionaire such as Charles Koch wouldn't do any of the above. Instead, he might get together at his business club with like-minded plutocrats and form a think tank to influence public opinion, the media and eventually government policy. They would hire accommodating scholars and researchers to churn reports to advance the millionaires' point of view. Most think tanks have an ideological bent. But no matter how blatant their bias, think tanks almost always claim to be non-partisan and non-ideological. They're unsullied like driven slush.

Washington is the "capital" of the global think tank racket, of the world's 6,300 think tanks, 542 are in Washington and environs.

The innocuous but misleading Foundation for Defense for Democracies (FDD) (founded in Washington in 1991) has no interest in democracy. The FDD was founded by billionaires Edgar M. Bronfman and his brother Charles, film studio-owner Haim Saban and Michael Steinhardt, Bernd Marcus, Dalek Feith, the Abramson Family Foundation, Jennifer Mizrahi, and Lewis Ranieri. Clifford May, who was vice-chairman of the Republican Jewish Coalition, is the current president. Mark Dubowitz is the CEO and Toby Dershowitz is Sr. VP of Government Relations and Strategy while Jonathan Schanzer is VP of Research. Notorious neocon warmongers Bill Kristol and Richard Perle are FDD Fellows. Adjunct Fellows include Jonathan Adelman, Richard Z. Chesnoff, Paul Crespo, Michael Kraus, and Agota Kuperman. The think tank has a staff of 20. Jeffrey Blankfort, editor and activist, has said FDD is one of the most influential and powerful of Zionist lobbies.

The FDD founders have any number of political pursuits on their agenda but lobbying for Israel is their *raison d'être*. So it was no surprise they hired (2019) Brenda Shaffer as senior advisor for energy. As such, she was responsible for FDD's Iran Program. In addition to her years in the energy industry, she had been advisor to the Government of Israel and had received her BA, MA, and PhD from Israeli universities. Shaffer was a big catch—her oversized fictional business card would cite her multiple specialties: international energy, the Middle East, Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, Caspian energy, Iran, the Azeris of Iran, Azeri culture, Armenia, Israel, and the East Mediterranean. Wikipedia is uncertain about Big Brenda's year of birth and city of birth. Neither is there a mention anywhere of her marital status. The only personal information on the internet is that Shaffer has a passion for mountain gorillas. The heavy-set harridan's affinity to gorillas would pose a fascinating challenge to

a shrink. Meanwhile, her efforts to hide her excess avoirdupois by wearing dark clothing have failed.

Shaffer's agenda and that of FDD aligned. Shaffer had contacts in Israel, Azerbaijan, and in Washington. She has written several books on energy, Azerbaijan, and Iran, and has been on the faculty of a Baku university. She had delivered speeches at international energy industry conferences, and has frequently appeared on TV discussing energy issues and international politics. A faculty member at the US Naval Postgraduate School, a visiting professor at Georgetown University and non-resident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council, Big Brenda has testified at hearings in the two houses of Congress. She is also the darling of politicians and energy promoters in Baku. Because of the Artsakh conflict, Shaffer is hostile towards Armenia and Artsakh. "The enemy of my friend, etc." is the rationale.

--- In addition to attacking Armenia in her articles, she often lets loose a barrage of anti-Armenian tweets and re-tweets.

--- To hurt Armenia's image in Washington, she portrays Armenia as a close friend of Iran.

--- To encourage Azeri Iranians to separate from Tehran, she claims Azeris make up one-third of Iran's population although the World Factbook and the Library of Congress say Azeris comprise only 16 percent of Iran's population.

--- Big Brenda has exhorted the U.S. to stop financial assistance to Armenia.

--- She has asked Congress to repeal a section of the Freedom Support Act that barred direct U.S aid to Azerbaijan.

--- She has exaggerated the size of Azeri lands occupied by Armenians.

--- When challenged about lack of democracy in Azerbaijan, she has said: "Every six months, every year, things are getting better." That was in 2001. Azerbaijan is still a dictatorship.

--- During Azerbaijan's September invasion of Artsakh, Big Brenda said the "David" in the 44-day war were the Azeris although it's common knowledge that even after discounting Turkish and Islamic mercenary support for Azerbaijan, the latter was much stronger than Armenia. Baku felt so confident of its military superiority that it projected it would defeat the Armenians in fewer than five days.

--- She has accused the United Nations of selective outrage regarding Israel's occupation of the West Bank while supposedly ignoring Armenia's "occupation" of Artsakh.

--- During the recent Azeri invasion, she wrote: "Israelis know that geopolitical interests bind Israel and Azerbaijan. But Armenia's representatives claim that morality should bind Israel to Armenia. It's just the opposite."

--- Shaffer accused Artsakh Armenians of desecrating an Azeri mosque. She didn't mention the thousands of medieval Armenian gravestones shattered to smithereens in Nakhichevan by Azeri troops.

--- She claimed in a tweet that last July's brief fight between Armenia and Azerbaijan started when Armenian forces attacked Tavuz.

--- She frequently defends the Azeri hereditary dictatorship claiming Aliyev had brought "peace, stability, and economic development."

## War of Words on Social Media

*In the three months preceding the invasion of Artsakh, a large number of Azeris opened Twitter accounts. Many had professional titles or were Azeri bureaucrats. Some used Turkish-sounding pseudonyms. The large number of registrations within a few months should have alerted social media observers and particularly Armenian computer gurus that something was afoot. In late September we discovered the Azeris had obtained Twitter accounts in preparation for the electronic war they were plotting. It was obvious the project was orchestrated, most probably by Azeri authorities, to counter negative reaction to the Azeri-Turkish-Pakistani-Syrian mercenary attack on tiny Artsakh. Through Twitter, the enemy intended to influence world public opinion against Artsakh Armenians. Twitter is different from Facebook. The latter is mostly subscribed by like-minded people. Thus, writing in Facebook is often preaching to the converted. With 330 million subscribers around the globe, Twitter offers you the opportunity to argue your case in 144 characters or less. It's effective. That's why Donald Trump was such a fan. It's also the favorite medium of Brenda Shaffer who sometimes tweets or re-tweets as many as fifty times a day. Her tweets are often poison darts aimed at Iran, Armenia, or any country, person, or organization she perceives not sufficiently respectful of or pliant to Israel. Twitter waters are mucky. For example, there is little oversight on things called "bots". The latter are computer generated profiles claiming to be real people, with real names but aimed at perverting the truth or squashing it with disinformation. Due to their large number, Azeri trolls dominated Twitter during the invasion and in its aftermath. Three months after the end of the war, they still dominate the Twitter debates through sheer numbers. To counter Azeri and Brenda Shaffer propaganda as many as possible Armenians should open Tweeter accounts. It is easy and takes less than 5 minutes. Right now the battle on Tweeter pages is uneven: the enemy has more participants. In September we lost the second round. Let's not lose the war of ideas. #Haghtelooyenk.*

Her hostility towards Armenia emanates Israeli strategy: denigrate Armenia to show to Azerbaijan that one of the advantages of being friendly with Israel is gratis positive public relations in the West courtesy of Zionist propagandists. It's reminiscent of Israeli lobby's campaign to obstruct America's recognition of the Armenian Genocide so that Israel would earn brownie points from Turkey. In the past year, Keghart.org has exposed four members of the Zionist writers' cabal (Nurit Greenger and Adele Nazarian of Los Angeles, Arye Gut of Jerusalem, and Irene Tsukerman of New York). Of the thirty or so gang of anti-Armenian writers, Shaffer is a breed apart. She casts a giant shadow but not because of her excess poundage. Although she sabotages her writings through bias and deception, she is more effective than most of her Zionist co-conspirators because her audience is among the political and academic elite of Washington and the energy industry circuit.

Big Brenda's successful career has not protected her from scandalous exposes. Her books, articles, and statements have been criticized by publications such as *Harper's* magazine and the *New York Times* for bias, prevarication, the hiding of facts, and for distortion. The policies she has hyped have had a passing acquaintanceship with the truth.

In an article about Armenia and Azerbaijan in the *New York Times*, she asserted Azerbaijan was an important security partner of the U.S. When she sent the article to the *New York Times* she hid her connection to Azerbaijan pretending to be an impartial observer. The newspaper's editor later chastised her publicly and said Shaffer had signed a contract obliging her to disclose conflict of interest, actual or potential. It was not the first or last time Big Brenda has commented on Armenia/Azerbaijan relations without mentioning her close ties to Baku.

In his critique of Shaffer's *Borders and Brethren*, Prof. Arun Kundani of the New York University wrote that the book "does not provide empirical evidence...negligent contradictory data as a result of an influence by politics of the publishers and funder, and bias in favor."

In his critique of the same book, a professor at the University of Amsterdam wrote: "*Borders and Brethren* is an excellent example of how political agenda can dehistoricize and decontextualize history."

Editor Evan Siegel said: "The book suffers from some general weakness. Its author is prone to make plausible generalizations which, however, are undocumented when they are documented at all." Siegel added the book was "full of mistakes, inaccuracies, misinterpretation, and misquoting of sources" as reasons for the book's failure to provide documentation to support Shaffer's observations.

In a *Harper's* magazine article entitled *Academics for Hire*, writer Ken Silverstein pointed out while she wrote on geostrategic issues as an academic she didn't reveal that she was a consultant to President Rovnag Abdullayev of SOCAR, Azerbaijan's giant energy company. Historian Ralph E. Luker echoed Silverstein.

Depending on the occasion, Brenda denies or asserts her connection to Azerbaijan. Her Georgetown University website says she was once an adviser to the government of Israel but leaves out her connection to SOCAR.

In an article ("How to Build Yourself a Stealth Lobbyist, Azerbaijani Style," June 22, 2015), Tim Bruckner wrote in the publication of The Organization of Crime and Corruption Reporting Project: "The rise of Brenda Shaffer as a scholar and oft-quoted in the field of energy politics illustrates how vulnerable the American foreign policy establishment is to manipulation by foreign agents. Supported by an overseas regime and an assorted network of over and undercover lobbyist, she used oil money to build her academic credentials, then in turn used those credentials to promote Azerbaijan's agendas through Congressional testimony, dozens of newspaper op-eds and media appearances countless think tank events, and even scholarly publications. She's still doing it..."

As well, the Caspian Studies Program she headed at Harvard was set up through a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce and donations by Exxon, Mobil, and Chevron, all of whom have commercial interests in Azerbaijan.

A person unaware of FDD's agenda would wonder why a blue-ribbon Washington think tank would hire Azerbaijan's discredited shill. Think tanks are not in the business of telling the truth. Their job is to make the world believe a particular story. The following anecdote distills the function of think tanks.

*The head of a potential client asks a think tank's CEO: "What's one and one?"*

*The CEO: "What do you want it to be?"*

Big Brenda will not vanish any day soon. To reduce the damage she causes, the Armenian lobby should be unrelenting in exposing her lies. Armenians in large numbers (see the side bar) should utilize Twitter to combat the blousy, larger-than-life Brenda who has three loves: Israel, Azerbaijan, and mountain gorillas.

## Comments



**armen baghdoyan** – 2021-02-19 00:47:27

An untrammled, well researched, courageous and penetrating piece that challenges the establishment media's misinformation factory with irrefutable facts. Here is the truth that is so assiduously covered up 24/7 by the powers that be. For the illuminated, it is a delightful, even if scary, reading. For those who have been fed constantly, even savagely, with corporationist misinformation and outright lies, this is a monumental mind-opener. People in the West, particularly in the U.S., are being brainwashed by their respective MSM to unquestioned and unsuspected servitude. They better learn, as soon as possible, that Russia, China, Iran or other countries are simply phantom enemies erected conspicuously by the hawkish Zionists in their respective countries. Any threat to Western 'democracies' is nowhere to be found in the world. Their real enemies are the Zionist controlled establishments, whose main task is to mislead people and keep them in total darkness. This editorial presents a great threat to those evil forces because it shines the life of light in the minds of people by telling the truth, forcefully, and brutally. Western people need to learn the simple truth and maintain it as their mantra: Their enemy is within. Kudos to the editors.



**Hovanes Boyadjian** – 2021-02-19 00:46:33

I think that Brenda Shaffer's alleged love of gorillas is a ruse to present a humanitarian side of herself when her actions reveal that she is a liar. Thank you for bringing this creature to our attention. I hope that Mr. Robert Kocharyan reads this article; he belongs to that group of ...



**Lusine Nalbandyan** – 2021-02-18 04:47:39

Lobbying for Azerbaijan and its dictatorship should be a shame for anyone who considers herself a scholar. I wish Brenda Shaffer and other "defenders" of democracies use their talent and skills for GOOD not evil.



**David Davidian** – 2021-02-18 02:56:40

Well done! -Yerevan, Armenia



**Horro** - 2021-02-18 00:47:58

Good informative article. P.S. I love the humour!