Smokers' Rights Organisations

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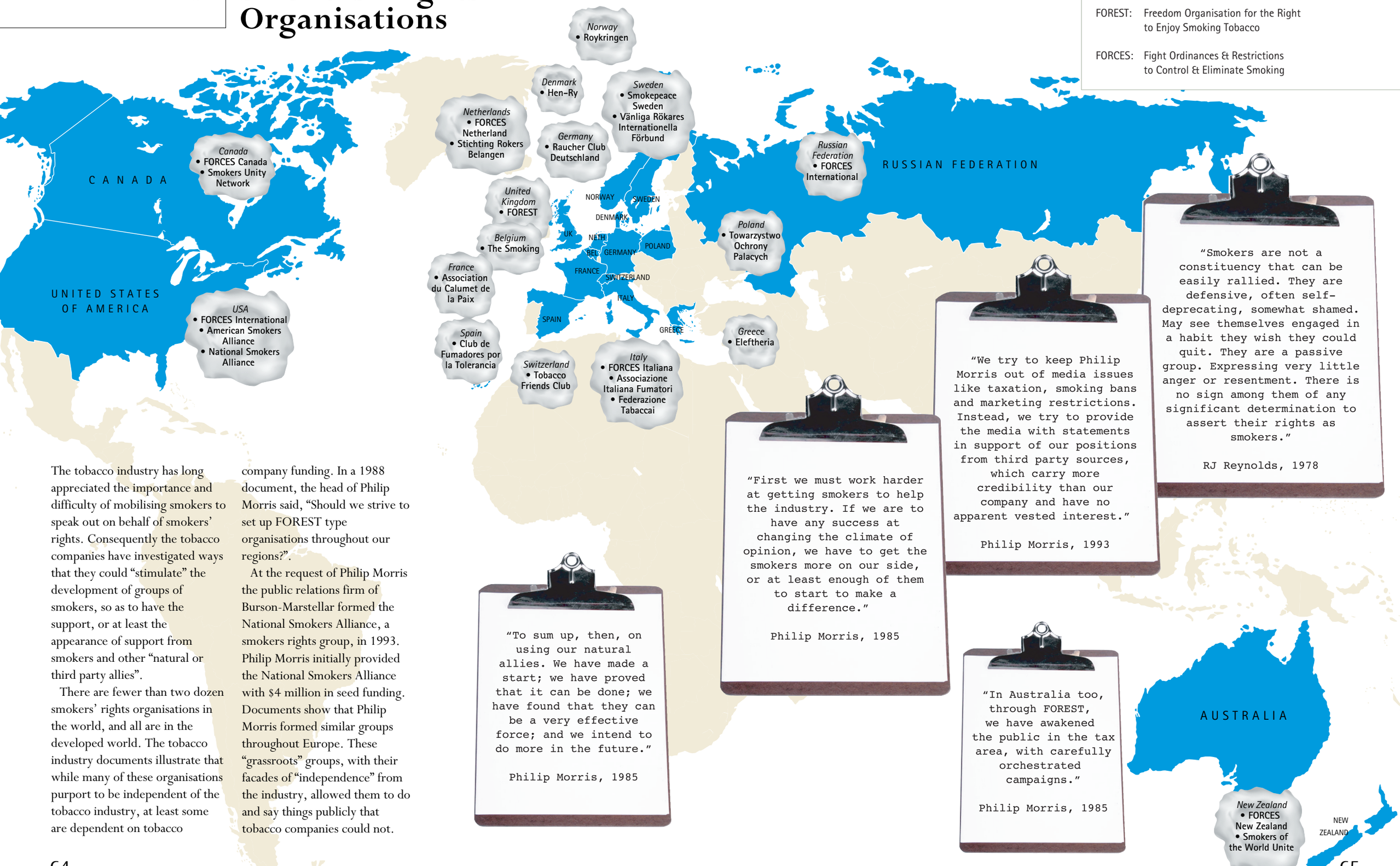
2002 where known

FOREST: Freedom Organisation for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco

FORCES: Fight Ordinances & Restrictions to Control & Eliminate Smoking



The tobacco industry has long appreciated the importance and difficulty of mobilising smokers to speak out on behalf of smokers' rights. Consequently the tobacco companies have investigated ways that they could "stimulate" the development of groups of smokers, so as to have the support, or at least the appearance of support from smokers and other "natural or third party allies".

There are fewer than two dozen smokers' rights organisations in the world, and all are in the developed world. The tobacco industry documents illustrate that while many of these organisations purport to be independent of the tobacco industry, at least some are dependent on tobacco company funding. In a 1988 document, the head of Philip Morris said, "Should we strive to set up FOREST type organisations throughout our regions?".

At the request of Philip Morris the public relations firm of Burson-Marstellar formed the National Smokers Alliance, a smokers rights group, in 1993. Philip Morris initially provided the National Smokers Alliance with $4 million in seed funding. Documents show that Philip Morris formed similar groups throughout Europe. These "grassroots" groups, with their facades of "independence" from the industry, allowed them to do and say things publicly that tobacco companies could not.

"To sum up, then, on using our natural allies. We have made a start; we have proved that it can be done; we have found that they can be a very effective force; and we intend to do more in the future."

Philip Morris, 1985

"First we must work harder at getting smokers to help the industry. If we are to have any success at changing the climate of opinion, we have to get the smokers more on our side, or at least enough of them to start to make a difference."

Philip Morris, 1985

"We try to keep Philip Morris out of media issues like taxation, smoking bans and marketing restrictions. Instead, we try to provide the media with statements in support of our positions from third party sources, which carry more credibility than our company and have no apparent vested interest."

Philip Morris, 1993

"Smokers are not a constituency that can be easily rallied. They are defensive, often self-deprecating, somewhat shamed. May see themselves engaged in a habit they wish they could quit. They are a passive group. Expressing very little anger or resentment. There is no sign among them of any significant determination to assert their rights as smokers."

RJ Reynolds, 1978

"In Australia too, through FOREST, we have awakened the public in the tax area, with carefully orchestrated campaigns."

Philip Morris, 1985