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**Fightback's Pre-History in the
New Zealand Left**

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Since Fightback's analysis and articles have been getting more attention from international comrades, we regularly get questions asking what "tradition" or organisational pedigree we belong to – are we Trotskyists, Marxist-Leninists, left-communists, or what? This very brief historical sketch aims to show how messy and complicated our background is. We feel, though, that this is a source of pride rather than embarrassment – in intellectual tendencies as with animals, hybridity often leads to vigour, while a "pure" pedigree is another word for inbreeding!

Fightback traces most of its ancestry back to the original [Communist Party of New Zealand](#), founded in 1921. During the splits between the various Communist-led states of the 1950s-1970s, the CPNZ distinguished itself by being the only CP in an advanced capitalist country to side with China against the Soviet Union; and was even more unique in siding with Enver Hoxha's Albania after its split with China in the late 1970s.

The paradox of taking such a hard-line "Stalinist"/"anti-revisionist" line was that the CPNZ's brand of "Hoxhaism" was forthright in condemning both the USSR and China as imperialist countries, not dissimilar in their global role to the US-led bloc. After Hoxhaist Albania surrendered to liberal democracy in 1991, after a period of confusion, the CPNZ produced an analysis (not dissimilar to that of another ex-Hoxhaist party in the US, [the Communist Voice Organization](#)) that all the so-called Communist countries had in fact been state-capitalist bureaucratic dictatorships since the time of Stalin.

This formerly super-Stalinist party had therefore come to the same conclusion as several tendencies coming out of the Trotskyist tradition. In a huge historical irony, after decades of strident anti-Trotskyism, in 1995 the former CPNZ, now known as the Socialist Workers

Organisation, formally adopted the analysis of one of these state-capitalist tendencies with roots in Trotsky's analysis – the International Socialist tendency, led by the British Socialist Workers Party. However, the SWO was always something of a “black sheep” within that tendency, in that it steered a very independent course from the London “mothership”, and at various times included members openly identifying with different Marxist trends, including from an “orthodox” Fourth Internationalist background.

Meanwhile, in 1990 CPNZ veteran Ray Nunes – who had split over his old party's Albanian turn – formed the Workers' Party of New Zealand, which described itself as “Marxist-Leninist, pro-Mao but not Maoist”. Over the years it continued CPNZ tradition by railing against their former comrades in the SWO for their capitulation to Trotskyism... Until in the 2000s, in another historical irony, the WPNZ fused with a “pro-Trotsky but not Trotskyist” group around the magazine *revolution*. (Some documents from the WPNZ before and after its fusion with *revolution* can be found on the [Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism Online](#).)

Both parties reached a crisis in 2011-2012. Socialist Worker had broken with the authority of the British SWP, but could not come to a consensus on a new political line and strategy, and decided to wind itself up in 2012. Meanwhile, the former leading group of the Workers Party – from both “Mao-ish” and “Trotsky-ish” tendencies – had decided that building a Leninist party in New Zealand's contemporary conditions was impossible, and had quit in 2011.

At that point, after decades of hostility, several former members of Socialist Worker realised that they had a lot in common with the remaining Workers Party members – in particular commitment to a non-dogmatic revolutionary socialism, which combined activists coming from several different Marxist traditions and sought an analysis unique to Aotearoa/NZ's conditions. The combined organisation renamed itself Fightback in 2013.