

# At Pride and at the festival, let's talk about the end of oppression

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**According to Czech Twitter, summer festivals are threatened by the idea of anti-capitalism. In fact, the opposite threatens us: capitalism destroying nature and restricting human freedom. Festival joy should be the harbinger of a better world.**

The organisers of Ostrava Pride claim to be an anti-capitalist collective. In recent weeks, this has been noticed on Twitter by a number of writers for whom the word “anti-capitalist” has a directly magical power - as the uproar that broke out when Pirate Jana Michailidu boasted on this social network about her visit to the Days of Anti-Capitalism has already shown. The Twitter feed was immediately filled with those who, although they are supposedly in favour of same-sex marriage, felt the need to declare that after the Ostrava “experience” they would rather not attend the upcoming Prague Pride.

However, a different experience also came from Ostrava. The Colours of Ostrava festival has increasingly submitted to the dictates of capital, as was well demonstrated by the fact that security did not want to allow those wearing rainbow elements into the venue - supposedly to “promote ideology”. No doubt some people wish we would not question the current system and just consume at summer events.

## **We do not live isolated lives**

It would perhaps be nice if capitalism and queer people's rights weren't related at all. If the injustices that happen to people because they don't fit gender stereotypes were the only problem we had to deal with. Unfortunately, however, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender is just one of the many forms of oppression we face.

Being able to freely express our gender is certainly important for our mental and physical well-being, but even if we try hard enough, other problems will not go away. The discrimination we may feel as a result of being LGBT then affects our overall position in society - and with it, very likely, our ability to pay our bills or develop our own potential. Even if we do not encounter any of the hate speech directly, it still has an indirect - and unpleasant - impact on us.

Although we often see in the media space nearly “perfect” same-sex couples who have stable relationships, prestigious jobs, and gardens with meticulously manicured lawns, the queer people who deserve the most attention and social support are those who have none of these things. Those whose non-heterosexuality excludes them from the local community or makes it difficult to find employment.

Socio-economic circumstances - which necessarily have to do with the prevailing economic system - are ultimately what oppress queer people or make their life situation significantly more difficult. So it makes sense to think of a more equal world not only in terms of love and identity, but also in terms of work and well-being.

## **Freedom of expression threatens the power of capital**

This is why we should support efforts to think socially-critically at Pride and not be afraid of an anti-capitalist message, while the capitalist profiling of Colours of Ostrava should be condemned. This is clearly shown by the behaviour of the festival security this year, who refused to allow a man with a rainbow armband into the festival grounds, seeing it as “promotional material”. When a participant asked if it was okay to have a big company name on a T-shirt, the security people responded by saying that the company was not an idea or an ideology. [Security then explained](#) to other visitors that symbols and signs that support a particular minority are problematic.

[It is not without interest that in the spring of this year](#) the general sponsor of Colours of Ostrava became the ORLEN concern, which owns Benzina petrol stations in the Czech Republic. This petrochemical company has bought up many media outlets in Poland and made personnel changes in them in order to [restrict freedom of the press](#). The people newly appointed to senior positions were aligned with the ruling Law and Justice party. The media owned by Orlen subsequently [stopped reporting](#) on issues related to LGBT+ rights and refugees.

So we have to ask whether the new general partner has not put pressure on the festival organisers in a similar way to its owned media in Poland? All the more so as the festival director [claims](#) in an interview with Deník N that people wearing rainbow colours were allegedly ready to provoke, suggesting that there was a conspiracy of individual festival-goers who were prevented from entering.

Whether by accident or design, the ORLEN concern, the general partner of the festival, is a prime example of the combination of dubious economic interests and power profiting from the plunder of nature. It helps itself to its position by restricting the freedom of the press and suppressing active sections of civil society that rebel against the ruling party and the oppression of minorities.

The spectacle surrounding a world-famous festival, an oil company with links to the Polish ruling party and the tearing down of T-shirts with rainbow slogans because ‘there is an idea behind them’ is a perfect example of the corruption of power in capitalism. The guardians of the current order try to accuse people who try to think differently of conspiracy, backwardness, longing for the old order or spreading ‘ideology’. But it is they who represent the real ruling ideology and the real knitting.

## **Dreaming of a better world**

The problem with capitalism and anti-capitalism, as the chatter on Czech Twitter well illustrates, is that it is automatically assumed that we are faced with a single, unchanging historical choice: the status quo or communism - meaning the regime in Czechoslovakia before 1990. This is akin to suspecting the supporters of the French Revolution in their day of seeking the return of tribalism instead of the overthrow of absolutism.

Of course, social transformations are usually quite complicated, not to everyone’s liking, and difficult to navigate. Indeed, transformation often means in some ways a period worse than “the old order.” But the resistance to capitalism itself may not be at all related, and is overwhelmingly unrelated, to a desire to return to the pre-Soviet Revolution days, but is rooted in an awareness of the gravity of the problems that are bearing down on us in a combination of social, health and environmental crises.

Whether on the Pride, at a festival, in the woods, or in a sun-drenched community garden, we like to dream on holiday. Especially about the end of what constrains and destroys us, what makes it impossible to love who we wish or to freely choose gender. We dream of the end of the power of those who destroy our landscape and exploit us at work. We dream of the end of ‘protection’ systems

that will eventually crack down on the few inches of our body surface with which we express our opinions.

So please - let us eat together during the holidays! Let's dream of how even those who are denied a voice or dignity will be taken seriously, let's dream of the survival of life and the end of oppression. The exuberant joy that I often experience at Pride, some of you may experience at a festival or by the water. But in doing so, let us not allow any protectionist to suggest that joy does not include ideas of equality and freedom for all.

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**P.S.**

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