

On holidays

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I looked around the web this morning, and in the UK at least, there is one overwhelming message: everyone has supposedly packed up for summer.

It is very apparent that some people want to walk away from the world's problems for a week or three. And the fact is that those who seek to set the news agenda can afford to do that, and so the impression is given that everyone else will be as well.

That, though, is not true.

Those creating that agenda ignore that there are still people being starved to death in Gaza.

Others are being bombed in Ukraine.

Or they are struggling to get by on inadequate wages and benefits in the UK, which means there is a perpetual struggle to make ends meet, and there is no chance of a break.

And few of those creating the news agenda are subject to discrimination.

What is more, they very often have a house they call their own, and quite often it is.

In other words, they are safe, they are secure, and they have income in excess of what they need, so a holiday can be taken.

I happen to be in that situation. Let me be honest about that. But I do not think a holiday is mine by right. Nor do I think I can ignore the rest of the world and turn off the news for a fortnight, as one old acquaintance once put it, as if the news was always in reality someone else's problems that could be ignored at will.

That, in my opinion, is not how the world is. In fact, I am sure that attitude is wrong, and it is very often only copious doses of whatever poison a person takes to get them through their period of total indifference, from alcohol onwards, that lets them do this.

If we take a break, it should, I think, be to reflect, to muse on our fortune, and to create the strength to renew our demand that it be shared. It is never the time to forget.

Neoliberalism pretends otherwise. Holidays are, it claims, moments to 'make memories', which always appear to me to be carefully fabricated falsehoods based on the way that advertising appears to project them.

I don't want to make memories.

I want to make the world a better place.

I don't want to hide from what is.

I want to make it better.

That doesn't stop me taking holiday, although without having children now I can afford the luxury of not doing so in July and August. But the pretence that this is a time when we ignore the world and its problems seems to me to be another of the pretences perpetrated by those in charge of a world where indifference to others is what most characterises their opinion. That's a luxury no one can afford, or should want.