

WEEK 15, 2020

THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS &

TRADITION

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

MSK GHENT/DAVID LEVENE



(Above)
A detail of the angel Gabriel's heavenly cloak in "The Annunciation" by Jan van Eyck.

(Left)
"The Annunciation," circa 1434–1436, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel, transferred onto canvas; 35.5 inches by 13.4 inches. Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

(Below)
Portrait of Baudouin de Lanoy, circa 1435, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; 10.5 inches by 7.7 inches. Berlin State Museums-Prussian Cultural Heritage, Berlin.

Only 23 of van Eyck's works are known to exist, and 13 of those works are on display in the exhibition.

KIK-IRPA, BRUSSELS



Virtuosso Jan van Eyck Paints the *Epitome of Beauty...4*



THE EPOCH TIMES

ARTS & TRADITION

To advertise, call 212-292-8359 or email advertise@epochtimes.com

TRADITIONAL CULTURE

THE TIES THAT BIND: LESSONS FROM PASSOVER

JEFF MINICK

Into this season of pandemic, quarantine, and hardship comes Passover.

The Jewish celebration of Passover derives from Exodus 12 of the Bible, when the last of 10 plagues visited upon the Egyptians brings about the death of firstborn sons in Egyptian households. To ensure the safety of the Israelites, God commands Moses and Aaron to tell the Hebrews to collect the blood of the lambs they have sacrificed and to smear that blood on the doorframes of the houses and also to eat the lambs.

The sons of the Egyptians perished; the sons of Israel were spared and the people freed from their bondage.

And so was born the oldest and most important of Jewish holidays.

From that point on, the Israelites celebrated Passover, "Pesach" in Hebrew. This April, over 3,000 years later, the spiritual descendants of those freed slaves will once again honor that moment in history by gathering together, praying, reading passages from the Torah, and eating foods symbolic of their liberation and their 40-year trek in the wilderness.

Are there lessons for us in Passover?

Let's take a look.

in their bid for freedom?

Freedom, as the Hebrews quickly discovered on leaving Egypt, means accepting the burdens of responsibility and accountability. Like Passover, Independence Day should remind all Americans that freedom comes with a high cost, often including the sacrifice of lives. The men who endured or died on battlefields like Bunker Hill and Cowpens, Antietam and Gettysburg, Normandy and Okinawa paid that cost. When we pause to savor our independence, we should give thanks to those who helped preserve that liberty.



An early 15th-century manuscript depicting, at the bottom, a Seder. The full-page miniature adapts medieval Christian iconography to illustrate the importance of study and discussion of Passover. Each figure has a book, presumably a Haggadah, a text about the Exodus from Egypt, that is recited at the Seder. University and State Library Darmstadt.

Tradition: Tevye Got It Wrong

In kicking off "Fiddler on the Roof" with some comments on tradition, the lead character Tevye says of certain Jewish practices, "You may ask, how did this tradition get started? I'll tell you. I don't know. But it's a tradition."

Baloney. Contrary to what Tevye sings, devout Russian Jews knew why they covered their heads and wore a little prayer shawl. The reasons are in the Torah.

Tradition pays homage to the past. As G.K. Chesterton once wrote, "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to that arrogant oligarchy who merely happen to be walking around."

Freedom Is Not Free

Like America, many countries celebrate an independence day, looking to some point in their history when they threw off an oppressor. They remember liberators like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, Simón Bolívar, Mohandas Gandhi, and Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla.

Of all these celebrations of freedom, Passover is by far the most ancient. The readings, the songs, and the foods eaten at Seder (a ceremonial meal during Passover), all stress the sweetness of liberty and the cost of that liberty. Those who celebrate Passover remember not only the escape from Egyptian bondage but also the time of wandering in the desert, the decades spent in search of a resting place and a homeland. Recollecting the ordeal of those long-ago ancestors reminds the Jewish people that freedom comes with responsibilities and sacrifice.

Though we Americans celebrate July 4 as our Independence Day, how many of us remember the sacrifices of those who gave us this holiday? How many of us remember men like Thomas Nelson, the wealthy Virginian who ordered his men to fire upon the British ensconced in his own mansion? How many of us remember other signers of the Declaration of Independence who lost their homes, their wealth, and sometimes their lives

garchy who merely happen to be walking around."

Most of us practice our traditions in small ways. With a sense of reverence, we place the ornaments collected by our great-grandmother on the Christmas tree, the prayers we say at mealtime are those of our ancestors, and we pass along the wisdom and insight of our parents and grandparents to our children in hopes they will someday do likewise in their own families.

Passover gives us a shining example—perhaps the greatest example in the history of our world—of the power of tradition. For 30 centuries, Jews of every land and age have found themselves bound one to the other because of certain beliefs and rituals, one of which is Passover.

These unbroken traditions undoubtedly helped Judaism survive. And like Passover, our own traditions should draw us closer to those we love.

Mishpacha

With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews, Passover became an intimate affair centered on the home and "mishpacha" (family). It bound together young and old in a rite of great importance, reminding them of their religious heritage, yes, but also of the many trials of

STEFANO EMBER/SHUTTERSTOCK



Hell on earth: The communist Khmer Rouge regime killed 1.5 million to 2 million Cambodians from 1975–1979.



"Departure of the Israelites," 1829, by David Roberts. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



"The Signs on the Door," circa 1896–1902, by James Tissot or a follower. The Jewish Museum, New York.

their ancestors. In times of trouble—and trouble for many Jews is never far away, even in our present age—the family became the rock and castle in which the oppressed could find solace, strength, and encouragement.

Raising children and preparing them to become grownups, taking care of the elderly and listening to their words of wisdom garnered from experience, offering one another hope in a crisis: this is the purpose of family.

Until recently, we regarded the family as the cornerstone of society, both the nuclear family and its extensions. Philosophers and theologians, poets and artists, filmmakers and novelists all once celebrated the family in their work.

For years now, however, that idea of the family has been under attack,

deemed by some as despotic or unnecessary. Certain lawmakers have sought to replace the family with government programs, and some social scientists attack the family as patriarchal or as fetters on individual ambitions. Yet no institution has risen to take the place of a father, a mother, and children.

Passover reminds us of the importance of mishpacha. Strong families mean a healthy society.

The Price of Liberty

Tradition, freedom, and family are not mere words. They are some of the binding ties of our civilization.

Some today seek to cut and throw away those binding ties, eroding our liberties, mocking tradition, and denigrating the family as oppressive or

outdated. Take away those evils, they claim, and we can build a paradise. Those of us who oppose them, who are familiar with the ideologies espoused by these radicals, see instead the pathway to a hell on earth, a road traveled by many nations in the last century—countries like Russia, China, Cambodia, and Cuba.

The enslaved Israelites once protected their homes by marking their doorways with the blood of a sacrificial lamb. The doorways of American freedom are also stained with the blood of sacrifice. Should we wish to honor those sacrifices and keep our freedoms, we must be always vigilant, always ready to do battle and prepared to defend our rights to "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Freedom, as the Hebrews quickly discovered on leaving Egypt, means accepting the burdens of responsibility and accountability.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin in seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

What Our Readers Say:

It's the only sane newspaper amidst all this insanity.
STAN K., PASTOR

It's bringing morality back to newspapers.
LISSA T., BUSINESS OWNER

It's the only paper that I know of right now that actually gives you the honest, old fashioned journalism.
DRUE L., BUSINESS OWNER

You're presenting the facts and letting the reader decide.
TERRI B., BUSINESS OWNER

Everything I read in it is fair and balanced, compared to other newspapers.
JUNE V., RETIRED BANKER



Subscribe @ ReadEpoch.com

THE EPOCH TIMES

TRUTH AND TRADITION



Become a Published Author with Dorrance. We want to read your book!

Trusted by authors for nearly 100 years, Dorrance has made countless authors' dreams come true.



Our staff is made up of writers, just like you, and we are dedicated to making publishing dreams come true.

Complete Book Publishing Services

FIVE EASY STEPS TO PUBLICATION:

1. Consultation
2. Book Production
3. Promotion
4. Distribution
5. Merchandising and Fulfillment

Call now to receive your **FREE** Author's Guide
877-655-4006 or www.dorranceinfo.com/epoch

FINE ARTS

Virtuosso Jan van Eyck Paints the Epitome of Beauty

‘Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution’ at the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent in Belgium

LORRAINE FERRIER

Fifteenth-century Flemish painter Jan van Eyck’s art is simply astounding. Somehow van Eyck managed to paint so true to life that when you’re face-to-face with one of his paintings, once you’ve caught your breath, you may inadvertently mutter: “Surely, this must be real.” Observe any of van Eyck’s paintings—from his altarpieces to his portraits—and it’s easy to think that you are actually in the presence of the people he painted. Van Eyck’s biographer, humanist Bartolomeo Facio went so far as to say that all his portraits were so lifelike, all that was missing were the subjects’ voices.

‘Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution’

Only 23 of van Eyck’s works are known to exist, and 13 of those works are on display in the exhibition “Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution” at the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent (MSK) in Belgium. Among those exhibited are works from van Eyck’s studio and copies of van Eyck’s lost works. This in itself offers an unprecedented opportunity to see his work, but in addition, the exhibition includes Italian Renaissance artwork by his contemporaries, such as Fra Angelico, Paolo Uccello, Pisanello, Masaccio, and Benozzo Gozzoli.

A total of 140 panel paintings, miniatures, drawings, and sculptures are bought together to celebrate van Eyck’s virtuosity at a time when the Northern Renaissance and Italian Renaissance flourished.

Among the many highlights in the exhibition are the eight outer panels of the Ghent Altarpiece that are hung at eye level as if they were individual paintings, rather than up high as the polyptych is usually hung.

The Perfection of the Northern Renaissance Tradition

Along with his contemporary, painter Robert Campin (known for many years by scholars only as the Master of Flémalle), van Eyck founded the Early Netherlandish tradition of art. The Netherlands along with Italy were at the forefront of European art in the 15th and 16th centuries, according to the Prado National Museum.

“It is a fair guess to say that any work which excels in the representation of the beautiful surface of things, of flowers, jewels or fabric, will be by a Northern artist, most probably by an artist from the Netherlands; while a painting with bold outlines, clear perspective and a sure mastery of the beautiful human body, will be Italian,” art historian



JAN VAN EYCK'S LIFE

It’s believed that Jan van Eyck (circa 1390–1441) was born into gentry and that his older brother, the painter Hubrecht van Eyck, raised him. Van Eyck’s art training is unknown. He spent his career as a court painter, traveling far and wide and also among high society. In 1422, he worked at The Hague as a painter at the Court of John of Bavaria-Straubing, ruler of Holland. In 1425, he went to Bruges, Belgium, and became the court painter for the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, who sent him to faraway lands on diplomatic missions. Some of those trips may have taken him to the Holy Land via Italy and also to the Ottoman empire.

E.H. Gombrich wrote in “The Story of Art.”

While Italian artists were mainly painting in tempera, which used egg to bind pigments, van Eyck preferred to paint with oils. Oil paints took longer to dry, which meant that he could blend tones more readily, creating deep, rich colors; oils also gave him more time to paint the finest details.

Although contrary to popular myth, perpetuated by 16th-century art historian Giorgio Vasari, van Eyck did not invent oil painting. But he did perfect the medium by applying layer upon layer of translucent glazes, resulting in the exceptional blending and detailing you see on his canvases. The layering of glazes meant that he could also create solid and luminous lifelike figures.

Van Eyck must have ardently observed light. His artwork indicates that he studied optics, which in the late Middle Ages was classified as a branch of geometry. He used light in his paintings as if he had nature’s hand, expertly adding touches of light to create solid, three-dimensional forms and figures.

Van Eyck even used the natural light of the Vijd Chapel, where the Ghent Altarpiece originally hung, for the light source in the exterior panels of the altarpiece.

Van Eyck’s attention to detail was remarkable. “His eye was at one and the same time a microscope and a telescope,” art historian Erwin Panofsky is quoted as saying. Van Eyck painted

everyday items and the most opulent of objects meticulously. And while his Italian contemporaries generally painted idealized portraits, van Eyck painted people as they were, and with his paintbrush, he noted every little thing. His three-quarter-view portraits showed the wrinkles, laughter lines, moles, whiskers—warts and all—as attested to by the portrait of Baudouin de Lannoy, the only portrait of van Eyck’s Burgundian statesmen thought to now survive.

Notice in some of van Eyck’s paintings that the proportions are not quite right: In Lannoy’s portrait, his body seems disproportionate to his head; similarly in a portrait of van Eyck’s wife, Margareta, her head is painted in a different scale to her body. Van Eyck placed people and objects into his paintings intuitively, rather than using the mathematical perspective and precision adopted by his Italian contemporaries.

‘As Best I Can’

Van Eyck’s attention to detail extended to frames. He painted the frame for “Madonna at the Fountain” as mock marble, adding his motto “ALS ICH CAN,” meaning “as best I can.” The motto is also believed to be a pun on his name: “as best ‘Eyck’ can.” He was one of the first painters to sign his works, and this painting, dated 1439, is one of the last of his signed works.

Private devotional Madonna paintings such as this were in high demand

in van Eyck’s day. In “Madonna at the Fountain,” Mary holds the Christ child, who contorts himself to get comfortable, as any baby would; yet with his arms outstretched, he seems to make the sign of the cross.

Of course, we know this is no ordinary portrait of mother and child, and the painting is rich with symbology to remind us. Mary stands in a garden full of flowers such as roses, irises, violets, forget-me-knots, and lilies of the valley: symbols of beauty, refinement, and purity. Van Eyck accurately painted water flowing from the fountain, symbolizing Mary, the mother of God, as a life-giving source. In the Middle Ages, Mary represented trust and loyalty.

‘The Annunciation’

In “The Annunciation,” van Eyck put Mary in the church to hear the angel Gabriel announce Christ’s immaculate conception. Van Eyck painted Mary’s words upside down to show that she’s directing her words to heaven, speaking directly to God.

The panel is filled with a kind of graceful stillness and harmony that captures the moment perfectly. The splendid Gothic church architecture is painted with such precision that even the wood grain on the paneled ceiling got van Eyck’s fastidious attention. The floor tiles reflect stories from the Old Testament. The irises in the foreground show purity. And Gabriel dressed in opulent red velvet richly covered in jewels perhaps denotes the importance of the event, and the sublime gaiety of heaven.

Not only could van Eyck paint with fine craftsmanship, he also painted finely crafted objects and captured on canvas the fine arts of sculpture and architecture. He used grisaille, painting in pure white and gray tones, to render sculptures so real that you can almost feel the cold surface of the stone in his painting.

The exhibition notes that in the “Annunciation Diptych,” Mary and the archangel Gabriel are painted solely in white and yellow ochre, giving the appearance of alabaster statues. In the diptych, van Eyck limited himself to four colors, including red for the frame and black for the background. These four colors hark back to antiquity, when Pliny claimed that the artist Apelles’s best works used that exact palette of colors.

Faith and Beauty

Scholars are at odds as to whether van Eyck’s “Saint Barbara of Nicomedia” is a finished grisaille work or an under-drawing of an unfinished painting.

Van Eyck's attention to detail was remarkable.



(Left) “Saint Barbara of Nicomedia,” 1437, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; 12.6 inches by 7.2 inches. Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, Belgium.



(Right) The “Annunciation Diptych,” circa 1433–1435, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; Left: 15.3 inches by 9.1 inches, Right: 15.3 inches by 9.4 inches. Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum, Madrid.

(Above) Panels from the van Eyck brothers’ Ghent Altarpiece are on display as individual artworks, in the “Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution” exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, in Belgium. In the foreground, a bust of Jan van Eyck looks out onto his art.

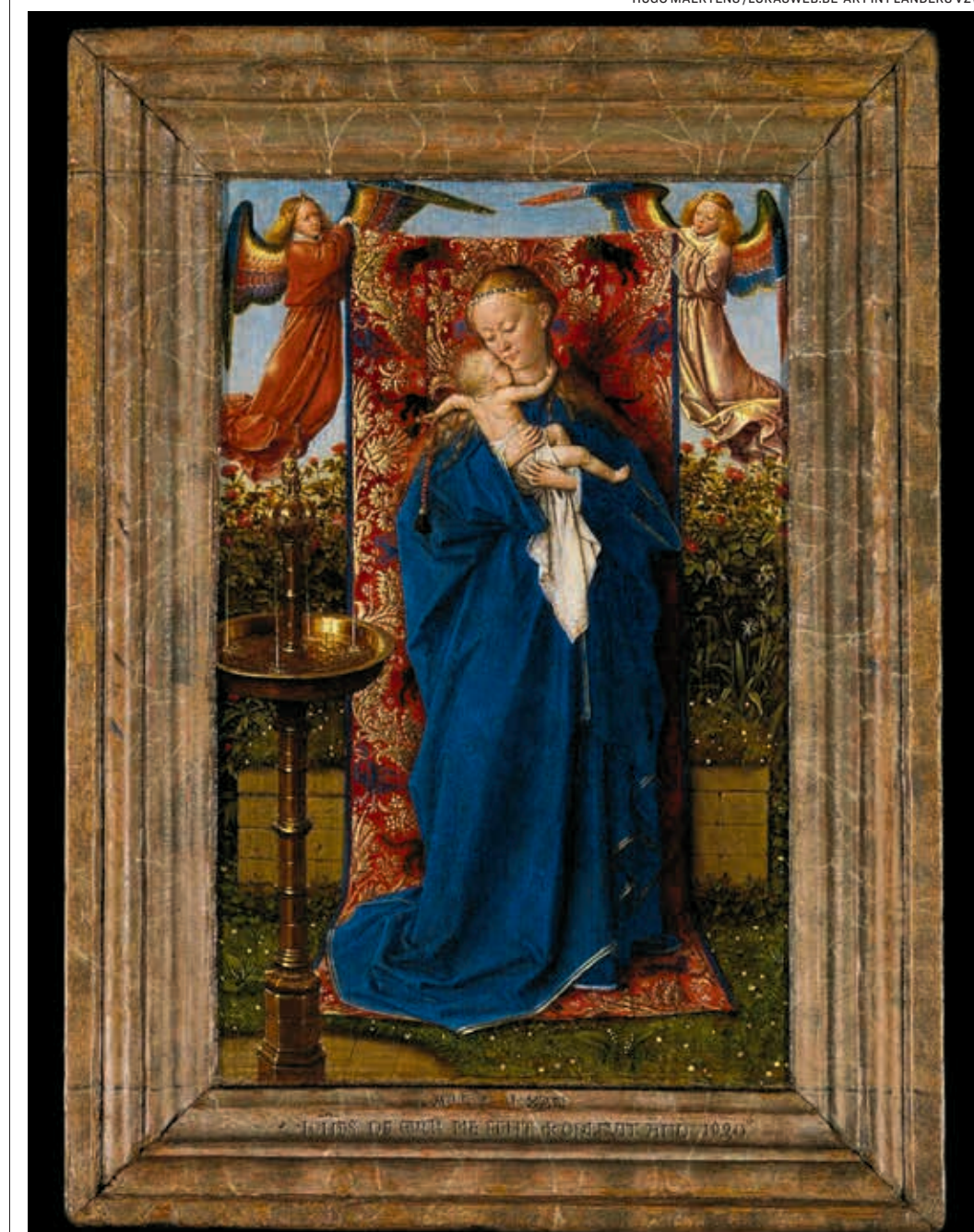
(Right) Portrait of Margareta van Eyck, 1439, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; 12.6 inches by 10.2 inches. Groeningemuseum, Bruges Museums, Belgium.



BRUGES MUSEUMS/HUGO MAERTENS LUKASWEB.BE-ART IN FLANDERS VZW

Within this small work, barely an inch taller than a sheet of letter paper, van Eyck rendered Saint Barbara enormous, disproportionately so, but perhaps significantly, because she’s larger than the tower that her father once imprisoned her in. Maybe van Eyck was conveying that faith can overcome any obstacle no matter how big or impossible a situation may seem. She holds a prayer book and a palm leaf, again, perhaps indicating that any earthly imprisonment cannot contain her faith.

Quite clearly, van Eyck fits Gombrich’s description of a Northern artist who excelled in painting the “beautiful surface of things,” but van Eyck’s astute attention to gestures and symbols could fulfill Aristotle’s belief about art: “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.”



(Right) “The Madonna at the Fountain,” 1439, by Jan van Eyck. Oil on panel; 7.5 inches by 4.75 inches. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp.

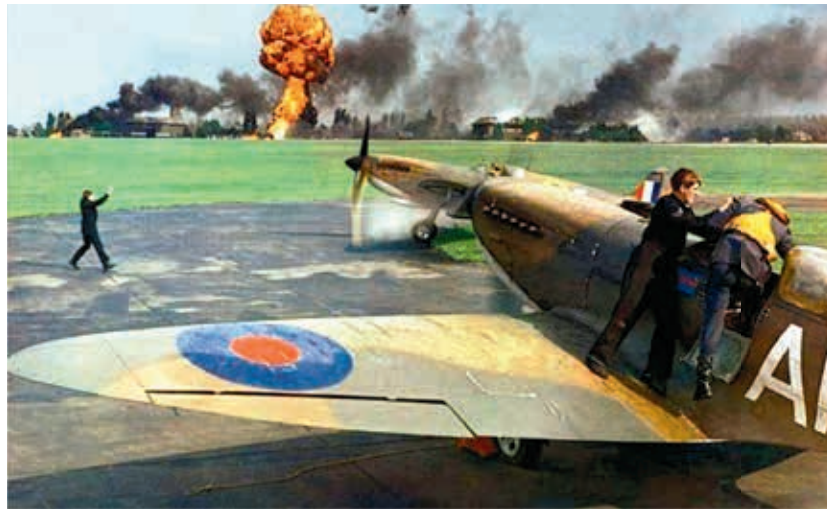
The exhibition “Van Eyck: An Optical Revolution” is at the Museum of Fine Arts Ghent until April 30; to find out more visit MSKGent.be

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF MGM

POPCORN AND INSPIRATION

An Inspiring Epic Depicting the Best of Great Britain

A scene from "Battle of Britain," which pits Britain's Royal Air Force against the German Luftwaffe.



Robert Shaw, one of the film's many stars, playing Squadron Leader Skipper in "Battle of Britain."

IAN KANE

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once addressed members of the House of Commons back in June of 1940: "The 'Battle of France' is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin." The following month, Nazi Germany fulfilled Churchill's prophetic statement and began unleashing its aerial onslaught upon Great Britain in earnest.

What better material to draw on from the annals of World War II than one of the most valiant defenses in the history of warfare—the Battle of Britain? The titular film, "Battle of Britain," was helmed by Guy Hamilton in 1969, who along with the film's star-studded cast, told the famous tale with the utmost skill and talent. It was a massive effort that won't soon be repeated.

Great Britain was still licking its wounds from the debacle at Dunkirk, where its forces (along with other Allies) had to evacuate from France in the face of the superior German military that was steamrolling through Western Europe. Germany had plowed through not only France but also Norway, and now Hitler turned his attention to the next logical Allied target: Great Britain. The island nation had its back against the wall.

The German war machine was actually planning a grand-scale amphibious invasion of the island's shores, but the Royal Air Force (RAF) clung stubbornly to its air superiority over the North Sea and other regions between the UK and Germany.

The film is mainly about the RAF's defense of its territory against the seemingly overwhelming might of the German air force—the Luftwaffe.

In a scene that illustrates this David and Goliath factor, an unnamed senior civil servant (Harry Andrews) apprises Air Chief Marshall Sir Hugh Dowding (Laurence Olivier) of the odds they face, saying: "We've got 650 planes!" To which Sir Dowding replies: "And they have 2,500 aircraft, haven't they?" No wonder the Germans viewed (albeit mistakenly) the weakened British as relatively easy prey.

Gambling on Guts

The Luftwaffe went to work by first attempting to level Great Britain's infrastructure, both military and civilian. The film shows how the Germans concentrated many of the bombing runs on the southern portion of the country—hitting factories and airstrips in order to grind the island's industry to a halt.

But the British had an ace up their sleeve; they'd developed a very-long-range radar system that

tipped them off to the German air raids far in advance. This allowed them to prepare and even counter the raids in some cases, sending German aircraft spiraling down to their fiery doom.

From the outset of the film, you can see the German military's leaders brimming with confidence, including their overall commander Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring (German actor Hein Riess). But they didn't quite count on the resourcefulness and, in many cases, gutsy determination of the British, who fight for every square inch of airspace around their island with indefatigable grit.

Director Guy Hamilton manages to effectively convey a period that marked a pivotal change in the war.

In one scene, we see freshly recruited RAF airmen scrambling to their training sessions, along with their commanders, the likes of whom include Squadron Leader Canfield (Michael Caine).

Göring soon turns his attention

to London, and a major bombing of both the British capital and other metropolitan centers soon follows. The RAF responds by conducting its own daring air raid over Berlin.

Much of the film is dedicated to re-creating aerial dogfights as the two powers vie for supremacy. Like other epic-scale war films that were popular during the immediate post-war eras of the 1950s and '60s, so many stars are cast in the film that none get an overabundance of screen-time, just enough so that audiences relate to the characters and their individual causes.

With a punchy, well-paced screenplay written by James Kenaway and Wilfred Greatorex and some phenomenal aerial photography that shows the Allied air forces locked in mortal combat with the Luftwaffe, Hamilton manages to effectively convey a period that marked a pivotal change in the war.

The battle itself was the first military campaign in wartime history to be almost completely fought by air forces.

The only drawback to be found in the film is a half-baked, melodramatic romantic subplot involving one of the RAF's commanders, Squadron Leader Colin Harvey (Christopher Plummer), and Section Officer Maggie Harvey (Susannah York). The romantic scenes feel forced and unnecessary.

Overall, "Battle of Britain" is a super-patriotic piece of cinema that should appeal to both war-film junkies as well as those who appreciate high drama and high stakes. The production values hold up well by today's standards, and the cast seems genuinely respectful of the historical significance that the movie portrays, as well as their individual characters. It is truly a fantastic drama that is both immersive and inspiring for the entire family.

Ian Kane is a filmmaker and author based out of Los Angeles. To see more, visit DreamFlight-Ent.com

'Battle of Britain'

Director
Guy Hamilton

Starring
Laurence Olivier, Christopher Plummer, Michael Caine, Susannah York, Robert Shaw

Running Time
2 hours, 12 minutes

Rated
G

Release Date
Oct. 24, 1969

★★★★☆

How to Share The Epoch Times With Your Friends and Family



As an Epoch VIP, you're passionate about the traditional journalism and in-depth reporting you get in The Epoch Times. You've even sent us ideas on how to spread the word. Here are some of the best suggestions from readers like you!

Request FREE Newspapers to Be Sent to Your Friends*

Submit the names and shipping addresses of your friends. You can request FREE newspapers for as many friends as you want. The Epoch Times will send the newspapers on your behalf for free.

Newspaper Sharing

Simply pass your copy of The Epoch Times, or a section of it, to someone

else after you've read it. Consider neighbors, friends, family, relatives, co-workers, teachers, golf buddies, and your boss.

Newspaper Placement

Place a copy of The Epoch Times at places where people typically wait such as doctors' offices, dentists' offices, hotel lobbies, airline terminals, barbershops, and beauty salons. Also consider placing copies at community centers, company cafeterias, break rooms, coffee shops, gyms, churches, automobile dealerships, or in your car. Visit EpochShop.com.

Bumper Stickers

Put a bumper sticker on your car plus ask friends and family to put stickers on their cars as well. Visit EpochShop.com.

Getting the Word Out

Word-of-mouth is always a great way

to spread the news about The Epoch Times. Talk it up at your local library, meetings, birthday parties, special events, and with friends and family over the holidays.

Using Email and Social Media

Use technology to share stories from The Epoch Times. Forward our daily email MORNING BRIEF to friends and family. Share postings from our Facebook site and YouTube channel. Simply copy the URL and then send it with a brief note such as: "Here's a story I thought you'd like to read."

Displaying Your Poster

The Epoch Times SPYGATE poster has become legendary—so consider posting it on a wall at your home or office. When friends or business associates ask, explain what the poster is about and how they can get their own copy.

Not a subscriber yet?
Visit ReadEpoch.com
to learn more

THE EPOCH TIMES

* (1) Please log into your account at TheEpochTimes.com (2) Click your name to manage your account (3) Click "Request Free Papers" on the left menu bar and follow steps