

With hindsight,...

In retrospect, it was important because...

3 | The memories of the Battle of Britain

– the UK was declining in the time of WW2. Many leaders were aware that the British Empire could hardly survive a new world war.
was doomed.

– besides, the British army was unable to confront the German Wehrmacht (the Nazi army) alone. The first British victory on the ground happened in the fall of 1942, in North Africa. The victory of El Alamein, though widely celebrated in the UK, was limited in scope (25,000 Germans out of action compared to 250,000 at Stalingrad in the same months). It was military weakness.

– that weakness also existed in comparison with Britain's mighty allies: the USA and the USSR (the Soviet Union). This appeared at the Tehran conference in December 1943, the first meeting of the "Big Three". In Tehran, both Roosevelt and Stalin showed their superiority and laughed together at the expense of Churchill.

– In 1944, the liberation of Europe was mostly an American undertaking: the allied forces were led by Eisenhower while the British commander, Montgomery, the winner of Alamein, only played a secondary role.

– As the English historian David Reynolds put it in his book Rich relations (1995), the presence of three million Americans in England from 1942 to 1945 was "a friendly occupation" (an oxymoron). Compared to the Yanks, the British ("the Limeys") felt "underfed, underpaid, undersexed and under Eisenhower". They were allies, but there were tensions.

> therefore, the memories of the battle of Britain became essential, because it was a battle won by the British alone.

– Hence, the many movies about the Battle of Britain :

* The first of the few (1942), intended for the American audience.

* The battle of Britain (1969).

* Dunkirk (2017).

* the documentary Spitfire in 2018

released for the RAF's centennial.