

# THE GREATEST TURNING POINT OF WW2

**LAURENCE REES:** What was the single greatest turning point of the war?

**ANTONY BEEVOR:** There are three major turning points in the war and they're all different in their own particular way. The first one is a negative one and that was Churchill's decision to fight on in May 1940. If we hadn't had that then there would never have been a base for the Americans to fight back, and there is always the possibility that Hitler could have maintained a complete hegemony over Western Europe. The second and probably the great geopolitical turning point was December 1941, as both the Germans were checked in front of Moscow and the Americans entered into the war. The third is the psychological turning point which is Stalingrad, though it wasn't necessarily the military turning point except in the fact that it gave the Red Army the confidence, and the techniques that it really needed, to go on beating the Germans. But it was the psychological turning point as far as the rest of the world was concerned, even in Western Europe, even in South America, throughout the world - Stalingrad became a huge symbol.

**LAURENCE REES:** And if you could only have one?

**ANTONY BEEVOR:** Well, it depends if you're allowed to take the one of December 1941, because that was the geopolitical turning point. There is no way that the Nazis could have won after that particular moment, and they were bound to be beaten eventually by the industrial power of America, by their manpower, and all the rest of it. I doubt that even though there were many horrors in 1942, and in many places British morale was so bad that they really thought that we might still lose the war in early '42, one has to remember that though there were a series of disasters at that particular time, the great turning point had actually been passed.



*Anthony Beevor is one of the world's foremost military historians and experts on the Second World War. His book on Stalingrad won numerous awards.*