

Moscow TV Round-Up: The Battle of Moscow, The X-Files and More

By [Mark H. Teeter](#)

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The X-Files [digitaltrends.com](#)

It's War and Remembrance Week on Moscow TV: two very good but very different World War II dramas are on tap, along with fine features on two of the best leadership-level political infighters in Soviet history. It's Russia, so the week ends fittingly on a sinister note of conspiracy – involving American agents, no less! Here's the where and when:

Monday marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Red Army's successful defense of the Soviet capital during World War II. TV Central is observing the historic occasion by airing the epic mini-series *"The Battle of Moscow"* (1985) in a single go — over half a program day — with breaks for news. Written and directed by Yury Ozerov, "Battle" was a multinational co-production that eschewed fictional characters, drawing exclusively on documentary materials and Marshal Zhukov's "Memoirs and Thoughts." Zhukov himself is played by the obvious choice for the role: Mikhail Ulyanov (the "Russian Spencer Tracy"), who portrayed the hero-

marshal in some 17 films between 1968 and 2005. Tune in for Ulyanov's fine work, some impressive and elaborate battle sequences and, no less important, the sense you get from the film of how most Russians *want* these events remembered.

The Battle of Moscow БИТВА ЗА МОСКВУ. TV Central, Monday at 8:45 a.m., 11:50 a.m. and 3:10 p.m.

A provincial lass from Tver who worked her way up the bureaucratic ladder all the way to Minister of Culture (1960-1974), Yekaterina Furtseva was a major player in late Soviet history as well as a high-profile role model for her y-chromosome-challenged compatriots. And she is far from forgotten: eight documentary or commercial films about "Catherine III" have been made since 2000, and it would surprise no one if Furtseva Action Figures appeared in GUM. There was plenty of cultural-initiative action during her tenure at the Ministry, in any case — much of it commendable (new festivals, buildings, exhibitions) and some of it regrettable: Solzhenitsyn and Rostropovich were among her targets, and she diligently kept the Beatles and Rolling Stones out of the Soviet Union.

The mini-series *Furtseva* (2011) tries hard to balance things — and does a pretty good job of it. Both Tatyana Arntgolts as the younger Furtseva and Irina Rozanova as the mature version are appropriately sympathetic without whitewashing the heroine. What's more, for a marathon 12-part "political soap opera," the production is remarkably dynamic and engaging — which is exactly what people said (and still say) about the heroine. Tune in "Furtseva" and decide for yourself whether the highest-ranking woman in Soviet government was a net plus or minus for the Soviet system she helped define.

Furtseva Фурцева. Vremya, Monday at 6:30 p.m. and Tuesday-Sunday at 2:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Alexander Proshkin's "*Live and Remember*" (2008), based on Valentin Rasputin's much-praised eponymous novella of 1974, is yet another World War II film — but one made in a wholly different key from the "standard" Soviet and Russian renditions of the conflict that became the defining event, for better and worse, in the lives of a generation of Russians. Here the soldier returning home from the war is not a hero but a deserter, and the conflict is not military but a personal one: should his wife Nastyona, the real center of the film, abet her husband in a fugitive life outside the community?

Both Proshkin and lead Darya Moroz won awards for their work here, and the film itself received several festival prizes. Yes, you *should* read Rasputin's classic novella, but the cinematic "Live and Remember" stands by itself as a moving testament regardless.

Live and Remember ЖИВИ И ПОМНИ. Russkii Illyuzion, Wednesday at 4:25 p.m.; Thursday at 8:20 a.m.; and Friday at 1:00 p.m.

In 1960 Nikita Khrushchev raised Leonid Brezhnev to real prominence within the Soviet political hierarchy, and the latter repaid him by leading a coup against his benefactor four years later — or so goes a Twitter-generation summary of the first (and in fact only) peaceful retirement from the political arena to private life by a Soviet leader. Ah, but there's a lot more to the story, as viewers will learn from the lively TV Central documentary "*Brezhnev Against Khrushchev: A Stab in the Back*" (2015). A company man if ever there was one, Brezhnev had

reason to resent Khrushchev's dismissive attitude towards him ("Lyonya is good at skeet shooting, but that's all"), and it wasn't *only* Brezhnev, of course, who found himself exasperated with the boss's well-known and too-often public eccentricities.

That said, this documentary's title is what it appears to be – an obvious tip-off as to the filmmakers' basic sympathies. But writer Alyona Abramovich plays fair with the facts and director Roman Kornienko has assembled a good collection of experts and witnesses (including the principal's son, Sergei Khrushchev), so the enterprise scores as bona fide tele-history. In short, have a look at how Soviet communism's "last true believer" was finally outmanoeuvred, and ask yourself, with fingers crossed hopefully, whether there is any chance that history might repeat itself.

Brezhnev Against Khrushchev: A Stab in the Back Брежнев против Хрущева. Удар в спину. TV Central, Thursday at 11:05 p.m.

Why do Russians love "*The X-Files*"? Could it be because what started as a modest U.S. cult serial in the early '90s grew into a cross-cultural viewing phenomenon that "tapped into public mistrust of governments and large institutions and embraced conspiracy theories and spirituality?" Yes, it could. In Russia, after all, the truth is *really* out there.

Late Thursday night Channel 3 brings the original series' 202-episode complement to its conclusion. These final three instalments of the longest-running science fiction drama in American television history (1993-2002) put FBI agents Mulder and Scully into extraterrestrial harm's way once again, of course, but this time...well, let's not ruin things with a спойлер (spoiler). Suffice it to say that in February Channel 3 will start airing the *new* X-Files series that debuted in the U.S. earlier this year. Put otherwise, the show's original American audience had to wait 14 years to learn what happened next, but the current generation of Channel 3 viewers finds out in two months! Sometimes being *really* out there is good.

The X-Files Секретные материалы. Channel 3, Friday at 1:20 a.m. (episode 200), 2:10 a.m. (episode 201) and 3:05 a.m. (episode 202)

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