

St. Petersburg Tries to Confiscate Landmark

By [Nadezhda Zaitseva](#)

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The St. Petersburg horizon. The city is trying to save a historic house by filing suit against its corporate owners. **Daniel Ischenko**

The city of St. Petersburg is trying for the first time to confiscate a culturally significant building to ensure its preservation.

The Committee for the State Supervision and Preservation of Landmarks has filed suit in the St. Petersburg and Leningrad Region Arbitration Court with the goal of confiscating the Rogov House at 3 Zagorodny Prospekt from the Prestige company, St. Petersburg Deputy Governor Igor Metelsky said.

In February 2010, inspectors halted the destruction of the building and fined Prestige's contractor, Setinzhenom, 50,000 rubles (about \$1,700) for lacking permits to carry out the work.

Workers had already destroyed part of the top floor of the three-story building, and it has remained partially without a roof since that time. A temporary covering was placed over the building at the city's expense at the end of the year.

The Rogov House, in the city's historical center, dates to the early 19th century. It has been vacant for many years. Prestige planned to build a business center with underground parking in its place. Members of the Living City organization and an architectural preservationists' group interfered with workers' efforts to raze the building.

Yevgeny Baklagin of the Sankt Peterburg law firm said the city has the right to confiscate a building when historical preservation requirements are not met. The owner of the property is entitled to compensation for its value, but fines for the violations could exceed the amount of compensation.

Prestige belongs to the Cypriot Brufanto Investments, according to SPARK-Interfax, and the Cypriot company appears on a list of companies affiliated with Gazprombank at the end of 2010, according to material published by the bank.

Dmitry Golovanov, Prestige general director, said all work on the building had stopped a year ago and declined to comment further.

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