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Russian Architects Blast Plans to Renovate Iconic TASS Building

November 11, 2021



The TASS building "is part of the Soviet and Russian contribution to the world modernist movement," architects wrote. **Moskva News Agency**

Plans to renovate the iconic central Moscow building that houses Russia's state-run TASS news agency are facing fierce opposition from residents and architects.

The unique Soviet brutalist building was built on Ulitsa Bolshaya Nikitskaya in 1977, with plans to reconstruct its facade and fit its windows with metal frames mothballed since 2016.

An online association of Russian architects issued an open letter last Friday criticizing the Moscow department of cultural heritage for reviving the renovation plans without requiring the preservation of its historic appearance.

"The project's authors have no direct influence on the choice of how the [contractors] plan to repair the facades," the association wrote on its website archi.ru.

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“Instead of the 1977 TASS building preserved in history and architecture textbooks on Soviet modernism, we risk getting a ‘generic’ likeness replicating the facade,” it added.

The letter’s authors urged the authorities to take the reconstruction plans seriously and not let the building “share the fate of many of its renovated ‘peers’ across the country.”

“We call for taking advantage of the European experience in the restoration of modernist

objects, since the TASS building is part of the Soviet and Russian contribution to the world modernist movement, which has received wide international recognition," they wrote.

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The architects accused Moscow's department of cultural heritage of rejecting their bid to include the TASS building on the city's list of cultural heritage sites, vowing to repeat their attempts in the future.

"People have not yet realized the value of Soviet modernist architecture like it happened with the monuments of constructivism," the authors lamented. "The most valuable objects are rapidly disappearing either due to repairs or demolition. What will remain of the architecture of that era's public buildings, especially in Moscow? Perhaps only photographs."

Their online petition calling for the preservation of the original TASS building has gathered nearly 3,200 signatures af of mid-Thursday.

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