

## The Detlev Rohwedder Building

### Published by

Federal Ministry of Finance  
Public Relations Division  
Wilhelmstrasse 97  
10117 Berlin, Germany



### Images

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BArch / R 4606 Bild-3782-002 / Arthur Köster  
BArch / Bild-183-S88607 / Heilig  
BReg / B 145 Bild-00014119 / Perlia-Archiv

Berlin, June 2019

To find out more about the history of the Detlev  
Rohwedder Building and to access additional Finance  
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### Renovation and remodelling

Transforming the Detlev Rohwedder Building into the main office of the Federal Ministry of Finance required extensive renovation and remodelling. For the most part, the original state of the building was retained, including the spatial arrangement of the offices, the natural stone façade, the exterior grounds, and the mural by the artist Max Lingner. Conference rooms as well as press and visitor centres were redesigned and equipped with state-of-the-art conference technology and air conditioning.

Detail of Max Lingner's monumental mural,  
*Aufbau der Republik* ("Building the Republic").



### Political significance

The Federal Ministry of Finance has accepted the historical challenge that this building embodies. A deliberate decision was made not to demolish the building as some expert opinions had urged, but rather to renovate the entire complex and preserve it for the public. Only by continuing to use this building can its history be kept alive, to serve as a warning and reminder for future generations.



■ The Detlev Rohwedder Building, located on Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin's historical government district, has served as the Finance Ministry's main office since 1999. It reflects the stages of Germany's turbulent history more clearly than perhaps any other building in the capital.



The Ehrensaal (Great Hall) during the Nazi regime

### ■ During the Nazi regime (until 1945)

The building was constructed in 1935–1936 according to designs by the architect Ernst Sagebiel and was one of the Nazi regime's prestige projects in Berlin. It served as the headquarters of the Reich Aviation Ministry from the time of its construction until the end of the Second World War and was Herman Göring's centre of power.

Resistance stirred here as well: members of the *Rote Kapelle* resistance group planned their activities here, until their cover was blown. Today, a memorial located in the Finance Ministry's entrance hall commemorates the resistance fighters, who were executed in 1942.

Sagebiel designed a steel-framed construction consisting of five to seven storeys and featuring two symmetric wings, a court of honour facing Wilhelmstrasse, two large interior courtyards, and a facility management yard. The edifice has a gross floor area of 112,000 square metres and 56,000 square metres of usable floor space, making it – both then and now – one of the largest office complexes in Berlin. It encompasses over 2,100 offices that can be reached via 6.8 kilometres of corridors, 17 staircases, four elevators and three paternoster lifts.

Despite the fact that the Reich Aviation Ministry played a major role in the war effort, the building survived the war nearly unscathed.

### ■ During the post-war period and GDR regime (1945–1989)

After the Second World War ended, the building again took on a pivotal role almost immediately. In 1947, the German Economic Commission was set up here as the central administrative organisation for the Soviet occupation zone, and the Soviet military administration used the space as its headquarters until 1948.

The building also played central stage for events that were crucial to the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). On 7 October 1949, the German People's Council (a surrogate parliament for the Soviet occupation zone) declared itself the provisional People's Chamber and put the constitution of the GDR into effect. In legal terms, this sealed the division of Germany. After the People's Chamber moved to another location, the building functioned as the GDR's House of Ministries.

As one of the main centres of government power under the socialist regime, the House of Ministries was a key target for protests by construction workers on 16 June 1953 and the epicentre of the popular uprising that took place a day later on 17 June 1953.



Founding of the German Democratic Republic on 7 October 1949



17 June 1953: Workers protest in front of the House of Ministries



### ■ Democracy arrives (after 1989)

After the reunification of Germany on 3 October 1990, the Berlin branches of the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Court of Auditors set up office in the building. Other parts of the building were occupied by the *Treuhandanstalt*, the agency charged with privatising East German state-owned assets, which was based here from 1991 to 1995.

On 1 April 1992, the edifice was given its present name, the Detlev Rohwedder Building, in memory of the *Treuhandanstalt*'s first president, who had been assassinated a year earlier.

In 1999, the Federal Ministry of Finance transferred its head office from Bonn to Berlin as part of the general relocation of the German government.