

**On 6 October 1938 Albert Speer asks the Reich Ministry of Economics
to support the mass termination of the leases of Jewish tenants in Berlin¹**

Confidential letter from Inspector General of Building Albert Speer (Sp/II/Dr.) to Staatsrat Schmeer² at the Reich and Prussian Ministry of Economics, dated 6 October 1938

Dear *Schmeer*,

Below, I wish to inform you in confidence of the following facts and circumstances.

As a result of the requisite demolition of numerous residential buildings in the process of redesigning the Reich capital, approximately 2,500 large apartments, that is, apartments with more than five rooms, are required for the near future. The construction of these large apartments entails significant difficulties, as the non-profit Housing and Land Settlement Association of the City of Berlin, which is building the greater part of the replacement apartments, only has a limited capacity to construct large apartments. In particular, only a relatively small proportion of these large apartments can be completed by the deadlines I have set for vacating the residential buildings – 1 April 1939 and 1 October 1939.

Therefore, I intend to try to obtain legislation that provides a way to give notice of termination to Jewish tenants of large apartments. Because both the mayor and the urban police and Party organization are presently overburdened with other tasks, during a joint discussion I arranged with the German Labour Front that it will use its block administrators in political districts I, II, and IV to pick out approximately 2,500 to 3,000 large apartments with Jewish tenants and deliver the result of these investigations to me.

Independently of this, a campaign is under way at the Reich Ministry of Justice, seeking the withdrawal of tenants' protection for Jews in general.³

Particularly in Berlin, where there are around 50,000 Jewish households, I would doubt that this campaign can be carried out in such a timely manner that these Jewish apartments can serve as substitute spaces for the demolished buildings, because the question of the accommodation of the Jews is not yet resolved at present.

Therefore, I intend to accelerate the pursuit of my plan, independently of the actions of the Reich Minister of Justice, and would be grateful to you if you would support these efforts.

¹ BArch, R 4606/157. This document has been translated from German.

² Rudolf Schmeer (1905–1966), electrician; joined the NSDAP in 1923; in 1925 joined the SA and rejoined the NSDAP; NSDAP leader in Aachen, 1926–1931; Reichstag member, 1930–1945; from 1933 deputy head of the German Labour Front and head of the Reich Party rallies; in 1935 Prussian Staatsrat; in 1938 ministerial director in the Reich Ministry of Economics; head of the departments of Economic Organization and of Jewish Affairs; in 1941 head of the Development Staff for Moscow; in the Reich Ministry for Armaments and War Production, 1942–1945; worked as a retailer after 1945.

³ The Law on Tenancy Agreements with Jews, 30 April 1939 (*Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1939, I, pp. 864–865) denied Jewish tenants legal protection if they had Aryan landlords. The regulation of 10 Sept. 1940 (*Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1940, I, pp. 1235–1236) abolished tenants' protection for all rental contracts with Jews. See Doc. 96, 22 Sept. 1938.

I have already negotiated with the mayor⁴ and the Public Housing and Land Settlement Association regarding the construction of a block of 2,500 small apartments (apartments with 2 to 2½ rooms), in which I then plan to house these Jewish tenants of large apartments.

The construction of such a block of small apartments would cost a total of around 25 million [Reichsmarks], as a very cursory estimate. However, if I were also forced to rebuild the large apartments that are required as a result of the demolitions, funds of around 65 million would have to be raised for this purpose.

With my proposed resettlement of the Jewish tenants of large apartments, I would hence be able to save the public purse the amount of around 40 million.⁵

I am informing you about this in confidence for the time being.

Heil Hitler!

4 Dr Julius Lippert (1895–1956), journalist; joined the NSDAP in 1927 and the SA in 1933; editor-in-chief of the National Socialist newspaper *Der Angriff*, 1927–1933; state commissioner for Berlin, 1933–1936; chairman of the city council and mayor of Berlin, 1937–1940; later commander of the Propaganda Unit Southeast; district commander of the Security Police in Arlon (Belgium), 1943–1945; in Allied captivity in 1945; extradited to Belgium in 1946, and convicted of war crimes in 1950; imprisoned until 1952.

5 The pogroms on 9 and 10 Nov. 1938 and the state policy of expropriation and expulsion soon forced the Jews to vacate the apartments that Speer wanted. On 26 Nov. 1938 Göring ordered that Inspector General of Building Speer be given the right of first refusal or the right to decide on the first tenants to move in after the Jews had left.