CHAPTER FIVE

BUILD THE WALL: THE TWO GERMAN ECONOMIES ARE NOW UNITED!

By daybreak on Sunday August 13, 1961 what many Germans considered as an improbable possibility, that is, to cut a city of about four million in two and seal the crossing lines was a reality. Bewildered and surprised, Berlin residents woke up to the new reality of a divided city that for the next twenty-eight years separated friends and families who happened to reside on either side of the sealed border between East and West Berlin. From the East German leaders’ vintage point *Operation Rose* was a success in that it accomplished the task without firing a shot or resorting to violence; other than the clearly violent action taken against Berlin residents as the wall effectively divided loved ones from each other.

The date and time for accomplishing the task were “obviously chosen to give the operation the maximum degree of surprise and to minimize the possibility of prompt and effective counteraction from the West.” However, the border closure between Berlin’s eastern and western sectors was without doubt a defensive military operation that was carried out by the GDR’s militarized police force and backed up by the Soviet Union’s military command stationed in Germany. The U.S. Department of State estimated that two infantry divisions and one armored division were involved in sealing the border, a military presence that was “fully adequate both to quell any attempts at outbreaks by the East German population and to discourage any possible Western ideas of counteraction” (see Figure 5.1 and Photos 5.1 and 5.2).

The Wall effectively gave the East Germans the heart and soul of old historic Berlin, although it was in ruins. This is a less explored and discussed issue in the Berlin Wall literature, probably because its admittance by the West would have delivered their adversary on the East a victory. In contrast, what became West Berlin after the border closure was in fact the westward expansion and growth of Berlin beyond its western gates since the early 20th century, such as the infamous Brandenburg Gate or

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1 Slusser (1973: 129).
2 Cf. Slusser, ibid., p. 131.
Figure 5.1 Berlin Map Showing the Wall Route Separating Eastern (GDR) and Western Sectors (FDR under American, British and French control), 1961–1989.