This chapter examines how the world was divided into two opposing blocs, East and West, during the period 1945–8. It begins with a discussion of the Marshall Plan, focusing on its implementation and its Cold War consequences, and the Western economic system. It then considers the Soviet Union’s takeover of Eastern and Central Europe, with emphasis on the split between Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia. It also looks at the struggle for influence in East Asia and concludes with an assessment of the division of Germany. The chapter suggests that the Berlin crisis was in many ways a symbolic crisis in a city which came to epitomize Cold War tensions until 1989; the crisis has also been regarded as an important cause of the militarization of the Cold War and the formation of NATO.
2. Two Worlds East and West, 1945–8