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“Today Has Been A Historical One”: Harry S Truman's Diary of the Potsdam Conference

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Diplomatic History, Volume 4, Issue 3, 1 July 1980, Pages 317–326,

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1980.tb00351.x>

Published: 01 June 2007

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Among the papers of Charles G. Ross at the Harry S Truman Library, unpublished and uncited, lies a unique historical document: an American president's contemporary account of one of the Second World War's Big

Three Conferences. Between 16 July and 30 July 1945, Harry S Truman recorded his impressions of persons and events at Potsdam in an irregularly kept diary, which he scrawled hastily during stolen moments upon nearly twenty sheets of cheap paper.¹ It provides the only record both of Truman's first conversation with Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 16 July and of his talk with Generalissimo Joseph Stalin before the second plenary meeting of the conference on 18 July.² How the diary came to rest among Ross's papers is uncertain. Archivists at the Truman Library speculate that the press secretary was contemplating its publication at the...

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Online ISSN 1467-7709

Print ISSN 0145-2096

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