At 2:50 a.m. on September 1, 1939, President Roosevelt was awakened by a telephone call from America’s Ambassador to France, William C. Bullitt, who told him Germany had invaded Poland. After ordering that army commands and navy ships be notified, FDR wrote this “bedside note,” documenting for posterity how he learned of the war’s outbreak.

The President received word by telephone from Ambassador Bullitt that Germany has invaded Poland and that many cities are being bombed. The President directed that all Navy ships and Army and Air Force Commands be notified by radio at once.

3:05 a.m.
September 1, 1939