

Gerald P. Fogarty, "Roosevelt and the American Catholic Hierarchy":

If Roosevelt sought a Catholic spokesman against Nazi aggression, Mundelein fit the bill perfectly. Here was a prelate of German ancestry who was decidedly anti-Nazi. On March 14, 1937, Pius XI had issued *mit brennender Sorge*, a condemnation of National Socialism. Because the German government had placed restrictions on Church presses, the encyclical had to be read from the pulpits in German parishes. On May 22, 1937, Mundelein delivered an address to his clergy in which he expressed his dismay that the German people had accepted Adolf Hitler, "an inept paper hanger," as their leader. There is some evidence that his statement was made at the request of Pacelli and several German bishops who had helped draft *mit brennender Sorge*. The forum he chose was neither a pastoral letter nor a public statement, but a supposedly private statement to his clergy that happened to be picked up by the international press. Whatever may have been the background to the cardinal's statement, it drew the praise of other American bishops. But the German government made a formal protest to the Vatican, and demanded that the cardinal retract his remark. When the Vatican defended Mundelein's right to freedom of speech within his own diocese, Germany then withdrew its ambassador to the Holy See.