

POPE NEVER “JOINED” HITLER YOUTH

After Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation, the following persons and media outlets erroneously said that he “joined” the Hitler Youth, without ever noting that it was compulsory:

U.S.: AP Planner; Huffington Post; John Patrick Shanley, *New York Times* blog; *Philadelphia Daily News*; Regional News Network (it said his “defenders” argue he was drafted, implying that it is a rebuttable presumption); timminspress.com; *Sun-Sentinel*; thepeoplesvoice.org; *Washington Post*

England: BBC; *The Guardian*; *The Independent*; politics.co.uk; *Metro*

Canada: *The Globe and Mail*

Ireland: *Daily Mirror*; *Irish Independent*

Here are the facts. Like all teenage boys in Nazi Germany, Joseph Ratzinger was forced to join the Hitler Youth. Unlike many others, he did not attend meetings and deserted when he was drafted into the German army. His refusal to attend meetings brought economic hardship to his family. German left-wing intellectuals like Günter Grass and Jürgen Habermas also were conscripted into the Hitler Youth, yet no one ever accused them of voluntarily joining.

Rabbi David Rosen, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, said it is “rubbish” to suggest that the pope willfully joined the Hitler Youth. In 2008, following our complaint, even Bill Maher apologized for making this pernicious accusation. In short, it is despicable to smear the pope as a Nazi sympathizer.