

Rutgers University newspaper under fire for Hitler spoof

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c. 2012 Religion News Service NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. (RNS) A satirical student newspaper is under investigation by Rutgers University after publishing a column in praise of Adolf Hitler and attributing it to a Jewish student activist.

An article titled "What about the good things Hitler did?" appeared in *The Medium* on April 4 alongside Rutgers student Aaron Marcus's name and photo. A self-described Zionist, Marcus writes columns for the independent Rutgers student newspaper, *The Daily Targum*, which the *Medium* sought to spoof.

Marcus told WWOR-TV the article hurt him and his family, and that some of his relatives died in the Holocaust. "To say anything praiseworthy of someone like Hitler, and to have people actually believe it was coming from me, even in a satirical manner, is just really painful," Marcus told the station.

He could not be reached for comment over the weekend.

Federal courts have extended "broad protection" to student media, Rutgers president Richard McCormick said in a statement, but *The Medium* article went too far. It is "particularly despicable," he said, in light of Marcus's faith.

The article "is extremely offensive and repugnant," McCormick said. "No individual student should be subject to such a vicious and provocative and hurtful piece, regardless of whether the First Amendment protections apply to such expression."

The university is investigating the column as a bias incident, he said.

The spoof states "history has given the Third Reich a bad rap" and notes the irony in celebrating Columbus Day, considering Christopher Columbus "slaughtered countless natives, raped their wives and enslaved their children." Hitler was

responsible for genocide, it states, but also experimented with rocket science and helped start the auto company Volkswagen.

The same day *The Medium* published the satire, *The Targum* published a column actually written by Marcus criticizing the Palestinian National Authority for refusing to recognize Israel as a Jewish state. *The Medium* is run as a club and is funded in part with money from the university, while *The Targum* is an independent newspaper run as a not-for-profit company.

Two editors at *The Medium* declined to comment, referring questions to a faculty adviser, Ronald Miskoff. Reached by e-mail, the journalism lecturer said he does not approve content or see it before it goes to press. He does critique *The Medium* after it is published.

"I can't explain the humor in the article. I suppose it's more about the irony of a Jewish activist writing something that is the complete opposite of what he really believes," Miskoff said.

This isn't the first time *The Medium* has come under fire for anti-Semitic material. In 2004, it ran a full-page cover drawing showing a man throwing a ball at another man -- mimicking a carnival game -- sitting on an oven.

Miskoff had not had contact with administrators yet about the column as of late yesterday. If any action is taken, he said he hoped "it will be with the understanding that college is a time in people's lives when they test boundaries and learn the results of errors prior to taking on full adult responsibilities."