

Göran Rosenberg

Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis obesvarade kärlek

The Unrequited Love of Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis

Albert Bonniers Förlag, 500 pages. First edition, September 2021.

"We were both born Jewish, you and I. You when so many Jewish roads were still open, I when so many Jewish roads had been closed. You when there was so much to break away from, to resolve, and to infuse with new life, I when so much Jewish life had been annihilated I when so much of Jewish life had been annihilated and the question could seriously be asked whether being Jewish was even possible anymore."

Thus begins Göran Rosenberg's deeply personal exploration of the life and work of Marcus Ehrenpreis, the Galicia-born chief rabbi of Stockholm between 1914 and 1948, the secretary of Theodor Herzl at the first Zionist Congress in Basel 1897, a grand rabbi of Bulgaria during two Balkan wars, a diplomat in defense of Europe's minorities, a Swedish author compared to Joseph Conrad, a spiritual leader of one of Europe's few unscathed Jewish communities through the Nazi era.

This is then not only a biography of one man, however fascinating a personal tale it brings to life, but the literary journey of an award-winning and best-selling Swedish-Jewish writer and public intellectual, son of Holocaust survivors, in the search for that European-Jewish world of meaning and hope, which Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis so clearly embodied, so vividly articulated, and from his pulpit in Stockholm so relentlessly worked to explain, defend, and salvage a few remnants of. Ehrenpreis' life-long dream was to build a bridge between "Israel" and "the peoples", and he believed that he could do so through the spiritual and cultural revival of Judaism, by bringing it into a new and self-asserted contact with the world. He also believed that a morally bewildered world needed this as much as the Jews. *The Unrequited Love of Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis* is a meticulously researched and beautifully written story of boundless hope, unrequited love and annihilated possibilities, which is the story of a diasporic Judaism that was to be harshly judged in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel.

To be harshly judged with it was also to be its leaders, most unforgivingly the leaders of the Jewish Councils in the Nazi ghettos, who were to be accused of betraying their "Jewish brethren". But similar accusations were to be made against the Jewish leader of Sweden, Marcus Ehrenpreis, who was infamously and wrongly accused of supporting the Swedish government in its anti-Jewish immigration and asylum policy during the 1930's.

Rosenberg's book provides a much-needed counternarrative to this still festering image of Jewish collaboration and betrayal, to which the Swedish government tacitly contributed in its efforts to throw an exculpating light on its controversial role during the war.

"*The Unrequited Love of Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis* is a book that gives the reader insights into Judaism in the broadest sense", writes *Bibliotekstjänst* in its pre-publication review, giving it a rare 5 ("brilliant"). "Rarely does one read a book on this subject that is so brilliant, intellectually exciting and factually rich."

Reviews:

Aftonbladet: "An intellectual delight."

Dagens Nyheter: "Every chapter in Göran Rosenberg's new book merits a review of its own".

Svenska Dagbladet: "Göran Rosenberg's rehabilitation of Marcus Ehrenpreis is a feat."


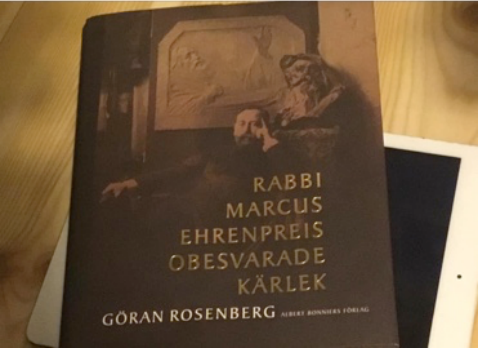
Dagen: "A tale that bleeds and glows."

Expressen: "The book of rehabilitation."



Västerbottens Folkblad and others: "A riveting time-journey."

Readers' public responses, a selection.

Anna-Karin Hammar, priest and theologian, Church of Sweden, on Facebook:

<div>Anna Karin Hammar 30 oktober kl. 00:08 · 🌐</div> <p>Kvällen är sen, men en stor sak har hänt. Jag har läst ut Göran Rosenbergs fenomenala bok om rabbinen Marcus Ehrenpreis. Varenda minut med denna text är värdefull. Varför?</p> <p>För att den ger ett rotfäste till all humanism. För att den omedgörligt och icke-dömande avslöjar relationerna i Sverige mellan judar och icke-judar särskilt under Hitlers valde och världens otroliga svek mot de för sina liv försök till flyende judar. För att den väver samman rättvisa och barmhärtighet som i ett flätat bröd. För att den ger hopp om att palestinerna i sitt förtryck kan få uppleva att judar med Ehrenpreis och Rosenberg i bagaget är de närmast allierade. För att den trots all frånvaro av Guds närvaro i historien ändå tror på en Gud lika självklar som andning. För att den kallar oss till att med hjälp av profeterna inte rädas makten utan våga vara på de maktlösa sida. För att den vittnar om en stor rabbin i Europas utkant som spelat en stor roll i avgörande skeenden. För att det kan skrivas litteratur på det svenska språket som gör motstånd mot förtryck och förstörelse av jorden utan att hemfalla åt idealism. Bland annat.</p> 
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Anders Ekhem, priest, Church of Sweden

<p> Anders Ekhem 5 november kl. 13:06 · 🌐</p> <p>Just läst färdigt Göran Rosenbergs bok om Rabbi Ehrenpreis. En av de mest insiktsfulla, vackraste, mest berörande, lärorika, uppmanande, skrämmande och politiskt och samhälleligt aktuella böcker jag läst på länge. Fått en fördjupad förståelse av den judendom som så länge väckt min respekt och nyfikenhet. Om att utvaldheten inte handlar om mark och gränser, utan om mänsklighet och dess värdighet. Jag stämmer in i bokens avslutande trosbekännelse "på den Gud som människan behöver för att förbli människa". Tänk om rabbinens obesvarade kärlek fick bli besvarad i vår tid 🙏</p> 	<p>Just finished reading Göran Rosenberg's book on Rabbi Ehrenpreis. One of the most insightful, beautiful, moving, instructive, exhortative, frightening and politically and socially timely books I've read in a long time. Gained a deeper understanding of the Judaism that has so long aroused my respect and curiosity. About how chosenness is not about land and borders, but about humanity and its dignity. I agree with the book's concluding statement of faith "in the God that human beings need to remain human." Imagine if the rabbi's unrequited love could be answered in our time.</p>
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Private letter from Per Wästberg, member of the Swedish Academy.

Dear Göran,

After many hours of immersion in your masterful biography/contemporary account, I am deeply moved, not least by the last quarter, and impressed - to put it mildly - by your clear language, your mastery of an enormous subject, your gently percolating personal involvement, your analyses, your overview and your lasting reappraisal of ME's contribution and personality. It's a lot to take in at once, and it's not just admirable but absolutely phenomenal.

Your book is a magnificent achievement. Now you can settle down.

Warm regards

Per

On previous books by Göran Rosenberg:

A Brief Stop on the Road from Auschwitz, Bonniers 2012.

Winner of the August Prize for literature in 2012.

A towering and wondrous work about memory and experience, exquisitely crafted, beautifully written, humane, generous, devastating, yet somehow also hopeful.

Philippe Sands, *Financial Times*

Written with tender precision, "A Brief Stop on the Road From Auschwitz" is the most powerful account I have read of the other death — the death after the camps.

Roger Cohen, *New York Times*

Dette er rent ut sagt en av de mest gripende bøker jeg har lest – og tankevekkende på mange plan... En bok man sent glemmer.

Johan O Jensen, *Adresseavisen*

Læs selv historien til ende i dette mesterværk af en skæbnefortælling.

Peter Wivel, *Politiken*

Rosenberg schreibt in eine einfache Sprache, so schnörkellos und schlicht wie skandinavisches Design. Seine Sätze sind von einer bestehenden Klarheit, durch Wiederholungen erreicht er eine gewisse Elegie, ein sehnsuchtsvoll bedauernde Grundmelodie, die das Buch zu mehr macht als „nur“ der Überlebensgeschichte seines Vaters: nämlich zu großer Literatur.

Johanna Adorjan, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntags-Zeitung*

Det förlorade landet, en personlig historia (The Lost Land, a Personal History of Zionism and Israel), Bonniers 1996

Nominated to the August Prize for best non-fiction of 1996:

"An incorruptible, complex, lucid and thrilling analysis."

The nominating jury.

In German as *Das verlorene Land*, Suhrkamp, Jüdischer Verlag 1998.

In French as *L'utopie perdue*, Denöel 2000.

"An intellectually stringent, pedagogically structured and morally impressive book, with an analysis that does not hesitate to confront the most painful of facts."

Eva Ekselius in *Dagens Nyheter*

"Det förlorade landet is intellectually a most exciting book. During the journey I filled a whole note book with page references and commentaries, mostly supplemented with question or exclamation marks. I guess that's the way it has to be when you struggle with a

book that ultimately deals with 'the lost soul' of Israel. This is certainly a rather presumptuous order, but I find that Rosenberg succeeds to deliver."

Cordelia Edvardson in *Svenska Dagbladet*

"Let me say it at once: Rosenberg has written a rich and unremittingly fascinating book. I cannot think of any other contemporary Swedish essayist that with such engagement and challenging spirit has given me the sense of being immersed in a discussion of outmost importance to my own existence. The book can be read as a *Bildungsroman* in disguise; dramatic, entertaining, moving. In a masterly prose the author describes his intellectual education och political search through three turbulent decades... With Rosenberg's book the intellectual space of Sweden has become somewhat larger."

Gabi Gleichmann in *Expressen*

"The most impressive book of the year! Göran Rosenberg has written a book about Israel as only an intellectual giant can do."

Kjell-Ove Cederqvist in *Dagbladet*

"You close this book knowing that you have read a classic. Brave, brilliant and honest, and one learn a lot about the anatomy of a tragedy."

Swedish writer and dramatist *Per Olov Enquist* in *Expressen*

Friare kan ingen vara - den amerikanska idén från Revolution till Reagan, Free Man's Burden – the American Idea from Revolution to Reagan, Norstedts 1991:

"It is one of the best books on American political history written by a European author in recent times."

American political scientist Joseph B Board in *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift*, Swedish Journal of Political Science, 4/93

"It is brilliantly written. It's form, a web of history and present, intensely stimulating. The most important book of the 1990's."

Per T Ohlsson, editor in chief, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*