The Late Michael Gurevitch – In Memoriam

The late Michael Gurevitch was one of the most eminent researchers in the field of communications, a scholar whose work reflected a rare combination of functional approaches and critical theories. He immersed himself in all the major topics that occupied communication researchers during the second half of the previous century, both from the institutional point of view and from the social psychological perspective: the role of the media in the democratic process; the reciprocity between the media, culture and ideology; the consumption of media as part of the recreational culture; and the role of the media in satisfying the psycho-social needs of the individual. For many years he worked in England at the Open University and at Leister University, where he collaborated with world renowned researchers, including Stuart Hall, James Curran and Jay Blumler. Later, he settled in the USA, where he taught and conducted research at the University of Maryland. Many of his publications are still considered classics in the field of media studies today.

Our acquaintanceship and joint work commenced in 1969, at the beginning of the media, culture and recreation research in Israel, headed up by Elihu Katz, his colleague and close friend. This research produced two books and several articles co-authored by the research team members. Our research collaboration continued on and off up to 2000, when another co-authored book, “Culture, Communication and Leisure in Israel” was published.

When we first became acquainted, Michael Gurevitch was a teacher and a mentor. Later on we became colleagues and good friends. In spite of his prolonged sojourn in England and in the USA, Michael was, and remained, an Israeli intellectual. In his younger days, he was the night editor of the “Lamerchav” newspaper, and always showed a keen interest in Israeli journalism and Hebrew literature, both as a researcher and as a reader. He was a confirmed booklover and constantly read the new books that were published in Israel. Throughout all the years that he lived abroad, he visited Israel at least twice a year, was up to date on all the goings-on in the country and maintained contact with his many friends. I would look forward to his visits because I knew that upon the conclusion of each working meeting, we could discuss interesting books that were recently published as well as the new trends in Israeli culture. The home of Michael and his wife Pat, in Washington D. C., was a magnet and meeting place for Israelis on sabbatical or attending conferences in the USA, and we remember their warm hospitality with great fondness.

Michael Gurevitch was a person everyone “loved to love” – pleasant mannered and soft tempered, an excellent confidant, intellectual and inquisitive and, above all, humble and modest. In spite of his success and his international reputation, he never succumbed to the sins of conceit and arrogance. In spite of the many years that he lived and was active outside of Israel, he never severed himself from Israeli society. One of his last project was joining the IDC Herzliya with the objective of assisting in the establishment of the Sammy Ofer School of Communications. At IDC, he succeeded in fulfilling a central role as a lecturer and scholar. We will always remember him as a good friend, and as a gifted colleague with whom we had the privilege of working. May his dear memory be forever blessed.

Hanna Adoni

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