

# lingua weekly

15<sup>th</sup> May 2008

## LOL in Yiddish

Éamonn Doherty



We weren't antisemitic in our town. There weren't many opportunities to be. The fact was there weren't many Jews in rural Ireland in the early to mid 70's. I suppose the closest ones to our house were about two hundred kilometres up the road in the "big smoke" called Dublin.

I had conflicting opinions about them. They had Jesus Christ killed, which wasn't one of their best ideas. But on the other hand, I had seen the "World at War" documentaries and so I knew about their intended extermination at the hands of Mr. Hitler.

However, the thing that decided it for me was their sense of humour. I could appreciate it. I don't know why. Maybe it's

because the Irish and the Jews have a lot in common - persecution and immigration.

And in the 70's Jewish humour was everywhere on television - Barbara Streisand (she used to be funny), Woody Allen, Groucho Marx, Mel Brooks and of course the great Billy Wilder (the guy Fernando Trueba calls "God").

They told jokes about their religion, antisemitism and the clichés of being a Jew.

I remember during my childhood watching a situation comedy (sitcom) television programme called "Rhoda". It dealt with the universal themes of family, friends relationships and living in a big city but through the eyes of a Jewish thirtysomething.

Two of the characters that stood out the most for me were Rhoda's sister (who now is the voice of Marge Simpson, wife of Homer and mother of Bart) and the doorman, Carlton. The doorman was an unusual character insofar as you never saw him on screen. You only heard his sleepy voice through the intercom as he made some inappropriate comments.

And finally a quotation from Golda Meir the first woman prime minister of Israel, who also had a sense of humour ...

***"Let me tell you something that we Jews have against Moses. He took us forty years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil."***

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