

What Did You Just Say?



by Reg Green

Marco, an Italian friend, was nowhere to be seen when I arrived at Naples airport after an overnight flight from Los Angeles. This was quite unlike the meticulous man I knew. Then I realized it was my mistake. I scurried to the right meeting spot and there he was, looking around anxiously..

I climbed gratefully into his car and we sped away, he talking enthusiastically about what he'd arranged for the meetings I was there for.

Something was troubling him, however, and suddenly he said, "Are you angry?" It came as a shock. I was tired but in no way angry and I tried to reassure him. He was silent for a few

minutes, then asked again, "Are you sure you're not angry?"

A little uneasy myself by then, I repeated more emphatically, "No, really, I'm not angry at all." Then seeing he was still not satisfied, I asked, "Why would I be angry?" "Well," he replied, "It's a long flight and I don't know if they serve meals these days."

Ah! 'Hungry' not 'angry.' What a dangerous world we live in. World War Three could start with a miscommunication like that.

It brought to mind a similar trip with my wife, Maggie, and then five-year old daughter, Eleanor, to Paris whose inhabitants also find it difficult to pronounce the English 'h.'

We were doing a lot of traveling those days and again we'd flown overnight. The rush-hour ride from the airport seemed interminable and Eleanor and I, although not angry, were indisputably cranky. At last we turned into the street where our hotel, the Appia, was. "We're 'ere at last," I felt called upon to say, "Let's 'ope you'll be 'appier 'ere."

It would no doubt earn the disdain of today's politically-correct but at least it put off our family version of World War Three for another day.