

## How do you say 'I'm sorry about George Bush' in Italian?



**BARB GUY**

A few years back I gave a lift to a lost Italian woman who was vacationing in Salt Lake City. We struggled to speak to one another, each trying out languages we had studied but didn't normally speak.

We talked for about 10 minutes. Then we exchanged e-mail addresses and maybe sent two or three brief messages over the years, but no more.

Then this spring she wrote to say she was coming to the U.S., and I replied that we were planning a trip to Italy. A few arrangements ensued and we agreed to host one another in our homes.

As my husband, Chris, and I were preparing to leave home for Italy, we received this sobering e-mail message:

*"Italy waits for you with its artistic and natural wonders.*

*American people are not loved in this period because of the war in Iraq. This war has been a terrible and devastating mistake."*

*Love,  
Carla*

The tone was set.

Even before Carla's surprisingly frank message, I had prepared to go to Italy equipped with words of apology concerning the war we started in Iraq. I had learned a few sentences that would indicate I disagreed with the war from its very beginning and that I found George Bush to be a terrible excuse for a leader, *un capo defettoso*.

It's so sad that as an American preparing to travel abroad, the first words I made sure I could speak were words of apology for my president's actions.

Now I am here in Italy and no one will confess to being upset with Americans, not that I'm asking. The people are very nice, and besides one cab driver, to whom we apologized earnestly, no one has brought up the war, although I did hear a DJ send a song out to the Italian soldiers fighting there. He even played a nauseating clip of George Bush talking about how we are securing freedom in Iraq. I assume he made fun of him afterward.

But it's hard to look around Italy without seeing signs of war. In the 13th century the pope sent a fellow to quell some fighting against the Crusades. The fellow's direction to his troops: "Slay all. God will know his own." I've seen similar mottos on T-shirts at home.

Everywhere I look there's an ancient fortification. Our young, young country can still remember all its wars. Here in Italy, where the building I had lunch in yesterday was built 1,900 years ago, time is a different thing.

The sense I'm getting here is that wars come and wars go, but most of us somehow live on. We've been to two towns where the marble war monuments from World War II are starting to give way. Through the chisel marks you can still read names of war dead from Mussolini's army as well as their Italian brothers who fought for the resistance, resting for eternity on the very same plaque. They can't all be heroes, can they?

I didn't expect to become sanguine about war on my summer vacation. Maybe it's the impossibly blue sea. Or the warm Italian sun. Or that everything it touches is gorgeous. Maybe it's because wine costs less than water or Diet Coke, and one really has to stay hydrated, but what I'm mulling over at the

# The Salt Lake Tribune

moment is that we all have had  
our hideous rulers.

Napoleon was finally shamed  
and exiled after having ruled over  
the destiny of Europe for  
decades. In the end they gave  
him Elba, a place the size of  
Antelope Island. Who knows  
what will befall George Bush?

I don't know what the memorials  
for our current war will look like,  
but I know the message they will  
send: This war has been a  
terrible and devastating mistake.

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*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to  
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