

SILVIO BERLUSCONI

Berlusconi was born in Milan and raised there in an upper middle-class family. His father Luigi was a bank employee, and his mother was Rosa Bossi. Silvio was the first of three children.

After completing his secondary school education at a Salesian college, he studied law in Milan, graduating with a thesis on the legal aspects of advertising in 1961. Berlusconi was not required to serve the standard one-year in the Italian army which was compulsory at the time. Obviously he was already resourceful.

Berlusconi's business career began in construction during the 1960s. He had the idea of developing Milano 2, a garden city of around 3,500 apartments, which he eventually built. How Berlusconi managed to finance the project is unclear.

He first entered the media world in 1973 by setting up a small cable television company, *Telemilano*.

Now, Berlusconi is the proprietor of three analogue television channels, various digital television channels, as well as some of the larger-circulation national news magazines. Together this media represent nearly half of the Italian market.

With his business partners he founded Mediolanum, one of the country's biggest banking and insurance groups.

He is also the owner of the European football club A.C. Milan, which has won a number of national and international trophies under his lead.

Berlusconi is Italy's third richest person, with personal assets worth more than 6,3 billion Euros.

Berlusconi's political rise was rapid and surrounded by controversy. Berlusconi launched a massive campaign of electoral advertisements on his three TV networks.

Altogether he was elected for prime minister for 3 times. (His only political opponent was Romano Prodi.)

Silvio Berlusconi has an extensive record of criminal allegations, including mafia collusion, false accounting, tax fraud, corruption and bribery of police officers and judges. He was visited by the police for 577 times, he had more than 2,500 court hearings and he spent more than 174 million Euros on his lawyers.

He has never been tried on charges relating to the Mafia. He even stated that the Mafia did not exist at all.

Berlusconi is famous for his so called jokes. These are some of them:

Before the 2008 Italian general election, Berlusconi said that the leftish party had no taste in women, because rightish female politicians are much more beautiful.

During a televised encounter with voters, a young woman asked Berlusconi what the younger generation should do about the lack of secure jobs. He promptly suggested that she try to marry the son of Berlusconi.

One day after talking to the German Member of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, he was accused of his links to Mafia. Berlusconi responded: "Mr Schulz, I know a movie producer in Italy who is making a movie about Nazi concentration camps. I will recommend you for the role of a Kapo. You are perfect for the part!"

Two days after Barack Obama was elected the first African-American US President, Berlusconi "complimented" Obama on his "suntan".

Few months after this, he "joked" again: "You wouldn't believe it, but they go sunbathing at the beach together - his wife is also sun-tanned."

Later that month he reiterated the remark, saying that anyone who found it racist had no sense of humour and was an "imbecile".