

A Glimpse into the Character of Silvio Berlusconi

—by [Reg Green](#) (July 2023)



“Ex-Prime Minister divides Italy even in death,” is how Reuters news agency headlined the funeral of Silvio Berlusconi, capturing the love and anger he aroused as the country’s most important and enduring public figure. But I had a unique glimpse of the inner feelings of this intensely personal man when our seven-year old son, Nicholas, was shot by highway robbers while we were on vacation in Italy nearly thirty years ago (nicholasgreen.org).

The whole country erupted in compassion and, as prime minister, he invited Maggie, my wife, Eleanor, our four-year old daughter, and me to meet him privately in his office, where he talked to us with impressive correctness like an old family friend rather than the leader of a country. There was no lamentation, no excess emotion, no reporters. At the end, he walked down the stairs with us to where a car was waiting,

said good-bye to Maggie and Eleanor, and asked me with polite formality, “May I embrace you?” But as he put his face to mine, I felt a tear run down his cheek and realized that all the time he had held his emotions in check so as not to upset us.

Before we wrench our own country apart, let’s not forget our bitterest political opponents are people too.

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