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ëVati-con' Featured on CNBC Documentary

Joe Feuerherd | Mar. 3, 2010 NCR Today

It was the story that had everything: a beautiful Hollywood actress whose star was on the rise, a debonair Italian entrepreneur who purported to do both well and good, a former president and his billionaire buddy, a would-be president of the other party and, not least, Vatican intrigue.

Remember Raffaelo Follieri? Tonight CNBC premiers its documentary, part of its ?American Greed? series, on the New York-based ?real estate developer? whose business plan included buying up aging US parishes and converting them into ?socially responsible? properties ? such as day care centers and housing for the aged.

The promo for the show (a short advertisement for CNBC is, unfortunately, at the frontend of the clip) can be found **here[1]**.

Turns out the business was a scam. Follieri, who once lived in the Trump Towers and maintained a Park Avenue office opposite the Waldorf Astoria, now resides in Federal prison.

Oh, but what a scam!

Follieri?s business partners included Andrea Sodano, nephew of then-Vatican Secretary of State Angelo Sodano. The young Italian?s modes operandi was to drop the Sodano name in chanceries around the country in order to secure face time with church officials responsible for real estate sales. NCR reported on Follieri in early 2006, coverage found **here[2]**.

He was financed by California supermarket magnate Ron Burkle, a close friend of Bill Clinton. Follieri allegedly ingratiated himself with the Clinton crowd with promises of donations to the Clinton Global Initiative.

Follieri, however, was nothing if not bipartisan. John McCain celebrated his seventieth birthday in Montenegro on a yacht rented by the budding entrepreneur. See the picture of that get together **here[3]**.

Follieri also purchased the personal beach home of a New Jersey bishop, the details of which are described **here [4]**.

And Follieri was also the significant other of actress Anne Hathaway (she, most recently, of ?Valentine?s Day?). It will be interesting to see if ?American Greed? reveals anything about her role, if any, in the Follieri scam.

Meanwhile, **another trailer for the documentary [5]**notes that Cardinal Sodano wrote a letter to Follieri instructing him to cease and desist from using the Vatican?s name in his dealings. That letter, written in March 2006, followed right on the heels of NCR?s reporting.

Source URL (retrieved on *05/03/2015 - 19:30*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/%C3%ABvati-con-featured-cnbc-documentary

Links:
[1] http://www.cnbc.com/id/15840232?video=1429251343&play=1
[2] http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006a/030306/030306a.htm
[3] http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080929/berman_ames
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