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CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN KURDISTAN

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ERBIL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

The Kurds have always taken a stand when we've asked them to, and I believe it's our turn now to stand by them.

INTERVIEW: HARRY SCHUTE, FORMER US MILITARY

The Kurds truly are our friends and allies because they want to be a democracy. They want to be a federal entity and they realize that if they are to succeed in that regard, they need the partnership of countries like America, like the European democracies. They need to be partnered with those countries so that they can succeed in those dreams that they have – which are the same dreams that we have.

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ERBIL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

If people were to ask me how we can help the Kurdish people I would have to say we should be giving them the same kind of help we give others. We should be doing business with them.

NARRATOR:

The Kurds of Iraq understand that the success of their fledgling democracy depends largely on the success of their economy. That's why they are throwing open their doors to international investors and introducing the world to their vast natural resources, including their extensive proven oil reserves waiting to be developed.

But while the oil fields of Kurdistan may yet remain untapped, its harvest fields grow more productive each year.

Already famous as the first site to practice wheat cultivation, Kurdistan's agricultural reputation continues to grow as a producer of vegetables, cereals and fruits of the highest quality.

NARRATOR:

Blessed with an agreeable climate, an abundant water supply, and rich, fertile soil, Kurdistan is becoming known as one of the most important locations in the world devoted to organically produced foods.

INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS LAYTON, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KDC)

If you look at a map of the whole of Iraq you see Iraqi Kurdistan would be green on the map and the rest of it brown. They have all the water so they have a tremendous agricultural capability, but unfortunately they don't have the food production facilities to turn that potential into an export capability. So right now there is an awesome opportunity for companies to come in here and help them get these production facilities going.

NARRATOR:

Canning, juice extraction, tomato drying, meat processing and packaging are just a few of the industries that could be easily developed with prospects for a substantial export market.

INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS LAYTON, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KDC)

I feel that Iraqi Kurdistan is perhaps one of the greatest opportunities anywhere in the world. I mean, here you are – you have an open, stable society with western values and they're going to build everything from the ground up. The people that come in here now will have an opportunity that does not exist just about anywhere else in the world.

NARRATOR:

Everywhere you turn Kurdistan is under construction in a massive effort to rebuild a land and a people Saddam Hussein did his best to destroy. Faced with the task of resettling countless displaced families, the Kurds have built tens of thousands of new homes, along with hundreds of schools and health centers.

They've established two new universities and one international airport, with another on the way, for their ever-growing urban population. The good news is Kurdistan is booming. The bad news is their building suppliers can't keep up with the demand.

**INTERVIEW: ZIGGY MARTSCH, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KDC)
GERMANY**

Kurdistan has a big business opportunity and they need help from foreign companies.

INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS LAYTON, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

I think that it would be accurate to say that since the liberation of Iraq – especially here in Iraqi Kurdistan because we have a much better security situation than in the rest of Iraq – that they are rebuilding everything from the ground up. And they want to do it on an international standard, therefore they are looking for suitable partners to help them accomplish that.

**INTERVIEW: 'ZIGGY' MARTSCH, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KDC)
GERMANY**

And it's a very good place for business people from European and United States and any place of the world.

INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS LAYTON, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (KDC)

...from America, from Britain, from Germany, from Korea, from Taiwan...and they're finding that there's such a vast number of projects being undertaken by the government that they're enjoying a tremendous opportunity – what I feel is probably one of the greatest opportunities in the entire world.

NARRATOR:

Visitors who come to Iraqi Kurdistan are quick to see that this is a land of possibilities. They admire the crystal clear rivers and imagine the thriving fisheries waiting to be built there. They go up into some of the most beautiful mountains in the world and wonder how long before resort hotels are filled with hikers and skiers.

Investors look at the abundant fields and thriving cities and understand that Kurdistan has become the economic powerhouse for the new Iraq, thanks to the high level of security their region has been able to achieve.

INTERVIEW: MRS. MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ERBIL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

You can walk around. You can move around. You can do whatever you want in Kurdistan. Come here and talk to the Minister. The Minister here is so easy. They want investors to come into this country. Come here and see for yourself.

INTERVIEW: DOUGLAS LAYTON, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

A lot of the people that have opted to come here and visit Iraqi Kurdistan are absolutely surprised that this is nothing like the rest of Iraq – that there is a secure, stable environment.

So you're a European businessman thinking about investment. You've got investment funds. You're looking for a ground floor opportunity. I would urge you and encourage you to come and just have a look for yourself, because every single person that we've brought in – and we've brought in many delegations from all over the world – they come here and within twenty-four hours they begin to relax and they understand this nothing like what they've been watching on tv.

NARRATOR:

But the Kurds of Iraq know that security alone is not the answer. They know there must be partnership with the international business community if they are to continue to develop as a modern economy and civil society. For this they look for support from the world's great democracies, and pray that this time the promises of their allies will prove true.

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL DOUGLAS, ERBIL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Democracy is underpinned by economic revival, and in order to achieve economic revival you have to have business. If people are employed and they're earning a good living then arguably that deters them from the kind of activities that may be causing some of the problems elsewhere in Iraq.

INTERVIEW: HARRY SCHUTE, FORMER US MILITARY

I think the reason we need to support the Kurds with this new democracy is because, very simply, they have been our one, constant, steady, true friend through this whole process. And I am confident that friendship will continue through good and bad. And that is why it is important for us to maintain that relationship with folks here in Kurdistan.

INTERVIEW: RIZGAR HAMAWANDI, KURDISTAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

God bless the people from the west who help us...from what we suffer as a bad experience. And now, because of them we are free and we are living in peace now.

NARRATOR:

With peace comes prosperity. Every day more business investors from around the world are making the surprising discovery of a land where the opportunities are endless, the doors are open, and the time to act is now.

Come, discover the 'other' Iraq. See the promise...

HERO GIRL:

Share the dream.

NARRATOR:

There's an old saying among the Kurds: "No friends but the mountains." But today this saying may have to be changed. For while they will always honor their past and treasure their beloved mountains, the Kurds of Iraq now welcome with open arms their many friends throughout the world.

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