



PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

26 FEBRUARY 1986

I have sent the following message to President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines:

"Please accept the congratulations and best wishes of the Australian Government and people on your great victory. The will of the Filipino people has prevailed.

This would not have been possible without your courage and determination, which have won you admiration in Australia and around the world. I pay tribute to that. I pay tribute to the magnificent resolve of the millions of Filipinos who, through their commitment to democracy and to fairness and justice in the conduct of your country's affairs, managed to secure the victory that was properly theirs. That this has been achieved with little evident violence reflects great credit on the Filipino people. The roles of church and other leaders have been both courageous and exemplary. The many who put their lives at risk deserve the highest praise.

As a near neighbour and regional partner, Australia has a keen interest in the Philippines and a strong concern for the welfare of the Filipino people. Our feelings have been with you during the recent difficult and indeed critical weeks. We now look forward to developing a relationship which is based on shared respect for political freedom, human rights and democratic choice.

In recent years the Philippines has not been able to participate to its fullest potential in the expanding inter-relationships of this region. While the previous regime was in office, I myself chose not to visit the Philippines as Prime Minister. Your impending Presidency allows us a new start in building a relationship which is commensurate with the Philippines' important place in the region, and I am looking forward to a meeting with you at the earliest opportunity. If it is convenient to you, the Australian Foreign Minister, Bill Hayden, plans to visit Manila in the next few days to establish high level contact between our Governments.

The Australian Government recalled our Ambassador to the Philippines over the weekend as a mark of protest against signs that Mr Marcos would cling to that power which the people had already denied him. We have now asked our Ambassador to return to Manila to take over the Embassy, which I am glad to note has already established friendly and cooperative relations with you and your colleagues.

Your accession to the Presidency, with the clear support of the majority of the people, marks a new beginning. We now look forward to the smooth assumption of your authority across the country.

Clearly the Philippines faces a huge task in the restoration of democratic processes and the implementation of economic reforms. You have the best wishes of the Australian Government and people as you tackle these challenging problems. I can assure you of the Australian Government's full cooperation and support.

Bob Hawke"
