Telegram from Geoffrey Harrison at the British Embassy in Moscow to P. Grey, Head of the South-East Asia department of the Foreign Office, dated 19 February 1948

Letter from

BRITISH EMBASSY,

MOSCOW

CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Paul,

We have suggested more than once that, if Mrs Pandit arrived in this country with any illusions, she has now shed most of them. We had an interesting illustration of this at a recent routine Saturday morning Commonwealth Representatives meeting at the Embassy here. She started by commenting that the Communist Party in India had now formally declared war on the Government of India. She added that she had been slightly embarrassed to receive an enquiry on the telephone from a Russian as to whether the Communist Party in India was going to be declared illegal, the more so as she believed there was quite a possibility of this. From this she went on to refer to the curious behaviour of the Russians in connexion with the assassination of Gandhi. She herself had been surprised to receive no official Soviet word of condolence. Her surprise was increased when she received a telegram from Delhi saying the local Communist papers had reported that the Soviet Government had conveyed official condolences, that Novikov had not in fact been anywhere near them, so presumably the communication must have been made in Moscow. She thereupon mentioned the matter privately to the doyen of the Corps Diplomatique, and presumably as a result she received some p.c. cards from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nearly a week after the event. As she said, this all made rather a curious impression!

She added, incidentally, that, when the satellite Ambassadors came to pay their visits of condolence, they one and all commiserated with her on the wickedness of the British in organising this dastardly murder. She said that the first time she was too taken aback to react, but that after the formula had been repeated a couple of times her retort became less and less diplomatic!

I should add that we have no reason whatever to doubt that Mrs Pandit was telling the truth.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Terence Shone at New Delhi.

Yours ever,

Geoffrey Harrison

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