The British Conservative Party has been instrumental for a long period in shaping the policies of the British Government towards British colonies. The Party was greatly concerned with, and vocal about, British policy towards the Indian Empire in particular. Hence it is very important and instructive to study the attitude of the Conservative Party to India's demand for independence. In this study, an attempt has been made to analyse the attitude and reaction of the Conservative Party of Great Britain towards India's demand for independence during the crucial period 1930 to 1947.

There is a widespread impression that during the above period at least the British Conservative Party was an Imperialist Party, with vested interests and was dead opposed to liberation of colonies, and to India's independence in particular. Did the Conservative Party as a whole oppose India's independence? Were there groups and individuals who supported and sympathized with India's demand? Was the Opposition confined to a few 'imperialists' of the Party? Did they change their attitude according to the spirit of the times or were they rigid in their opposition? The answers to these questions would help a proper reappraisal of Indo-British relations during the period of this study 1930-1947.

This is primarily a study of the Conservative Party's attitude to India's struggle for independence. The study is not concerned with the attitude of other British political parties, but often references are made to the Labour Party's attitude also to make the differences between the two clear. Neither are we concerned here with the Indian national movement as such, except in so far as it
concerned the attitude of the Conservative Party. At the same time, we are not very much concerned with the details of intra-party struggles. A large portion of the thesis is concerned with Indian constitutional developments, but they are dealt with merely as steps in the direction of the goal of independence. The focus is on the attitude of the British Conservative Party to India's demand for independence. It has been assumed that, by and large, the attitude and the policy of the Party were the same as that of the Government when the Party was in power.

Hitherto, no detailed study of the subject during the period covered in this study seems to have been made. This study is a modest attempt to fill that gap. There is, however, a doctoral thesis by C.S. Ghosh submitted to the Manchester University in 1963 which covers a part of the period of this project; but that thesis was mainly concerned 'with the intra-party struggle in the British Conservative Party over the Indian Problem between 1927 and 1935'. For about eighteen eventful years covered in this project, with the exception of a brief period, the Conservative Party was in office in the United Kingdom. Hence, the attitude and reactions of the Conservative Party during a large part of this period were in fact the attitudes and reactions of the British Government to India's demand for independence.

The period of study (1930-47) happens to be one of the crucial periods in India's long struggle for independence, and the issues involved in the struggle started crystallising towards the late twenties of the present century. The study starts from the year 1930, for it was in that year that the Indian National Congress took the "Independence Pledge" and started agitating for
'Purna Swaraj' or Complete Independence. The year focussed the attention of the British public, the Press and the parties to the importance of the hitherto neglected problems of India and forced them to watch, and respond to, the rapid changes that were taking place in the mighty Indian Empire. It was just at about the same year that the British Conservative Party began to take an active interest in their Government’s India policy after the Conservative Governor-General’s pronouncement of 31 October 1929 on the ultimate aim of the British policy being the conferment of full Dominion Status on India. The study ends in 1947 soon after the cherished goal of the Indian national movement was achieved with the country’s independence in August of that year, with the approval of the British political parties.

The study is based on primary sources, like Conservative Party meetings’ minutes, private correspondence of Lord Halifax, Lord Zetland, publications of the Party, autobiographies, biographies and memoirs of Conservative and other political leaders relating to India, parliamentary debates and contemporary periodicals and newspapers, and interviews held with some of the political leaders and experts in the field. In addition, a number of printed books and secondary sources have been made use of.

The thesis has been divided into four parts consisting of nine chapters, introduction and conclusions. Each part covers the important events which occurred during a specific period. The first part, consisting of three chapters, covers the period of five years from 1930-1935 and deals with the Conservative Party’s attitude to Indian constitutional reforms. The Round Table Conference, 1930-32, forms the theme of the first chapter. The
White Paper proposals and the Conservative Party's assessment of them in and out of Parliament forms the theme of the second chapter. The discussions, deliberations and approval of the Government of India Bill forms the subject of the third chapter. Part two covering the five-year period from 1935-1940 includes two chapters and deals with the attitude of the British Conservative Government towards constitutional experiments in British India and Conservative attitude to India during the early stages of the war. Part three covers the period from 1940-1945 and has been divided into two chapters. During this period, the British Coalition Government was headed by Winston Churchill and the period covers the critical stages of the Second World War. The fourth and the last part consisting of two chapters deals with the last phase of India's struggle for independence when the Conservative Party was in Opposition after a long interval. The general conclusions are given at the end separately.

A General Note on the Methods Followed

From 1924 onwards the Conservative Party was officially known as the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations. But here it is generally referred to as the Conservative Party. When a name of a person occurs first, it is cited in full but later on only the surname is referred to. A brief biography of the less known individuals mentioned in the thesis is included in Appendix I. References and numbered monographs, where further details are not given refer to publications of the Party. Place of publication of periodicals and newspapers is not mentioned, if they are published in London.
Acknowledgements

A study of this type is not possible without the help of a host of individuals and organizations. I worked under the supervision and guidance of Dr. M.S. Rajan, Professor of Commonwealth Studies and Director, Indian School of International Studies, New Delhi. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude to him, for his advice, patience, and kindness. My thanks are due to Mr. George Chowdharay-Best, who provided me with a useful bibliography on the subject; to Professor Nicholas Mansergh, Smuts Professor of the History of British Commonwealth at Cambridge University, who was at the School on a short assignment as Visiting Professor, and who read the draft of my thesis and offered valuable suggestions; to Dr. Bimla Prasad, Head of the Department of South Asian Studies at the School for his kindly interest and to Mr. A.S. Hebbar, Editor of Publications at the School whose valuable suggestions were of great help to me in finalizing the draft.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Indian School of International Studies, where as a student I was given opportunity to make this study, for providing me with a research grant to visit the United Kingdom; to the University Grants Commission for the Research fellowship; to the Government of Mysore for study-leave benefits for the above period; to the staff of the joint Library of the Indian School of International Studies and the Indian Council of World Affairs for the competent help and assistance received; and to the staff of the Delhi School of Economics Library and the Central Secretariat Library for their assistance.
During my stay abroad, I received help from Professor Kenneth Robinson, Director, The Institute of the Commonwealth Studies; and Dr. Hugh Tinker of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, who were kind enough to permit me to attend the Seminars at their respective institutions. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Mr. R.D. Milne, Secretary, Conservative Overseas Bureau, for his kind and generous help in providing me facilities to consult the Conservative Party literature and for allowing me to see the minutes of the Party annual conferences and the meetings of the Central Council; to Lord Zetland, for his very kind permission to consult his father's (Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India 1935-40) private papers; to Lord Halifax, for his permission to look into the private papers of his father (Lord Halifax, Viceroy and Governor General of India 1926-31) as Lord Irwin. My thanks are also due to the staff of the following Libraries for the help and courtesy received by me: The Librarian of the Conservative Party Research Section; The Librarian and the Staff — specially the staff in charge of the manuscripts section — of the India Office Library, London; the British Museum Reading Room; the British Museum Newspapers Library, Colindale; the Chatham House Press Library; the University of London (Senate House) Library and the Library of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies London. I am grateful to many leaders of the Conservative Party who answered my questions and agreed to meet me and discuss with me the subject of this thesis.

New Delhi