

Whitechapel High Street. A view that must have been familiar to Stalin when he stayed in London

Stalin Came To London

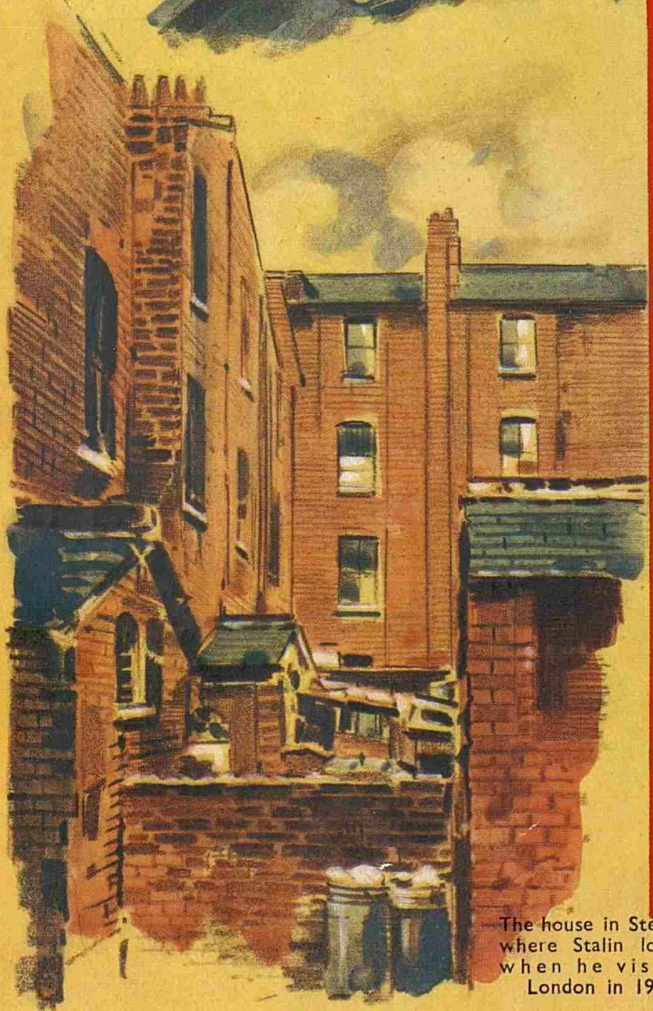
TO the humble Russian couple who looked after him in Stepney for those few weeks of May, 1907, young Mr. Ivanovitch was no doubt a very satisfactory lodger. He was quiet, he spoke their language and he was out most of the day at some conference. They may even have been sorry when he left. But this we can never tell, for the landlord and his wife are unidentified, forgotten, probably dead. However, the world knows quite a lot about Mr. Ivanovitch, though he is more familiar under another name. For the young man who rented the first-floor back in Jubilee Street, Stepney, forty-three years ago was Joseph Stalin.

Yes—Generalissimo Stalin, Father of All the Russias, pictured now as inseparable from the Kremlin, and least travel-minded of all the world's great men, did once come to London. Aged twenty-eight, slimmer than now but with the same characteristic moustache and bushy crop of hair, he was one of the 336 delegates (among whom were Lenin and Trotsky) to the congress of the Russian Social Democratic party which met at the Brotherhood Church in 1907 to discuss Russian revolutionary policies. Reporting later on the conference he wrote of its importance as a victory for Bolshevism (he was a Bolshevik himself) over the more reactionary Menshevik views and as a proletarian defeat of the intellectuals and "liberal spell-binders." But of London, of the people he met and the things he saw, he recorded, as far as is known, nothing.

It was natural enough that Stalin should have stayed in London's Russian quarter, but until a national daily recently made inquiries no one seems to have bothered to find out just where he lodged. Facts now unearthed point to the Stepney rooms of a Russian cobbler at 77 Jubilee Street. The street-corner house still stands, but population shifts fast in a big city and forty-three years is a long time, and only one Londoner has been found who recalls the young Mr. Ivanovitch from Russia. Points that stick in his mind—he was then a lad of thirteen—are the lodger's liking for a special kind of toffee, his careful daily shave in the cobbler's kitchen and his generous tipping.

So much for London's rather inadequate memory of Stalin. What, on the other hand, does Stalin remember of London? Did he see anything of the town beyond Jubilee Street and the Brotherhood Church? Was he too busy talking politics with his comrades, too much at sea in a strange capital, to visit the lights of the West End, the historic (Continued on page 78)

By Guy Livingston



The house in Stepney where Stalin lodged when he visited London in 1907