

TOM MANN (1856-1941)

Trade Unionist, Socialist and Communist

Thomas Mann was born in Foleshill, Warwickshire, a mining district, on 15 April 1856, the son of Thomas and Mary Anne Mann. He began work at the age of 9 on a farm and at the age of 11 he went down the mine. Later he became an engineering apprentice.

Although he had little schooling, he displayed a keen desire for knowledge. His study of economic problems led him to Christian Socialism and trade unionism. He developed a sense of outrage at capitalism and the struggle of the worker's life.

A 6-month prison sentence for sedition in 1912 did not stop him from going on speaking tours afterwards in support of striking workers in Scandinavia, USA and South Africa. He later spent two months in Brixton prison.

He served as General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers 1919-21. A fine public speaker, he addressed conferences and rallies, including a rally of marchers in Trafalgar Square in November 1936.

During the summer of 1935 Tom and his wife Elsie moved into a newly-built semi-detached house at 29 Norfolk Crescent, Sidcup, Kent.

With endless energy even at the age of 80, Mann travelled by ship to Russia. His relentless campaigning ended in November 1939 when he suffered a clot on the brain. He and Elsie were staying at her sister's house, Moorside, Grassington, Yorkshire when he died on 13 March 1941.



In a pamphlet celebrating his 80th birthday, Tom Mann was described as 'one of the world's greatest revolutionaries. A great reformer with wonderful dynamic qualities of mind and emotion... In Tom Mann we honour a great propagandist and trade unionist, always fearless in his advocacy of any cause that appealed to him, never hesitating to be in the forefront; and one who has suffered for his convictions'.