

under the present system by which a strike can be won, when the workers are confronted by capitalists of unlimited wealth and viciousness."¹¹⁸

John Reed, the event's driving force, writes a biographer, "eventually did come to understand that the battle of an industrial union to win recognition was too immense a problem to be solved by a theatrical performance."¹¹⁹ For the moment, however, he simply felt unwell, and it was reported he intended to depart New York in order to convalesce.¹²⁰ On June 19 he boarded a liner for Europe in the company of Mabel Dodge, with whom he was to spend the summer in Florence, Italy. Big Bill Haywood left soon after for Provincetown to recuperate from an ulcer, and then also went on to Europe. The appearance of a hasty exit by both men from the dissatisfying experience of Paterson was perhaps unavoidable, and would be remarked upon by many, including the silk workers now left to their own fate.

THE LABOR WAR AT PATERSON and the pageant had been waged under the full gaze of the big-city press. But there were other workers' battles being fought far from the nation's view, in places where even the most dogged news reporter rarely went in search of a story. One such locale was the remote, underpopulated southeast corner of Colorado, where John D. Rockefeller Jr. operated the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CFI). Before 1913–1914 few if any outsiders let alone journalists came here, no one to notice the extent to which the CFI and several smaller mine owners—Rocky Mountain Fuel, Victor-American Fuel, and Primrose Coal, among others—exerted complete feudal control over the region's coal miners, its communities, and its laws. This sense of a fiefdom-in-isolation had once prompted the WFM's Charles Moyer to ask on the front page of a labor newspaper, "Is Colorado in America?" But the state and its hard-scrabble mining towns were about to lose their long-preserved anonymity.

The United Mine Workers had dispatched organizers in 1913 to offer a "river of friendship" and support for the miners in southeast Colorado, most of whom were recent immigrants.¹²¹ The workers' goals were straightforward—better wages and working conditions, regular payment

of wages, the fair weighing of the coal they dug, and the right to buy dry goods where they chose rather than at the company store. What they and the UMW found frustrating was that the state of Colorado had mine reform laws on the books mandating an eight-hour day, semimonthly wages, and a prohibition against the use of company scrip, rules routinely ignored by the mine owners, who defended the policy of doling out miners' pay as they saw fit as a means of keeping the workers from squandering the money in saloons and brothels. It was this total control exercised by the company over their lives that grated most on the miners and their families. John Reed, who toured the area in 1914, found no sweeping revolutionary dogma at work:

[The strikers] do not want to . . . destroy the wage system; industrial democracy means nothing to them. . . . They had come to America eager for the things that the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor seemed to promise. . . . They wanted to obey the laws. But the first thing they discovered was that the boss, in whom they trusted, insolently broke the laws.¹²²

Rockefeller remained unbending in the attitude that he could ignore the UMW, couching his position as a defense of the open shop. He threatened to shutter the mine operations and "lose all the millions invested" before he would allow "American workmen [to] be deprived of their right, under the Constitution, to work for whom they please."¹²³ The only son of financier John D. Rockefeller, he had taken on the CFI assignment as a matter of family trust, and had never visited the site of the company's Colorado operations. Knowing little about coal mining or labor-management issues, he was completely reliant for guidance on the executives stationed there, President L. M. Bowers and Superintendent E. H. Weizel, both firm antiunion men. Rockefeller's allusion to the U.S. Constitution in the context of CFI was curious, inasmuch as Colorado governor Elias M. Ammons had acknowledged publicly that that revered document was considered not to be in force in CFI's mining domain, as

CFI “owned all [the] houses, schools, saloons, churches and stores; hired all [the] teachers, doctors and ministers; [and] picked all [the] judges, coroners, sheriffs and marshals.”¹²⁴ Corporate control in CFI territory went literally right to the lip of the grave, for the local coroner, who was in the employ of the mine owners, was also the undertaker, and the “coroner’s juries” he convened to examine on-the-job deaths were appointed by the companies. In five years of deadly cave-ins, explosions, and other mine catastrophes, he had in only one instance rendered a verdict casting blame on a mine operator.¹²⁵

As the UMW continued to build a presence in the region, the mining companies reaffirmed their alliance with Rockefeller, who stood by his vow to forfeit his investment in the coal region before he would recognize any miners’ union. There would be no negotiation. The CFI and other employers also began importing crates of rifles, machine guns, and ammunition, and hired company guards, some of whom worked for the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, to intimidate union workers and serve as potential “scab-herders,” guarding any nonunion replacement workers who might be needed in case of a strike. The Baldwin-Felts men, who were infamous back east for antiunion “enforcement,” brought with them a heinous contraption known as “The Death Special,” an armored vehicle able to transport several detectives and customized with a searchlight and a mounted machine gun.¹²⁶ These men, whom a Colorado state inquiry would later term “imported assassins,”¹²⁷ were despised on sight by the workers, and indeed had been savaged in a poem titled “Mine Guard” by the Wobbly writer Ralph Chaplin:

*You psychopathic coward with a gun;
The worms would scorn your carcass in the mud;
A bitch would blush to hail you as a son—
You loathsome outcast, red with fresh-spilled blood.*¹²⁸

The UMW had done some hiring of its own, arranging for several organizers—Louis Tikas, known as “Louis the Greek”; Mike Livoda, of

Eastern European heritage; and an Italian named Gerald Lippiatt—to work with the miners’ various ethnic constituencies. Tikas, who had once operated a coffeehouse in Denver, stood out among the miners for his natural leadership abilities; it was said he’d attended a university in Europe. Many of his Greek fellow-workers had been soldiers in the Greek army in the First Balkan War, and were recognized for their martial background and familiarity with weapons and military tactics.¹²⁹

Blood was first spilled on August 16, 1913, when Gerald Lippiatt was slain by Baldwin-Felts detectives in a shoot-out in the town of Trinidad. Enraged miners retaliated by assassinating George Belcher, a Baldwin-Felts man suspected in the Lippiatt murder, and Bob Lee, an arrogant mine guard who claimed to have ridden with the outlaws Frank and Jesse James.

The miners had set a September 23 deadline to receive the companies’ response to their demands, and when no word from CFI was forthcoming, they gathered in the Trinidad Opera House for a prestrike rally. Mother Jones, “The Miners’ Angel,” was there, her tiny gray head adorned as ever by a small bonnet with a flower attached. “For God’s sake, strike—strike until you win,”¹³⁰ she told the assembly. “Don’t be afraid, boys; fear is the greatest curse we have. I was never anywhere yet that I feared anybody. I would rather be shot fighting for you than live in any palace in America.”¹³¹ Eleven thousand miners soon walked off the job, but as they and their families resided in company housing, they were immediately evicted and took up residence in a dozen tent colonies provided by the UMW on land the union had purchased, the colonies situated so that the strikers could keep an eye on the roads by which scabs might be brought in. The largest was near the village of Ludlow and held about thirteen hundred men, women, and children in rows of white canvas tents, which residents dubbed “The White City,” an allusion to the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893.¹³² Harassment from the mine guards and Baldwin-Felts agents began almost at once, the guards scanning the tent colonies at night with powerful searchlights and occasionally shooting machine-gun bursts into the air.

Governor Ammons initially ignored the coal companies' request for the Colorado National Guard; it was expensive for the state to maintain the Guard in the field, and Ammons owed his election in part to the backing of organized labor. But by late October he bowed to the wishes of the mine owners.¹³³ At first the twelve hundred arriving militiamen were greeted warmly by the strikers, who assumed the militia would offer protection from the hated mine guards. The strikers challenged the soldiers to a game of baseball, and later organized a dance for the visitors. But the mine owners grew impatient with such camaraderie; they wanted the troops' presence to discomfort the strikers and nudge them back to work. Because they had begun subsidizing the upkeep of the militia, the owners were in a position to urge Ammons to order the soldiers to assist the company guards in protecting scabs, a move certain to alienate the miners.¹³⁴

The soldiers' actions on behalf of the scabs did prove infuriating, and as Reed reported, "the attitude of the militia [toward the tent colonists] suddenly changed." Militia incursions into the colonies began on the pretext of finding guns; in some instances soldiers beat or arrested uncooperative strikers; one old miner was so roughly handled he was unable to walk back to his tent and instead had to crawl on his hands and knees. The only encouraging sign was that some of the scabs rebelled, claiming to have been lured to Colorado under false pretenses. These mutineers quietly took leave of their compound at night to seek refuge in the miners' tent colonies.¹³⁵

Mother Jones, meanwhile, was beginning to grate on the nerves of Governor Ammons. In an age when reformers were commonly maligned as "agitators," the octogenarian Jones wore the title proudly. In a West Virginia strike the year before, she had mobilized miners' wives to join her with "mops, brooms, and dishpans" to chase after scabs, and had driven mine owners to distraction with her small army of "wild women." She firmly believed the rightful place for strikers' wives was at the barricades. Greedy capitalists created "ladies," Jones liked to say, "but God Almighty made women."¹³⁶ During a streetcar strike in New York City, she'd once so thoroughly roused a female audience that the women, upon exiting the

hall, attacked the first "scab" streetcar to come by, smashing its windows, assaulting the crew, and fighting with arresting police.

Ammons moved to ban Jones from the southeast part of the state, although she made several attempts to defy his edict and was eventually jailed—first in the convent-run San Rafael Hospital outside Trinidad, later in a courthouse cellar. "The soldiers have the bayonets," Jones complained, "and I have nothing but the Constitution."¹³⁷ On January 22, 1914, Brigadier General John Chase of the Colorado militia was the antagonist in the so-called Mother Jones Riot, which broke out in the town when Chase's mounted troops confronted two hundred miners' wives who were marching to support the imprisoned Jones. At one point Chase lost his grip on his horse's pommel and fell to the ground; believing the women were laughing at him, he quickly remounted and in a rage ordered, "Ride them down! Ride them down!" The troops surged their horses forward and, amid screams of protest, attacked the fleeing women, prodding them with their sabers and bringing numerous complaints of injury, including a victim who claimed a part of her ear had been severed.¹³⁸

BY SPRING 1914 THE STRIKE WAS more than half a year old, and the ranks of the National Guard, due to state budget constraints, were drawn down to two hundred men. Meanwhile the militia's leaders heard rumors that more guns were coming into the miners' possession, and became newly vigilant. On the morning of April 20 a woman informed the troops that her husband was being held in the Ludlow tent colony against his will. The task of confronting the strikers over the woman's husband—and possibly the secret stockpiling of guns—fell to two National Guard officers, Major Patrick C. Hamrock, a Denver saloon keeper and former Indian fighter; and Lieutenant Karl E. Linderfelt, who called the miners "wops" and had a reputation as a petty tyrant even among his own troops. Linderfelt had once struck a miner's young son who had failed to respond to an order, screeching, "I am Jesus Christ, and all these men on horses are Jesus Christ, and we have got to be obeyed."¹³⁹

Linderfelt and Hamrock sent word to the Ludlow colony that the missing man would have to be turned over, but when soldiers entered the colony Louis Tikas assured them he was not there. They warned Tikas that if the miners didn't produce him soon, they would return in greater numbers and search more thoroughly. A short time later Major Hamrock contacted Tikas by telephone and ordered him to appear at the militia's camp. Tikas suggested they meet halfway, at a small rail depot, which was agreeable to Hamrock. There Tikas spoke with Hamrock and Linderfelt. It was a few minutes before ten o'clock.

As the group was talking, gunfire was heard from the direction of the colony, followed by a loud explosion. It has never been entirely clear what happened; either some of the miners were positioning themselves in anticipation of an attack, and the soldiers perceived their movements as aggressive, or the soldiers simply opened fire. Tikas immediately raced back to the colony, waving a white handkerchief as he urged men to return to their tents, while Hamrock telephoned his headquarters, saying, "Put the baby in the buggy and bring it along," an order to move a machine gun onto the firing line.¹⁴⁰ The shooting, once commenced, proved difficult to halt. The Guard, holding the high ground at a place called Water Tank Hill, forced the miners to retreat; the troops then descended among the tents, looting their contents and setting many afire. The miners had dug pits beneath some as hiding places, and in one, eleven women and children were discovered, dead from smoke inhalation. A total of twenty-two people died in the assault.

Tikas, taken captive, was brought again before Lieutenant Linderfelt. They argued over whose actions had triggered the day's bloodshed and Linderfelt, in a rage, struck Tikas over the head with the stock of his rifle, opening a vicious wound. Linderfelt later testified that Tikas "called me a name any man with red blood in his veins will not stand."¹⁴¹ The lieutenant then left him in the custody of a militia sergeant and several soldiers. According to the militiamen, Tikas and another prisoner named James Fyler tried to escape, prompting them to open fire, killing both. The soldiers bent over Tikas's corpse and shook its hand, mockingly "wishing

him well in the next world." An autopsy revealed that Tikas's "scalp had been laid open by a blunt instrument" (the blow from Linderfelt) and that he'd been shot three times in the back.¹⁴²

News of a massacre—the multiple deaths of innocent women and children in the Ludlow tent colony as well as the assassination of Louis Tikas—rippled through the nation's headlines. UMW president John P. White was livid. "The State of Colorado," he said, "has spent nearly a million dollars to aid the coal companies to drive the miners back to the mines and a vacillating governor has directed the use of the militia in such a manner and way as to bring discredit and disgrace upon the state. Scores of men, women and children have been murdered."¹⁴³ Even the conservative press was stunned, the *Denver Express* mourning the "mothers and babies crucified on the cross of human liberty" as "a burnt offering laid on the altar of Rockefeller's Great God Greed."¹⁴⁴

The Colorado Senate also reeled over the affair, its Progressive members blaming the coal operators who had waved away possible arbitration, the governor for taking money from the coal corporations for support of the militia, and the militia itself for being trigger-happy. State Senator W. C. Robinson offered a resolution finding Governor Ammons "incompetent to run the state government" and urging his immediate resignation. In a speech supporting his resolution he referred to Ammons as "The Great Squaw Catcher" for detaining Mother Jones, and suggested he take the name as his formal title upon leaving office.¹⁴⁵ The Colorado Women's Peace League, a group of Denver society women who sent a committee to view the carnage at Ludlow, insisted to Ammons that "Rockefeller gunmen and thugs" be "purged" at once from the militia and demanded the state take over the operation of the mines until a labor agreement could be obtained.¹⁴⁶ The *Socialist Appeal to Reason* lampooned Rockefeller and his famous family's supposed devotion to Christian ideals and institutions:

... as long as he has the cash to spend, it's easy the people to fool,
As long as he builds a cottage or two and teaches Sunday School.

*The toadies fawn, and the lickspittles kneel,
He's worshipped by all the freaks,
While the bodies of little children are burned 'neath Colorado's peaks.
And this skulking, sanctimonious ass, this breeder of crime and hate,
With the greed of a jackal and a heart of brass,
Whines, "Nothing to arbitrate."*¹⁴⁷

John Reed and Max Eastman traveled to Ludlow shortly after the massacre, toured the devastated tent colony, and moved on to observe the shooting war that had erupted between miners and militia. A published "call to arms" had gone out, a message of vengeance for the Ludlow deaths, urging striking miners "to protect the people of Colorado against the murder and cremation of men, women, and children by armed assassins employed by the coal corporations."¹⁴⁸ For days, gunfire echoed in the hills and canyons surrounding remote mining villages around Ludlow. Along a 250-mile front, three thousand miners were under arms. They were soon joined by others. Passions were so heated and the impact of the strike on local commerce so extensive that after the burning of the Ludlow colony all manner of men—teachers, bankers, drivers—sought weapons and took to the hills, creating "one of the nearest approaches to civil war and revolution ever known in this country in connection with an industrial conflict."¹⁴⁹ Several mines were destroyed and seventy-five people perished during ten days of fighting. No doubt the only thing that kept the actual dimensions of this bitter struggle largely from public view (and memory) is that it occurred in such an out-of-the-way place.

Governor Ammons vowed that his militia would put down the insurrection; however, the Colorado Women's Peace League had other ideas. Leading a march by a thousand Denver women on the state capitol, they took up positions inside the building and vowed not to move until the governor alerted the White House. President Woodrow Wilson had followed news of the strike since the previous fall, when he had judged that "the situation was unraveling because the operators [had] tried to force tenth-century despotism onto a twentieth-century industrial situation."

He had urged the owners to accept the involvement of outside mediators.¹⁵⁰ Now he hesitated to send federal troops to Colorado, wanting the state to resolve the crisis on its own; but the descriptions of the deaths at Ludlow and the advocacy of the Women's Peace League had combined to force his hand, and he ordered seventeen hundred soldiers into the state. Concerned that Ammons was not taking seriously the responsibility to restore order, the president warned that "my constitutional obligations with regard to the maintenance of order in Colorado are not to be indefinitely continued by the inaction of the state legislature."¹⁵¹

Despite a coroner's inquiry, a National Guard commission hearing, and a court-martial concerning the tent killings of the miners' families and the murder of Louis Tikas, no one was ever successfully prosecuted for any of the violence at Ludlow. That the inquiries produced this result may have partly had to do with the fact that not a single striker's testimony was heard in the latter two venues, their representatives having refused to take part in the proceedings because they were not open to the public. The most damning evidence at the coroner's hearing came from a Colorado & Southern Railroad train crew, which witnessed the militiamen torching the miners' tents and firing at a group of women and children who were attempting to use the passing train as cover so they could escape the militia assault. At the court-martial, Guard officers who testified offered a number of reasons for the attack on the colony and the deadly conflagration, all difficult to prove or disprove—that they had been responding to shooting by miners; that a strong wind had caused the tents to catch fire; that some soldiers had acted excessively, but only after finding a fallen comrade whose body had been mutilated by the strikers. A Guard corporal named Mills, implicated in the killing of Louis Tikas, did not appear at the hearing because he was said to have fled to Mexico, fearful that Tikas's friends were looking to even the score; Lieutenant Linderfelt also complained to the court that he was a hunted man. Although neither Major Hamrock, who was allowed to sit at the defendants' table wearing his six-shooter, nor Linderfelt was punished, the tribunal concluded that Hamrock had erred in ordering a machine

gun used against the strikers' colony, that it had been soldiers who had set the tents on fire, and that Lieutenant Linderfelt had failed to keep them from doing so. The court also adjudged him guilty of striking Tikas over the head with a rifle, but elected to attach no criminal motive to it.¹⁵²

THE SUFFERING OF THE Ludlow families resonated that spring in distant New York City, where there was labor agitation of a different kind. An estimated three hundred thousand jobless men had taken to roaming the streets, standing for hours on breadlines or besieging relief agencies and church missions. Labor reformers had embraced the crisis, waging a kind of low-scale guerrilla war on behalf of those out of work. When city and charitable efforts proved inadequate, this Revolt of the Unemployed, as it was named, invaded the sanctuary of churches and synagogues while services were under way, desperately seeking to make their plight known. "I asked for permission to go into the church with the boys and the priest would not give me that permission," Frank Tannenbaum, a youthful leader of the revolt, later testified. "I then asked for food which was refused, and then for money which was also refused. Then I said to the priest, 'So this is your Christian gospel?' And he said, 'Never mind about that. I will not allow you to talk to me in that way.'"¹⁵³

The city's newspapers uniformly denounced those who would interrupt a place of worship, but Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman's magazine *Mother Earth* roundly applauded such activism; what could be more fitting than that the "well-fed, pharisaical clergymen and their smug, self-righteous congregations [be] rudely awakened from their fatuous dreams of seventeenth century theology by hordes of angry men demanding food and shelter." When the churches hired guards to keep the masses away, the "ragged, starving men" bearing "the Black Flag of Hunger" invaded the city's better neighborhoods, reported *Mother Earth*, home to "the world's industrial potentates."¹⁵⁴

The police grew frustrated by their inability to defeat the roving bands and, when they did manage to corner the wanderers, fell on them with vicious glee, clubbing and sometimes arresting the vagrants. A visit by Lincoln Steffens to police headquarters helped end the worst forms of

brutality, although the authorities threw the book at Tannenbaum, the young idealist, a court convicting him of inciting to riot and sending him to Blackwell's Island for a year, as well as fining him \$500. "There is no instance in the world's history where the efforts of the slave class to free themselves have been considered legal," Tannenbaum assured the judge in a final statement. "I belong to the slave class."¹⁵⁵ Goldman and Berkman tried to carry on in Tannenbaum's absence, on March 21 leading protestors from Union Square in a march uptown that produced the headlines "Emma Goldman Tells Mob to Storm Churches and Shops," "Reds Go up Fifth Avenue Cursing the Rich," and "Marchers Drive All Well-Dressed Persons to Seek Refuge in Doorways."¹⁵⁶

Soon local resentment came to fix on the news of the Ludlow Massacre and the apparent indifference of the man responsible, New York's own John D. Rockefeller Jr. In protests coordinated by muckraker Upton Sinclair, Rockefeller's offices at 26 Broadway were picketed by demonstrators wearing black armbands in memory of the tent colony victims. The irrepressible Sinclair also helped engineer a cross-country fund-raising and consciousness-raising tour led by a prominent Denver Progressive, Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey, featuring women and children survivors of the Ludlow disaster. Judge Lindsey was no friend to the Colorado coal operators—he had recently published data showing that between 1910 and 1913, 622 children had been left fatherless by coal mining accidents in the state—nor did the hometown Denver press look approvingly on his national mission to publicize the horrors of Ludlow. In retaliation it began trafficking in rumors that his eastbound delegation was in fact an avant garde sexual caravan in which the lecherous judge took advantage of the now-husbandless Ludlow widows.¹⁵⁷ Of course the reality could not have been more different; one of the women, Mary Petrucci, who had lost three of her children in the blaze, had been turned mute by the tragedy and, utterly inconsolable, seemed to scarcely know where she was.¹⁵⁸ The Lindsey group reached Washington and was welcomed at the White House by President Wilson, who held one of the surviving Ludlow babies in his arms as he listened to the victims' accounts.

In New York, meanwhile, students from the Socialist Rand School

decided to use one of the tactics from the "Revolt of the Unemployed," and crashed the services at Rockefeller's church, Calvary Baptist on West Fifty-seventh Street. Rockefeller and his family were not in the congregation that day, but a young man named Charles Morrison confronted the pastor, the Reverend Cornelius Woelfkin, to demand to know if "as a preacher and of the word of God, do you think that Jesus would uphold John D. Rockefeller in his attitude toward the Colorado strikers?" Morrison asked the question four times without receiving a response from the clergyman, who turned and walked away as Morrison was escorted forcibly from the building. The Reverend Woelfkin shared with a reporter his belief that "it is only these people who have no responsibility who go about making trouble. If these people had some responsibility we would hear very little from them."¹⁵⁹

Rockefeller, it appeared, had slipped out of Manhattan to his country estate at Tarrytown. The protestors followed, and in the quaint little Hudson River community just north of New York City they contended for the right to make speeches denouncing the coal baron in the village square. Rockefeller himself was said to be confined indoors, having caught cold playing golf in the rain. Upton Sinclair arrived, demanding that local officials allow a public meeting where the Colorado situation could be discussed, but a permit for such a gathering was refused. On May 30 a dozen protestors returned to Tarrytown and, not bothering to seek official approval, initiated a series of speeches in the square. They were arrested, charged with blocking traffic, disorderly conduct, and endangering the public health. The next day Alexander Berkman led another group from the city to make speeches in Tarrytown, and all were likewise taken into custody. That very night twenty more speakers arrived and were promptly detained; many complained of rude treatment by the village police, whose ranks had been augmented by detectives from Rockefeller's private security forces and members of a local patriots' group.¹⁶⁰

Nursing his cold, looking out from the broad windows of his estate, Rockefeller surely recognized that the situation was untenable. The Colo-

rado fiasco—or "Rockefeller's War," as some insisted on calling it—was having a dreadful impact on his and his family's reputation, as well as their personal safety. Congress's inquiry into the situation had concluded that Rockefeller had been negligent and arrogant about the management of labor relations for refusing to meet with the miners and rejecting outside proposals of mediation. "The statement that a man or company of men who put their money in a business have a right to operate it as they see fit, without regard to the public interest, belongs to days long since passed away," the congressional report asserted. "Every individual who invests his capital . . . is entitled to the protection of the law . . . but he owes something to society."¹⁶¹

Rockefeller, to his credit, was by now questioning his long-standing faith in the guidance of the western managers of the CFI, and to doubt their consistent claims that all the violence during the strike had been caused by the miners. His reaction was twofold; he hired Canadian industrial reformer Mackenzie King, who had been that country's deputy minister of labor, to head up a fact-finding inquiry into the Colorado situation, and also launched a public relations effort to counter the negative publicity he was receiving. In one inadvertently revealing action, the Rockefeller forces formally announced that CFI was now prepared to concede certain improvements to the Colorado miners, only to learn that many of these "privileges" were already the law in Colorado, that they had long been stifled by the company, and that their denial had been among the strikers' major grievances. Ivy L. Lee, a former spokesman for the Pennsylvania Railroad whom Rockefeller hired as a publicist, began editing weekly reports from the Colorado coal operators and publishing them as *Facts Concerning the Struggle in Colorado for Industrial Freedom*. Lee's tracts praised the militia, rehashed unflattering rumors about Mother Jones, noted how many miners had remained loyal to the operators, and editorialized against the "bloodthirsty agitators" who had fomented all the trouble in the first place. So extensive were Lee's distortions that the radical press dubbed him "Poison Ivy."

Rockefeller had better luck satisfying his critics when, after the strike

was formally terminated by the UMW in December 1914, he fired the CFI managerial personnel he now suspected of having fed him inaccurate and biased information about the strike, and personally visited the Colorado coal region. There he mingled with miners and their families, descended into the mines, inspected living quarters and schools, gave impromptu talks, and vowed to henceforth give his workers' needs a greater share of his attention. According to reports Rockefeller's personal charm and diplomacy did have a favorable impact on those he met, suggesting that all along it was his style of "absentee capitalism" that was part of the problem. With the assistance of King, he drew up a Colorado Industrial Plan, also known as "The Rockefeller Plan," that aimed to correct many of the underlying issues of feudalistic paternalism that had brought on the difficulties of 1913–1914, although one aspect, a company union, which Sam Gompers dismissed as "a pseudo union," failed predictably to impress labor and government observers.¹⁶²

However much Rockefeller wished to deter outsiders from linking the Ludlow disaster to his personal or family life, his Tarrytown abode was thrust back into the news on July 4, when a bomb believed to be meant for the mansion detonated prematurely at an anarchist bomb factory in New York City. All three men killed in the explosion at an East Side tenement—Arthur Caron, Charles Berg, and Carl Hanson—were anarchists who had been involved in the free speech effort at Tarrytown. "So great was the force of the explosion," it was reported, "that articles of furniture were blown hundreds of feet into the air, some of the wreckage landing on the tops of houses more than a block away."¹⁶³

Alexander Berkman was greatly moved by the incident. Like him, Caron, Berg, and Hanson had embarked on a noble *attentat* to exact revenge upon a living monster of greed and capital, and, like him, had been unable to realize their objective. Under the circumstances Berkman could do little but transfer his concern over Ludlow and his grief to the pages of *Mother Earth*, where he produced an issue largely dedicated to the Colorado troubles; it reprinted several speeches from a well-attended Union Square memorial gathering that had been held for the bomb fac-

tory victims, where a consoling banner near the speakers' stand had proclaimed, *THOSE WHO DIE FOR A CAUSE NEVER DIE—THEIR SPIRIT WALKS ABROAD.*¹⁶⁴

IF THERE EVER WAS A MAN remembered for having lived and died for a cause, it was the Wobbly songwriter who went by the name Joe Hill, perhaps the most beloved and celebrated labor movement martyr of all. The final chapter of his life—his 1914 murder trial and the worldwide crusade to stay his execution—took place during the intense phase of the American labor struggle that coincided with Lawrence, Paterson, Ludlow, and the coming of the First World War. Hill's story is thus something of a coda to the early romantic phase of the IWW, which may explain why his martyrdom has long been embraced as among the purest and most meaningful.

A merchant marine and itinerant laborer who came to the United States from Sweden in 1901, Hill (whose original name was Joel Häggland) was a self-taught writer and musician who scribbled his impressions of the country's labor struggle as he traveled the West in the first decade of the century. He worked in a rope factory, shoveled coal, and served as a common seaman. In 1910 he joined the IWW, participated in the Fresno and San Diego free speech campaigns, at least once apparently getting knocked around by cops and vigilantes, and spent thirty days in jail in San Pedro, California, on a "vagrancy" charge after serving on a dockworkers' strike committee. He became a prolific writer of labor songs such as "Workers of the World, Awaken," "There Is Power in a Union," "Union Maid," and "The Preacher and the Slave," by taking well-known tunes and setting new words to them, the idea being that immigrant workers would be more likely to sing along if the tune was familiar. Hill's songs were printed frequently in IWW publications, bringing him a degree of renown, his words always emphasizing the tremendous confidence that buoyed the labor struggle. "If the workers took a notion, they could stop all speeding trains," Hill sang, "every ship upon the ocean, they can tie with mighty chains."¹⁶⁵ "There Is Power in a

Union,” one of Hill’s best-remembered efforts, was set to a church hymn and admonished workers:

*There is pow’r, there is pow’r
In a band of workingmen.
When they stand, hand in hand.
That’s a pow’r, that’s a pow’r
That must rule in every land—
One Industrial Union Grand.*

For “Workers of the World Awaken,” he provided both original words and music:

*Workers of the world, awaken!
Break your chains, demand your rights.
All the wealth you make is taken
By exploiting parasites.
Shall you kneel in deep submission
From your cradles to your graves?
Is the height of your ambition
To be good and willing slaves?¹⁶⁶*

Joe Hill might have remained one of many respected “hobo folk composers” attached to the IWW, such as Ralph Chaplin and Richard Brazier, had not his life been altered fatefully on January 10, 1914, in Salt Lake City. A butcher named John G. Morrison, a former policeman, and his seventeen-year-old son, Arling, were shot dead in what at first appeared to be a botched robbery. The sole witness was another son, Merlin, thirteen, who claimed the killers had shouted at his father, “We’ve got you now!”—suggesting the shooting was an act of retribution by criminals against Morrison; no money or goods were taken in the crime, nor was a murder weapon found. Arling, however, had managed to return fire, hitting one of the holdup men before he himself was mortally wounded.

Later that night Joe Hill went to a hospital seeking treatment for a gunshot wound. He told police he had been shot in a quarrel over a woman whose name, as a matter of honor, he would not reveal, and proceeded to make his situation more precarious by initially refusing legal counsel.

Given the paucity of evidence, he might under ordinary circumstances have gone free. There was no discernible motive to be ascribed to Hill and the prosecution was technically unable to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. But the atmosphere surrounding the trial was biased against an itinerant workman who belonged to the IWW in a case in which a former lawman and his son had been slaughtered. The legal burden wrongly shifted to whether Hill could prove his innocence, which in court he appeared unable or unwilling to do. He did, however, protest in a letter to the *Salt Lake City Telegram*:

I never killed Morrison and do not know a thing about it. He was, as the records plainly show, killed by some enemy for the sake of revenge, and I have not been in this city long enough to make an enemy. Shortly before my arrest I came down from Park City, where I was working in the mines. Owing to the prominence of Mr. Morrison, there had to be a “goat,” and the undersigned being, as they thought, a friendless tramp, a Swede, and, worst of all, an IWW, had no right to live anyway.¹⁶⁷

Although Hill was pilloried at trial for being a Wobbly, he tried to keep the IWW out of the case, insisting the accusation against him did not involve the organization; he even attempted (unsuccessfully) to dissuade the IWW from raising funds or depleting its treasury in his behalf. Once he was convicted and sentenced to death by firing squad, his plight came to wider attention, prompting a crusade for clemency or a pardon. Letters and petitions flooded into the office of Utah governor William Spry, with influential people including Samuel Gompers and the Swedish ambassador to the United States asking that Hill’s case be given further review. Hill himself wrote an article for *Appeal to Reason* professing his

innocence¹⁶⁸; however, he remained mute about the details of the alleged crime, even when given a last chance to reveal the truth before a specially convened Board of Pardons. He explained to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, with whom he corresponded throughout the ordeal:

I have no desire to be one of them what-ye-call-em martyrs. On the square I'll tell you that all this notoriety stuff is making me dizzy in the head and I am afraid I'm getting more glory than I really am entitled to. I put in most of the later years among the wharf rats on the Pacific coast and I am not there with the limelight stuff at all.¹⁶⁹

As the date of his execution neared, Flynn appealed directly to President Wilson, who, at the additional urging of the AFL, telegraphed to Governor Spry requesting another look at Hill's case and a stay of the death sentence. Wilson in fact attempted twice to convince Spry to halt the execution. But time had run out, and Joe Hill went before a firing squad on November 19, 1915. In one of his last letters he told Big Bill Haywood, "Good-bye, Bill. I will die like a true blue rebel. Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize!" His only request was that his body be removed from the state of Utah before it was cremated. Hill's final words—"Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize!"—became a popular IWW slogan, one frequently invoked by Wobblies headed for incarceration.

★ CHAPTER SEVEN ★

DYNAMITE

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE IWW BELIEVED that wars were waged for the benefit of monarchies, dying nations, and captains of industry, and turned workers against one another. The real struggle, in their view, remained the one they and millions of other "brothers and sisters of toil" fought every day—the war between labor and capital. Thus, when war overcame Europe in 1914, the Wobblies rejected talk of American involvement, Big Bill Haywood reminding members, "It is better to be a traitor to your country, than a traitor to your class."¹ Addressing a workers' rally from the stage of Carnegie Hall, he threatened to lead a general strike if the United States allowed itself to be lured into the conflict.²

When America did enter the war in April 1917, however, nine out of ten draft-eligible Wobblies registered with the Selective Service, and most of those called to arms reported for duty, more or less on par with members of the AFL, which had remained loyal to the government's foreign policy. Given the great popular support for the war, Big Bill also found it wise to adjust his position, cautioning IWW locals against