

**Document 4: Labor Organizer and Activist Mary Harris “Mother” Jones on the 1914 miners’ strike against the Rockefeller holdings in Southern Colorado\***

The miners armed, armed as it is permitted every American citizen to do in defense of his home, his family; as he is permitted to do against invasion. The smoke of armed battle rose from the arroyos and ravines of the Rocky Mountains.

No one listened. No one cared. The tickers in the offices of 26 Broadway sounded louder than the sobs of women and children. Men in the steam heated luxury of Broadway offices could not feel the stinging cold of Colorado hillsides where families lived in tents.

Then came Ludlow and the nation heard. Little children roasted alive make a front page story. Dying by inches of starvation and exposure does not.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 1914, machine guns...were placed in position above the ten colony of Ludlow. Major Pat Hamrock and Lieutenant K. E. Linderfelt were in charge of the militia, the majority of whom were company gunmen sworn in as soldiers.

Early in the morning soldiers approached the colony with a demand from headquarters that Louis Tikas, leader of the Greeks, surrender two Italians. Tikas demanded a warrant for their arrest. They had none. Tikas refused to surrender them. The soldiers returned to headquarters. A signal bomb was fired. Then another. Immediately the machine guns began spraying the flimsy tent colony, the only home the wretched families of the miners had, spraying it with bullets. Like iron rain, bullets fell upon men, women and children.

The women and children fled to the hills. Other tarried. The men defended their homes with their guns. All day long the firing continued. Men fell dead, their faces to the ground. Women dropped. The little Snyder boy was shot through the head, trying to save his kitten. A child carrying water to his dying mother was killed.

By five o’clock in the afternoon, the miners had no more food, nor water, nor ammunition. They had to retreat with their wives and little ones into the hills. Louis Tikas was riddled with shots while he tried to lead women and children to safety. They perished with him.

Night came. A raw wind blew down the canyons where men, women and children shivered and wept. Then a blaze lighted the sky. The soldiers, drunk with blood and with the liquor they had looted from the saloon, set fire to the tents of Ludlow with oil-soaked torches. The tents, all the poor furnishings, the clothes and bedding of the miners’ families burned. Coils of barbed wire were stuffed into the well, the miners’ only water supply.

After it was over, the wretched people crept back to bury their dead. In a dugout under a burned tent, the charred bodies of eleven little children and two women were found – unrecognizable. Everything lay in ruins. The wires of bed springs writhed on the ground as if they, too, had tried to flee the horror. Oil and fire and guns had robbed men and women and children of their homes and slaughtered tiny babies and defenseless women. Done by order of Lieutenant Linderfelt, a savage, brutal executor of the will of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company.

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\* From: *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*, Chicago, 1997, pp. 191-193.