The Last Page

We reproduce here the original manuscript of a poem by Raphael Lemkin.

Thoughts in Rhyme

Part I

Genocide:

They came to you to kill,  
Not for murder’s thrill,  
But to fulfill  
Their history’s call  
For power over all  
Nations by one.  
Your only blame  
Is in your name;  
For race and creed  
Shall perish your seed.  
Pushed into a cattle car,  
On your face a scar  
From policeman’s boot,  
You will look with pain,  
To see never again  
Your family exposed  
To torture and loot.  
Work you once have done  
To feed your wife and son,  
To fill with pride your life,  
To harden you for strife,  
Will now cut your breath  
And accelerate your death.  
The smoke of your dearer bodies  
Will fly high  
Into the sky.  
Removed are the tombstones;  
Dogs and hogs  
Chew your forefathers’ bones.  
In your empty house  
An orphaned cat,  
Your child’s pet  
From the bed,  
Alone will wane:  
Silent will stand your piano,  
Waiting for your sopranos,  
And be it now understood,  
Your violins are no more than wood.  
A book with your name  
Will perish in flame,  
In the school you once taught,  
An admiring pupil will be caught  
For praising your name,  
And this is your epitaph:  
Your orphans will never laugh.  
In distant lands  
Mailman’s empty hands  
Will greet your kin,  
Tears down his chin.  
This was once God’s city,  
A dimeter too big for pity.