

maintained at five percent of the total population, all of which could help revitalize small towns and local industries. "No area of national policy," he argues, "has the same kind of power for good or ill as does farm policy."

THE USES OF ADVERSITY: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe. By Timothy Garton Ash. Random House. 335 pp. \$19.95

It would seem foolhardy to publish a book about Central Europe at a time when daily newspaper articles about the region often prove outdated by the time they hit the streets. These 16 essays by the London *Spectator's* foreign editor originally appeared in *The New York Review of Books*, *Granta*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and the author's own publication; they date from the winter of 1983 to the summer of 1989. Yet there is little that is stale about them. They are saved, in almost every case, by Garton Ash's historical intelligence, his acute readings of cultural politics, and his deft portraits of key political players, many of whom (particularly those on the Polish scene) he knows first hand. The *New York Review* essays even entered directly into the political dialogue that helped shape the new Poland and the new Hungary: Hastily translated, they enabled reformers there to see events in their own country within the larger context of a collapsing Soviet Empire. The tempo of "refolution"—Garton Ash's neologism for the revolutionary reforms we are witnessing in Budapest, Warsaw, Prague, and East Berlin—has accelerated dramatically since last summer. But this collection will endure because it depicts so exactly, and often presciently, the region on the brink of its most dramatic political transformation since the early years of the Cold War. While clearly enthusiastic about the prospect of a reinvigorated, democratized Central Europe, Garton Ash remains soberly realistic about the dangers that lie ahead for an area with so troubled a past: "Can Central Europe be put together again . . . at the very point where it has most often, most horribly, and (from the point of view of neighboring empires) most successfully been divided—at the point where different nations, races, cultures, religions try (or fail) to coexist?"

Arts & Letters

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: Speeches and Writings. Edited by Don E. Fehrenbacher. Two volumes. Library of America. 898 pp.; 787 pp. \$35 each

Abraham Lincoln is only the second American president—after Thomas Jefferson—to be "canonized" by inclusion in the Library of America's collection of "America's greatest writers." Does this mean that Lincoln, in addition to being a great president, should be reckoned among our great literary stylists?

Here are close to 1,700 pages of speeches, letters, messages, and even a few poems by which to arrive at a judgement. Certainly Lincoln's status as a stylist and writer was harder earned than Jefferson's. In his 1860 campaign autobiography, Lincoln reports that he never entered a college or "accademy" [sic] until he became a lawyer. "What he has in the way of education," Lincoln (a genius of understatement) writes of himself, "he has picked up." Yet, for all his homespun, unassuming airs, he made himself into a person of genuine culture: He attended the theater and the opera regularly, and he read widely. "Some of Shakespeare's plays," he said, "I have gone over perhaps as frequently as any unprofessional reader"—a literary training that few politicians, or non-politicians, can better.

At his best, Lincoln enters the company of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson; like them, he is a biblical prophet who has learned to use the American vernacular. The Civil War made Lincoln a stylist, because his biblical cadences were inspired by what was to him a *holy* war: "He [God] gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence [slavery] came." Lincoln's most remembered passages—"Four score and seven years ago" (from the Gettysburg Address) and "With malice toward none, with charity for all" (from the Second Inaugural)—are religious, not political, rhetoric.

