

INTRODUCTION

THIS VOLUME FINDS Booker T. Washington at the height of his powers as an interracial diplomat and black spokesman. It also marks, on the other hand, the expression of outspoken criticism of him by leading black intellectuals that would continue until long after his death.

There had been criticisms earlier of Washington's compromise with southern white segregationists, but these went unheard in the general praise and sponsorship of the Tuskegean. At the meeting of the Afro-American Council in Louisville in the summer of 1903, the critics led by the Boston editor William Monroe Trotter failed to get a hearing from the pro-Washington majority. A month later when Washington spoke in a Boston church, in the camp of the opposition, Trotter led an effort to disrupt the meeting. While it did not succeed in stopping Washington from speaking, it was sufficiently disorderly to be headlined the next day as "the Boston Riot" and to earn Trotter a thirty-day jail sentence.

Washington believed the attacks on him were personal and motivated by jealousy, and Trotter's actions seemed to confirm his view. There was, however, growing dissent on intellectual grounds, a conviction that Washington's philosophy and leadership pointed in the wrong direction. In the spring of 1903, in a collection of essays entitled *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois, the leading black intellectual of the period, criticized Washington's unsympathetic attitude toward higher education and the higher aspirations of the race, and the compromises dictated by Washington's need for support from southern white leaders and northern millionaires. Du Bois couched his criticisms in polite language, but after the Boston Riot the vindictiveness of Washington and his lieu-