

INTRODUCTION

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON always gave the impression of being on top of events and of controlling the course of Afro-American affairs because of his quick pragmatic response to changing situations. The major events shaping the destiny of black Americans in the early twentieth century, however, were out of Washington's control or significant influence. In common with other blacks, he could only adjust to the gathering storm of white racial aggression in the South, symbolized by the Atlanta race riot in 1906; the decline of Republican and federal alliance with black rights, dramatized by President Roosevelt's dishonorable discharge of black regular troops allegedly involved in the Brownsville affray; and the spread of virulent white racism to the North, illustrated by a race riot in Lincoln's home town of Springfield, Illinois. Washington never openly acknowledged that these events were signs of the inadequacy of his program or his leadership, and continued his public course of moderation and optimism. Privately, however, he redoubled his efforts to silence his black critics, to influence white opinion, to build his personal political machine, and to strengthen Tuskegee Institute as a model of black self-reliance.

Washington continued to use spies to infiltrate the ranks of his critics, employing Richard T. Greener at the second meeting of the Niagara Movement, the Wood Detective Agency to seek embarrassing personal information about Monroe Trotter's family, and Melvin J. Chisum to gather information on the Brooklyn branch of the Niagara Movement, which he passed on to Washington at clandestine meetings on a park bench. Though the evidence is not conclusive, Washington also probably focused the