

**THE BLOG**

Makin' a List, Checkin' It Twice

By Marty Kaplan

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If, as we now know, J. Edgar Hoover had a secret “plan to suspend habeas corpus and imprison some 12,000 Americans he suspected of disloyalty,” why not Dick Cheney?

Hoover’s just-declassified 1950 plan, laid out in Sunday’s *New York Times*, wasn’t about Korean War enemy combatants; it was targeted at Americans — the radicals, pinkos, longhairs, fairies and other nogoodniks on Hoover’s naughty list. Is it so farfetched to think that, if the contents of Cheney’s mansafe manage somehow to evade their rendezvous-with-shredder destiny, we will someday learn that Addington, Yoo and the other elves drafted a just-in-case executive order to round up today’s Long War dissenters when (Heaven forbid) the next 9/11 occurs?

I know, I know: I’m being paranoid. I’m making the mistake of thinking that Admiral Poindexter’s Total Information Awareness office was a neocon feature, not a bug. I’m forgetting that Operation TIPS — the “terrorism information and prevention system” — was shut down. I must be whacked to believe that habeas corpus would ever be suspended for American citizens. I have to be delusional to imagine that the Congress will permit a version of FISA to pass that won’t stop the CIA and the NSA from reading the emails and listening in on the phone calls of Americans whose sin is to think the Patriot Act is unpatriotic. I’m nuts to think that Rove and Libby left behind an enemies list that had more than Joe Wilson’s name on it. Yeah, I’m just getting off on the thought of J. Edgar and Big Time in Santa drag.

By coincidence, the night before I read the story about Hoover’s 1950 plan to protect America from its enemies within, I saw the 1950 movie *Born Yesterday*. It’s about a millionaire scrap-metal dealer (Broderick Crawford) who hires Paul Verrall (William Holden), a Washington journalist, to culturefy his dim-bulb floozie (the brilliant Judy Holliday), while the tycoon plays Brent Wilkes to a Truman-era Duke Cunningham. Toward the end of the movie, there’s a scene where Holden tells Holliday that the greed of the businessman and the corruption of his bribed Congressman amount to creeping fascism. In screenwriter Garson Kanin’s words, “It’s enough to break your heart. You see a perfect piece of machinery — the democratic structure — and somebody’s always tampering with it . . . trying to make it hit the jackpot.”

There would have been more dialogue like that in the movie, had Columbia head Harry Cohn not censored it under right-wing pressure. It comes as no surprise that both Holliday and Kanin were blacklisted in *Red Channels*, the 1950 report on “Communist influence in radio and television.” (Among others on that enemies list: Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Norman Corwin, Kanin’s wife Ruth Gordon, Langston Hughes, Arthur Miller, and Howard K. Smith.) Should it come as a surprise if it one day turns out that today’s Garson Kanins and Paul Verralls (Keith Olbermann? Amy Goodman? Bill Moyers?) were slated by Cheney apparatchiks for a habeas corpus-free roundup? Maybe you don’t have to be born yesterday, or a conspiracy theorist, to wonder.

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