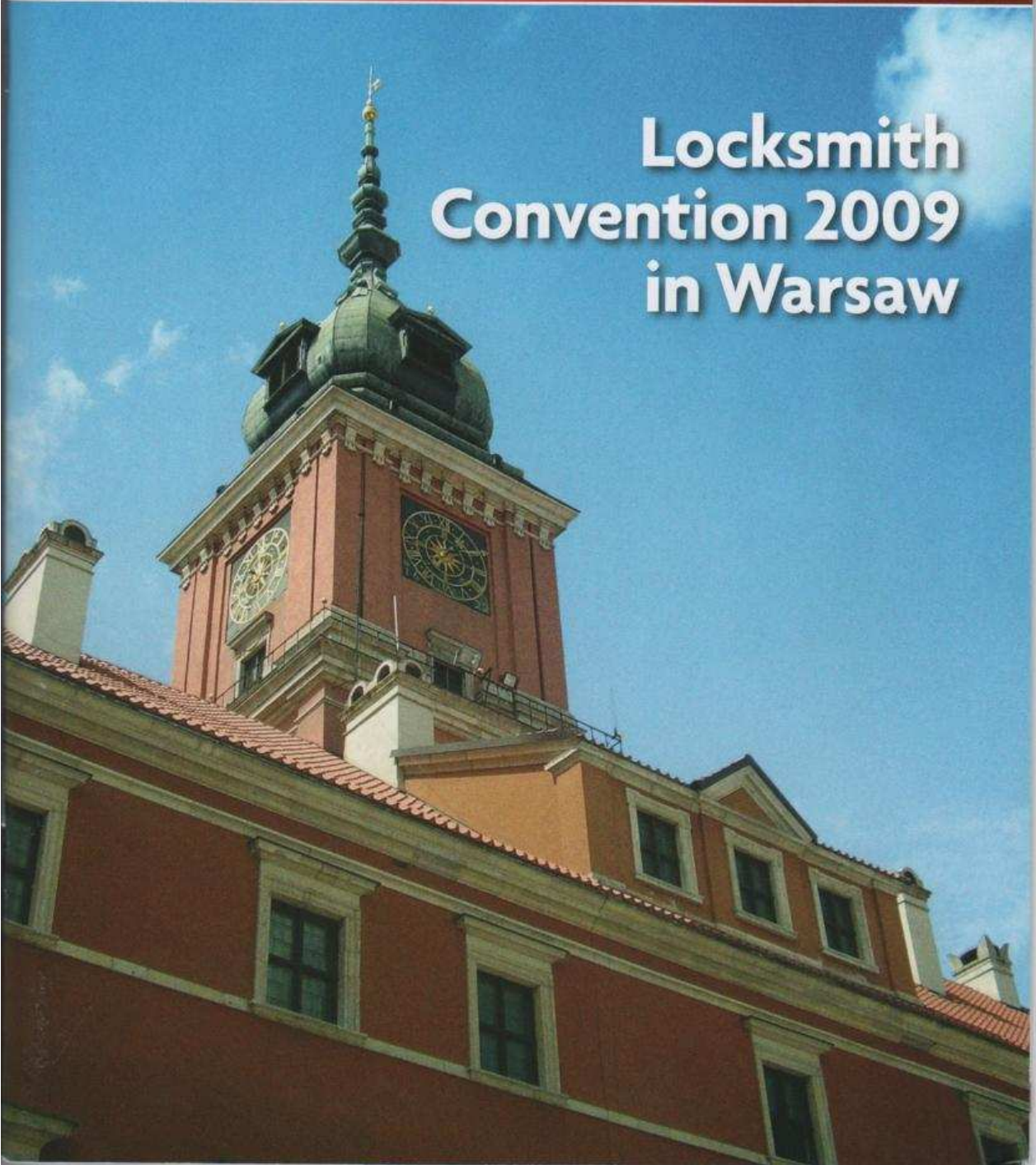


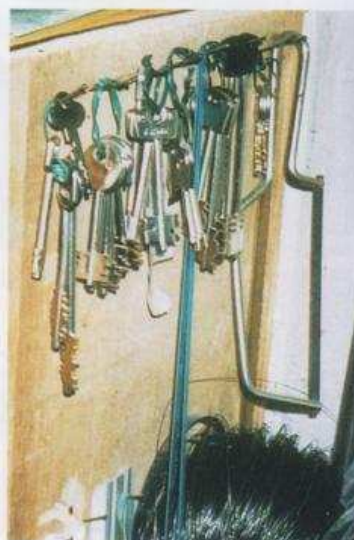
INSIGHT

European Locksmith Federation 2009

Locksmith Convention 2009 in Warsaw



The devil makes the pots but not the lids



I am often called in, as supposed expert on forensic matters, related to locks and keys. The consultancy is very often quite challenging and puts me in contact with really unusual characters.

Here is a story I would like to share with my fellow locksmiths from Europe.

Some years ago I was called in by a prosecutor, well known to me. He asked if I was interested to join a police squad during a forced entry in the house of a suspect lockpicker, Mr. R. P.

You may imagine my answer and so I was attending the "break in".

In the apartment we found nothing of relevance, but then we went downstairs in the garage; a box was rented to the suspect.

We forced open the metal door and I was introduced in a sort of Aladdin cave of a master locksmith (see picture above on left); the fact that he was a criminal leaves nothing to the competency and skills.

A very wide array of tools, most hand made, was duly photographed and recorded. All was impounded and I took the spoils at home. It took about a week to classify the tools and make some assumption about the way of use.

The key holder

A particularly attractive item was a key holder, with some twenty keys hanging, of different types (see picture above on right).

Each key had a self sticking label, with a sort of crypto code. UFFASS was decoded as Insurance Office (Italian – ufficio assicurazioni) and a quick search by the prosecutor revealed that a nearby office lock was ready to be compromised.

Another key has the label PTMS; it took some time to decode the meaning; but then the prosecutor sent a car patrol with two Carabinieri to the Post and Telegraph office of Massa Carrara (car licence plate MS), a city about 300 km away from where we were. In a few hours we got the confirmation call from the Carabinieri: the key was actually able to open the post office armoured door!

In mean time, the prosecutor told me why he caught the suspect: a gang of robbers was able to enter a bank branch from the rear door, using a very well made key. The gang chief told the prosecutor the key was made by a specialist locksmith, working for the underground world.

The locksmith was brought in front of the court and indicted for having cooperated in a bank robbery, not for making illegal keys, as such an activity in Italy is not against the law; law punishes the illegal use, not the illegal manufacture!

As expert witness, I described in details, with colour pictures and demos, the use of the impounded tools. Eventually, the "gentleman" was sentenced to 8 months in jail.

When the court was in session, to issue the judgment, every body was waiting, R.P. included.

He was so kind to approach me and to explain that my illustration to the court was not bad (I appreciated the compliment!), but the way of use of some tools was not exactly how I supposed; I thanked him profusely for improving my forensic ability.

At judgement end, I asked the court not to destroy the tools, but to let me keep them, as training tools for future expertises; the court agreed to my request.

The mystery key

Among the impounded items, was an exquisitely made safelock key, of the type used to

lock vault doors. It was obviously a key ready for use somewhere (see v28g).

Being unable to pinpoint the vault, I took the opportunity of a national bankers convention, to show up an enlarged view of the key and to ask all attending people if some alarm may ring, pinpointing the operating area of R. P.

Two weeks later I was told the corresponding lock had been identified and police was investigating.

But our history is far from the end.

More activity

About one year later I was on holiday in Northern Italy. The local newspaper gave ample space to a very interesting news: a criminal, namely R. P., was caught by a patrolling

police car, during a complex key impressioning exercise, on the rear door of a post office.

Being a relapsed criminal, this time the sentence was much longer, about two years. Of course, if you behave well in jail, the sentence is appreciably shorter and therefore R. P. was again free after about one year.

Not yet tired

Later on, newspapers published a story about a well know criminal locksmith, now 60 year old (would you believe it was our friend R. P.), being arrested for the third time, in Southern Italy, during a lock picking exercise in front of a supermarket safe.

I do not know the actual sentence, but I hope will be forever!



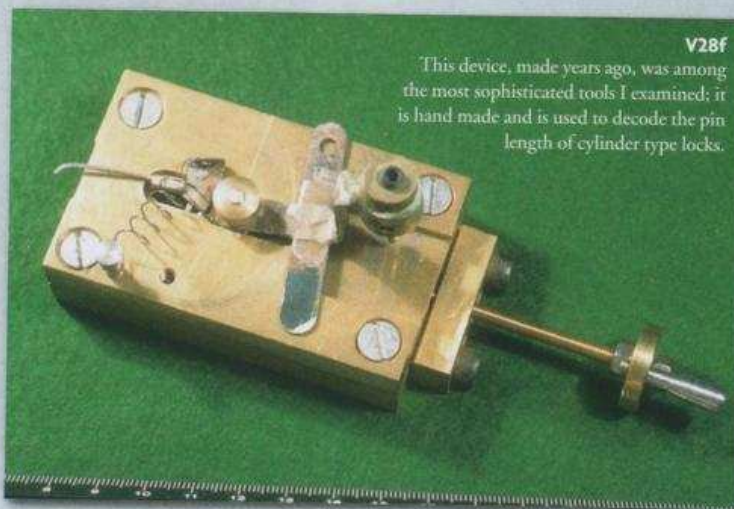
V28c
A large number of yale type keys have been cut according to specific measures, in order to help in decoding the lock code.



V28e
I am sure many of our readers are familiar with this kit, able to set up quickly a fully functioning double bitting key.



V28d
A very practical device was hand made, in order to decode pin and counter pin lengths, for different types of locks.



V28f
This device, made years ago, was among the most sophisticated tools I examined; it is hand made and is used to decode the pin length of cylinder type locks.