

Extracts from the SOE descriptive catalogue of special devices

Articles that can be adapted to conceal information

Catalogue ref: HS 7/49

SECTION F.

ARTICLES CARRIED BY A STUDENT

This section could very well be a catalogue in itself as even the many articles mentioned in the following pages do not in any way cover the whole field of material which comes under this heading.

Almost anything which a person carries or makes use of professionally, by way of trade, for personal convenience or toilet purposes, can be adapted for concealment.

This section covers all types of articles but by no means all varieties, and for simplicity it has been divided into sub-sections.

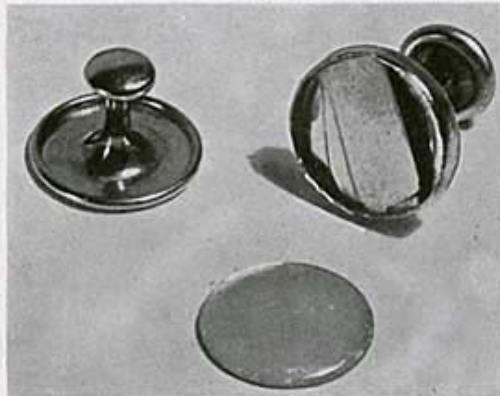
No. 1 sub-section deals with those concealments which are possible in the actual personal clothing and contents of the pockets of the average man.

PERSONAL ARTICLES.

The following is a short list of some of the articles which have been adapted:—

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Collar stud | Pocket torches |
| Collar stiffener | Pen knife |
| Coat button | Pipe |
| Cigarette holder | Pipe cases |
| Door key | Pencils |
| Fountain pen | Shoe trees |
| Finger ring | Shoulder paddings |
| Pocket petrol lighter | Shoe heels and soles |
| | Spectacles |

The following examples show what can be done with these articles:—



Collar Stud. A metal collar stud with a celluloid back can be used for concealing micro prints. The celluloid back is removed, and the print placed in the cavity. The celluloid is replaced and secured with a small application of Seccotine.

Necktie. A necktie can conceal a small code printed on silk. The code is secured to the back of the tie with two small press studs. This method is used in order that the code may be very speedily used and replaced. A tie adapted in this manner is worn quite normally and without any bulkiness showing.

Door Key. A door key has been successfully adapted for the concealment of small microprints. The shaft of the key is drilled to about three quarters of its length, and a small stud is made which fits into the hollowed shaft by means of a left handed thread. See illustration.



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What is this source?

The devices shown here come from the Descriptive Catalogue of Special Devices and Supplies used by the SOE. It was compiled and issued by the War Office. The advice about disguise comes from the special training programme used at SOE's training schools. Here, agents would learn how to operate in occupied countries.

These sources suggest a wide range of skills that were required to be an effective agent and the many dangers they faced.

What's the background to this source?

From 1939 to late 1942 Germany and its allies had the upper hand in the war. During this period it was difficult for Britain and its allies to take any direct action against German forces. To tackle this problem British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set up the Special Operations Executive (SOE). SOE's job was to go into occupied countries and spread propaganda, collect information and attack important targets.

SOE had two main departments. SO1 dealt with propaganda while SO2 dealt with active operations. SO2 agents went into occupied territory to blow up railways, bridges, radio transmitters and similar devices.

It's worth knowing that...

The catalogue contains many other devices that could be used on a mission. Agents are shown how to conceal explosives in fake logs and plaster fruit. They are shown how to hide information in soap, sponges and tubes of toothpaste. Vital equipment such as radio sets is shown camouflaged (disguised) as vacuum cleaners, portable gramophones and bundles of twigs.

Many SOE agents were not British. The majority of these had been driven out of their home countries by the German occupation. They were then recruited because they would be able to blend in easily to the country they were working in.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: RESISTANCE AND SOE

What do we learn about SOE from this source?

1. What does this source show about the work of SOE agents and the dangers they faced?
2. Do these sources provide any evidence that SOE took good care of its agents?
3. Can we learn anything from these sources about the type of people who became agents?

Use this outline to plan your poster.