

# 30 Taiwan agents held in predawn Colony raids

MORE than 30 suspected Taiwanese agents, including some women, spent their second night at the political prisoners detention centre in Victoria Road after being rounded-up by Special Branch detectives early Tuesday.

According to sources, these people were caught after a tip-off by Chinese officials here.

They said the spying ring came to light when officials in China arrested a man at the Canton Autumn Trade Fair several months ago.

Special Branch detectives also seized a quantity of

arms, ammunition, propaganda leaflets, spy's code booklets maps believed to be escape routes out of China to Hongkong and rolls of microfilms.

The sources said the arms include several machine guns but they were satisfied that these guns were not meant to be used in Hongkong.

If any of the alleged agents are to be charged with a criminal offence, they will have to be brought before a magistrate sometime today.

But if they are being dealt with as illegal immigrants, they can be held in custody without trial to await deportation.

One informed source said yesterday that one of the arrested "agents" was due to be taken to court this morning and that the others were likely to be deported or freed.

Police remained officially tight-lipped, answering "no comment" to all inquiries. Asked why they would not

comment, a spokesman said: "Police cannot give any information on matters which are of a security nature."

Last night all the lights inside the high-walled, heavily barred-wired detention centre in Victoria Road were blazing.

A plain-clothes guard at the heavy steel door told a reporter: "Nobody is giving any information."

About 100 detectives, mainly from the Special Branch were divided into eight teams and started the operation after being told by the heads of the branch at the Police Headquarters at 4 am on Tuesday.

It was understood that only the team leaders knew where exactly the raid would be.

According to the sources, the teams swooped on several premises on both side of the harbour.

After about three hours, they rounded-up all the suspects and took them back to headquarters where they were questioned before being sent to the detention centre.

The sources said the microfilms, believed to be about the agents activities in China, were found inside a soap during the raids.

The ammunition were found packed inside cans of ordinary tinned food. A bazooka was also found in the raids. But after two arms experts examined it, police were satisfied that it is not a "live one."

The bazooka shells are believed to be used to scatter propaganda leaflets when fired into the air.