

Namphys, who in turn was ousted by the sergeants' coup that brought General Avril to power 16 months ago.

Throughout it all, Haiti — which had been in decline since it became the world's first black independent republic more

organisation at home that seems capable of toppling him.

It was vintage Papa Doc. And all the US future strategy seems to be based on, "look what Papa Doc did in a situation like this, and we've got what Avril's planning".

direct terrorism of the opposition. Although he has not openly abandoned the idea of the elections — which were to begin in April with the local councils and carry through to November with presidential ones — he clearly does not intend to relinquish power and has made cer-

At this stage, although words like "irrational" and "illogical" are flying around, no one sees any sense in closing the door on General Avril. The idea seems to be that if he is crazy enough to launch a crackdown without reason he is crazy enough to lift it.

Caribbean area after Panama, that we would rather not have to do."

Nevertheless, according to some of those who have fled to safety in the United States, the very thing that may have prompted General Avril's crackdown may be pushing the

explosive".

However that may be Haitian overstatement, or simple wishful thinking. Although there were some signs that the civilian opposition was beginning to coalesce (they joined to send a telegram to the Taiwanese Government denouncing

unliking of, and the official line might take a three-year study course.

According to her "we call on the Avril Government to make a clear reaffirmation of the government's commitment to the election".

Ah yes. Times are, after all, tough in Foggy Bottom.

A new governor won't change the tune

ACCORDING to a report in the British press, leading business interests in Hongkong have no confidence in the ability of the Governor, Sir David Wilson, to stand up to pressure from Beijing, and have asked Mrs Thatcher to appoint a politician, a government minister, to run the territory.

They cite the example of the appointment of Earl Mountbatten as the last Viceroy of India, and of Lord Soames as the last governor of Rhodesia before it became independent under the name of Zimbabwe.

This seems to be an example of the old story "If you don't like the music, shoot the pianist". It assumes that the present governor is able to determine the policies towards China and that if he is removed, the policy can be changed.

There would be no constitutional difficulty in replacing Sir David before his normal term of five years is completed as he is appointed at the pleasure of the Crown.

Sir Patrick Renison, the last colonial administrative officer to govern the colony of Kenya, was unceremoniously removed in 1963, and Sir Richard Turnbull was similarly sacked as governor of Aden in 1967. In both cases the British Government had decided on a drastic change of policy, and it was felt that a new governor was needed to carry it out.

But Hongkong is not in this situation. However, it is probable that the present Governor has far less freedom to determine policy towards China than any of his colonial predecessors. The British Foreign Office has always insisted that it should have a predominant voice in any colonial issue which

NORMAN MINERS argues against a change of personnel at the top of the Hongkong administration.

affected China, in spite of protests by the Governor and the Colonial Office.

Now that the old Colonial Office has disappeared, and the Governor is directly responsible to the Foreign Secretary in London, the Governor is more closely constrained in what he can do than ever before.

A new limitation on the Governor's freedom is the existence of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group.

When the group was originally established in accordance with the Sino-British Joint Declaration, it was said that it would be mainly concerned with Hongkong's membership of certain international organisations, and arrangements to ensure the continued application of various international treaties to Hongkong after 1997.

But in practice the Chinese side has insisted that all important issues of internal policy should be discussed, and Britain has given way to this demand.

This was shown in November 1985 when the Hongkong Government at first refused to allow the issue of direct elections to the Legislative Council to be raised at a meeting of the Joint Liaison Group, but later admitted that the subject had been discussed there.

According to the Joint Declaration, the group is not an organ of power, and will not have any supervisory role over the Hongkong administration. But in practice this is precisely what is happening.

All issues which are not settled by agreement at meetings of the group are referred to the British and Chinese Governments for solution through

consultations. The Governor is then obliged to implement whatever concessions the Foreign Office has made.

This situation will not be altered by replacing Sir David by a politician, however senior he may be. Britain's policies in Hongkong are only part of its policy towards China.

So long as the Foreign Office continues to put the cultivation of good relations with China above the interests of Hongkong, it will make no difference whether the head of the Hongkong Government is a diplomat, a politician or a soldier. The decisions that matter will be taken in London, by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

THE interests of Hongkong have been consistently ignored by London ever since the old Colonial Office was abolished and the territory was put directly under the Foreign Office.

A Colonial Office civil servant writing in the 1930s commented bitterly on the Foreign Office's attitude: "The F.O. is already eager to give away what belongs to other people." The Foreign Office, 50 years later, behaves no differently.

There is another strong reason why Hongkong should be very wary of the appointment of a politician as Governor. Normally this is a sign that Britain is about to scuttle its responsibilities and cast a colony adrift into independence before it is ready.

In India, Mountbatten took the decision to divide India into two dominions and quit within six months. The

experience was similar in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Aden.

There is no sign at present that Britain is preparing to cast aside Hongkong in the same way. By signing the Joint Declaration Britain had agreed to continue to administer Hongkong with the object of maintaining and preserving its economic prosperity and social stability up to June 30, 1997.

But it is quite possible that before 1997 Hongkong may become ungovernable. Martin Lee Chu-ming has warned of the danger of political turmoil if the Hongkong Government, acting under orders from London, refuses to establish a sufficient number of directly elected seats in the Legislative Council to satisfy popular demands for democracy.

The continuing brain drain may lead to a breakdown of government services, such as schools and hospitals. Unemployment may mount as capital is withdrawn from Hongkong enterprises and invested overseas.

There is the likelihood of inflation as employers bid up wages in order to attract the diminishing supply of professionals. There may be increasing industrial militancy when workers go on strike for higher wages and better retirement benefits to protect themselves against a bleak economic future.

The frustrations of those who cannot leave may erupt into violent demonstrations and protests. If such a situation should arise, it is quite conceivable that the British Government would decide to cut its losses and terminate colonial rule without delay.

This was what was done by the Labour Party government in 1948 when the administration of the colony of Palestine was breaking down in disorder. The British walked out, leaving the Arabs and Jews to fight a civil war.

So long as Mrs Thatcher remains Prime Minister there is no danger of a similar abdication of imperial responsibility in Hongkong. The Conservative Government has shown an admirable firmness in administering Northern Ireland, in spite of popular demands that British troops should be withdrawn from the province in the face of IRA attacks.

But if a Labour government should be returned to power at the British general election in 1992 it is possible that Mr Kinnock might decide to follow the examples set by Prime Ministers Attlee and Wilson in India, Burma, Palestine and Aden.

It would be as well not to put too much trust in any future Conservative successor to Mrs Thatcher. Michael Heseltine, a possible future Conservative Prime Minister, has already suggested that Chinese officials should be brought into the Hongkong administration before 1997. This shows a desire to shuffle off Britain's responsibility as soon as possible.

Sir David Wilson may not be a perfect governor. But he is in an impossibly difficult situation attempting to find some compromise between the demands of China, the expectations of the Hongkong people and the vacillating weakness of the Foreign Office. Any replacement would probably be far worse.

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the freedom to determine policy