

Of wars and generals

Renowned Daily Star columnist **Megasthanes** returns with a penetrating and provocative analysis of the military mind

WHEN John Foster Dulles died of cancer in May of 1959, President Eisenhower -- whose secretary of state he was for over six years -- paid him a moving tribute. In a statement, Ike said that a lifetime of labour for peace had ended.

Dulles had not been Eisenhower's first choice for the State Department. The top cabinet job was in fact offered to Tom Dewey, then governor of New York, who had twice unsuccessfully run for president as the Republican candidate. It was only after Dewey declined, and warmly recommended Dulles, that Ike chose him.

Dulles certainly possessed unimpeachable credentials for State. Very few of his more than 50 predecessors -- or for that matter his successors -- could have come to Foggy Bottom better equipped or primed for the job. Educated at the elite institutions of Princeton University and the Sorbonne, trained in the law, suave and sophisticated and elegant he had been associated, when all of 30 years of age, as legal counsel at the Versailles Peace Conference. He assisted in the preparation of the UN Charter at Dumbarton Oaks, and was senior adviser at the San Francisco Conference. He also negotiated the peace treaty with Japan. Coincidentally enough, he was the grandson of a secretary of state and it was his life's ambition to achieve that office, which he did at the age of 64.

As was once observed, every generation tends to look back to its predecessors and imagine a world in which stern reality gives way to romantic imagination. All too often, the past, seen through the prism of intervening years, appears in too roseate a hue. Americans of a certain age or generation -- and with