



Goh Keng Swee: A Public Career Remembered

Barry Desker

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Dr Goh Keng Swee was Singapore's first Minister for Finance from 1959 to 1965 who initiated Singapore's first industrial estate now known as Jurong Town. He was also the first and longest serving Defence Minister after Singapore became independent in 1965, responsible for building up the Singapore Armed Forces from scratch. Later he became Minister for Education in 1981 and revamped the education system to what it is today. Dr Goh was also concurrently Deputy Prime Minister from 1973 to 1984 during which time he set up the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

While Dr Goh's public career and achievements are well documented in press reports and archival records as well as in photographs and speeches, what is missing is an insight and exposition of Dr Goh as an individual in his various roles. *Goh Keng Swee: A Public Career Remembered* seeks to provide this missing dimension of Dr Goh as a person to work for. Thirty-eight persons who had the opportunity of closely observing or working with Dr Goh have contributed their reflections and recollections of Dr Goh as a person, colleague and “boss”, to this book. They have given candid and personal pen portraits of an unusual leader and minister, revealing a glimpse of the working habits of Dr Goh not known to most people.

Drawn from oral histories and recent interviews, these reminiscences have been chronologically arranged, from those who recalled what it was like to work alongside Dr Goh on the Malayan Forum in London in the early 1950s, through his various ministerial positions, to travelling with Dr Goh after he “retired” from politics in 1984. What emerges from these anecdotes of Dr Goh is that he could be an extremely demanding “boss”, who could also be very supportive of his subordinates. They show him to be a person with a very inquisitive and creative mind capable of making great leaps of lateral thinking, able to connect disparate ideas and data to propose new and innovative solutions to intractable policy problems. He was truly a Singaporean for all seasons.

Readership: Laypersons interested in Singapore's public service and in the memoirs of the Old Guards/pioneers of Singapore.

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