

## **CV Dr. C. (Kees) le Pair**

Dr. C. (Kees) le Pair (1936) grew up in Leiden. He lived and worked for three years in Lebanon and spent a considerable amount of time in the United States and Thailand. For 31 years of his active career, he worked as a bureaucrat. The best part of it as CEO of the Netherlands National Research Organisations of Physics and Technology.

His first objective qualification came when he was five years old. On the advice of the school administration, his parents withdrew him from kindergarten. He was deemed unsuitable. The level at which his classmates wove mats was far beyond his ability. In elementary school, a teacher warned his parents that he would end up in the gutter. He was later supported in this prediction by several secondary school (HBS) teachers. The only one who always believed in him was his grandfather, who believed he was destined for high positions. By the end of his career, he had proven all those expectations wrong.

The headmaster of his elementary school was Mr. J.P. Paulusse, to whom he, like many of his classmates, owed his career. Thanks to him, he passed the entrance exam for the Municipal HBS. In 1953, he passed his final exams with the highest grades in the region. He also received his first lessons in politics and organization when, against the wishes of the headmaster and a vocal part of the teaching staff, he became the president of the school association.

On the advice of his physics teacher, Dr. J.W. Blom, he chose to study in Leiden rather than at Delft. He had once knocked over a calorimeter with oil during a student lab experiment. In the eyes of his beloved teacher, this classified him as a 'theorist.' Initially, he approached his studies the same way he had approached high school: doing nothing. However, he could hold his own when it came to drinking beer. He also took his first steps on the path of love, though that came to nothing. By the end of his third year, when he had passed only one of the required subject exams, it became clear to both him and the authorities in charge of awarding scholarships that something had to change. He started to work and passed the final exams within the time it took the average student in those days. He then conducted research under the supervision of Prof. Dr. K.W. Taconis on how helium isotope mixtures melt and solidify.

It was an exciting time. American and Russian atomic bomb tests made the atmosphere radioactive. Year after year, we were irradiated. The level of radiation was comparable to the aftermath of a nuclear power plant explosion in Chernobyl, though the latter only lasted some 14 days. But in the 1960s, people didn't suffer as much from radiation, so his group of students and schoolchildren who protested against the atomic bomb was initially not larger than 25 people.

An exhibition of documents about still-active Nazi judges was kept out of the public eye by the Leiden University Board at the request of the German ambassador. In response,

he set up the exhibition in his student room, which earned him new 'gallows and rope' predictions. He was active in the Pacifist Socialist Party, where he became secretary of foreign affairs, and he protested against the U.S. actions in Vietnam, a princess's marriage to a Spanish macho, and various other topics. In hindsight, he is no longer so sure about the correctness of his stance on the Vietnam issue. However, his aversion to violence didn't stop him from inviting various diplomats and senior military officers as the chairman of the Anti-militarist Students' Working Group, where constructive discussions on peace keeping and security took place.

After his doctorate in 1965, he became an assistant professor at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. While this period in the country is considered peaceful, there was enough turbulence to make it an achievement that he was able to accomplish something scientifically during his time there.

After Beirut, he joined the management of the Foundation for Fundamental Research on Matter (FOM) in 1968. He also worked briefly at the National Science Foundation in Washington. The contacts made during this time proved valuable for future visits and science policy business dealings in the U.S. In 1981, the Technology Foundation STW was established. He became its first CEO and held this position until his retirement in 1999. In one of his additional roles, he supervised major research projects in several European countries for Philips, Siemens, and other electronics giants, all of which were partly funded by the governments. These projects were on the same scale as the Manhattan or Apollo projects. When he also became a member of the General Energy Council and the Defense Research Council, American colleagues believed that he had universal expertise in energy and information technology in the Netherlands. He never told them that his position was more due to departmental shortcomings than to his intellectual assets. The effective knowledge of a ministry, after all, tends to be closer to the greatest common denominator than to the least common multiple of its officials' knowledge.

Meanwhile, everyone was against atomic bombs. Globally, there was de-escalation. In the Netherlands, the momentum was so strong that he felt it was time to push back. An invitation to join the VVD (The conservative liberal Party for Freedom and Democracy) committee on science and technology provided a good reason to end his position as an independent. He became a member of the party.

His first public steps were taken in first grade at the HBS by founding a class newspaper with a high level of plagiarism. He didn't even know the word at the time. He led the merger with another class newspaper, which contributed to the (re)founding of the school newspaper, where he was included in the editorial board. A few years later, he shocked the history teacher with an article about the situation in Cuba under dictator Batista. This led to the permanent censorship of the school newspaper. He resigned as editor in protest. However, he doesn't believe he was the catalyst for Fidel's revolution.

During his student years, he was a member of the editorial board of the magazine of *Catena*. During his stay in Beirut, he worked as a correspondent for *NRC*. Later, he wrote a regular column on science and technology for that newspaper, as well as for the *Ingenieurskrant* and others. In total, he published around 150 publications, aside from his columns. About twenty of these were on his research in physics. Three were not serious. According to some critics, this figure is 10-40 times too low. Some of his major works of late are available on this website: <https://www.clepair.net>

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences awarded him the Medal of honour for his good and bad deeds. Queen Beatrix knighted him in the Order of the Dutch Lion, a rare honour in the low countries. The Technical University of Delft awarded him an honorary doctorate in all the sciences flourishing there. In Germany, he was made an honorary member of the *Wissenschafts Forscher*.

His love life was more complex than his three marriages. Two of which were to Drs. H.G.M. (Riek) Schroten. Riek personified a statement by Kamerlingh Onnes: a physicist must be able to do everything. She was a researcher, institute director, waitress, gardener, teacher, and head of social work in Leerdam, among other things.

His current wife, Dr. L.V. (Luba) Zoebkova, is from Russia. She assists him when needed in solving Dravidian and theosophical problems. Previously, she worked at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and in India. She used to be a part-time professor at the University of Madras and taught Russian at a university college in Utrecht.

His children once held three nationalities. They have all been converted.

After his retirement, he sailed a quarter of the Earth's circumference with Luba and friends from various parts of the world. His ship, *Ananda*, took him to Angra dos Reis (about 60 km west of Rio de Janeiro), Brazil. From there, he returned to the Netherlands, where so much was about to go wrong that he went back to work hard to try to salvage what could still be saved.

In the meantime, he helped set up several clinics in Vanuatu while sailing: with Project Marc. While approaching 90 years he occupies himself with many colleagues, among which the former CTOs of the Dutch multinational industrial companies and former presidents of Netherlands' technical universities about the disastrous misbeliefs about climate and a too hasty energy transition. He is still supervisor of the International climate foundation CLINTEL.

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Revised and translated from the older CV in Dutch.

