

## In Memoriam

### Count Buysse

(1945 – 2023)



With the passing of Count Buysse (Paul) on 30 December 2023, the Royal Higher Institute for Defence (RHID) bids farewell to one of its most prominent executives. Count Buysse has served as vice-chairman of the board of directors for fourteen years, from 16 August 2007 till 19 October 2021.

There were many sides to Count Buysse's career and versatile life. However, some continuity could be found in his international orientation, with a particular fondness for the United Kingdom, his focus on the manufacturing industry and his insights into geopolitical shifts. What is probably less known is that he also gained vast experience in the defence industry during his stay in England.

Count Buysse started his career in 1966 at Ford Motor Company and switched to British industrial technological companies from 1976 onwards. In 1976, he became chief executive officer of British Leyland Belgium; in 1998, he was appointed CEO of the mythical defence company Vickers. In 2000, he decided to return to Belgium as chair of the steel wire company Bekaert but remained internationally active.

Between 1983 and 2000, Count Buysse mostly stayed in England, where he would be immersed in the British imperial culture and its strong national consciousness, great military traditions and important defence industry. There, he observed that a credible national defence policy cannot exist without a strong defence industry. Convinced that this industry played an essential role in guaranteeing our national security and prosperity, he vigorously advocated the development of a strong Belgian defence industry. Considering our capacities and our role within NATO, he was also a strong advocate for international industrial collaboration with our partner countries in the field of defence. Furthermore, he had grasped the great importance of an efficient diplomatic corps necessary to this purpose. In his view, involving the Egmont Institute in the establishment of this broader international framework was therefore an absolute must.

During his fourteen years of serving as vice-chairman, Count Buysse's vision and policy read as follows: ensuring that Belgium is able to develop a competitive and innovative defence industry. He believed that adopting a multidisciplinary approach was the only way to put his vision into practice and thus he used his network to bring together people from different disciplines in order to achieve this higher purpose. For example, he was one of the minds behind the "triple helix" approach of the RHID, a model according to which the government stimulates and facilitates a collaborative partnership between economic and industrial actors and the world of universities and research institutes with a view to developing a competitive international defence industry. The RHID's role would be to stimulate and coordinate the triple helix policy. I remember Count Buysse's delight when I told him a few months ago that the RHID implements exactly that industry policy. Today, we can find Count Buysse's vision in the Belgian DIRS (Defence, Industry and Research Strategy) and the DEFRA (Defence-related Research Action) programme, but also in NATO's EDT (Emerging Disruptive Technologies) policy, the DIANA (Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic) programme and the NIF (NATO Innovation Fund).

Count Buysse's contribution to the Belgian defence industry is undeniable and extremely important. Those who worked with him at the Belgian Defence will remember him as a visionary, committed and loyal leader. A gentleman and aristocrat who selflessly dedicated his talents and network to our society, our prosperity, and our well-being. Count Buysse chose a wonderful motto that perfectly suited him: "*Perseverantia Vici*", but "For King and Country" would have been an equally honourable choice matching his dedication.

Baron Gosselin  
Vice-chairman

2 January 2024