

# The Military Genius of Jeanne d’Arc, and the Concept of Victory

by Irene Beaudry

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## Joan of Arc, A Military Leader

by Kelly DeVries

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Jeanne d’Arc is one of the best-documented figures in history. Eyewitness testimonies, transcripts of her trial, and her own letters have left us a wealth of knowledge about one of the most extraordinary figures of all times. Even a cursory perusal of this documentation shows that Jeanne d’Arc was a genius whose every action exemplified the highest ideal of mankind. DeVries’s book comes at a crucial time in our own history, for many lessons can, and must, be learnt from this French giant of a human being. DeVries’s book is fairly well documented—although suffering from a glaring omission of one of the most thorough and historically crucial works on Jeanne d’Arc, that being Gabriel Hanotaux’s monumental work, which the French statesman wrote in 1910. Too often DeVries’s conclusions are simply flat wrong. Nevertheless, his book is both handsome and a useful chronology of Jeanne’s battles.

DeVries correctly situates the historical necessity of Jeanne d’Arc in his chapter, “Why Joan of Arc Was Needed.” France did not exist as a nation at that time. It was a collection of principalities ruled by princes more powerful than the King. These princes, English, Burgundian, and French, had been enmired, since 1337, in the Hundred Years War, in which they routinely used their subjects as cannon fodder. By the 1420s, the French forces were demoralized, and decimated to the point of conceding defeat to the invading English forces, and their allies from the French royal house of Burgundy. A bestial culture ruled Europe at that point: Imperial law mandated that man was an animal, and it seemed that nothing in the world could change this fixed oligarchical condition.

Then, in 1429, a young peasant girl burst on the scene, and, through her determination and genius, changed not only

the course of the Hundred Years War, but also wrenched all of humanity out of the orbit of feudalism, into the light of the Golden Renaissance. It was the power of her ideas, and the passions with which she fought for them, that incited kings to bend to her will, hardened generals to follow her, and the masses to take action, and fight for a country that for the first time, they realized belonged to them.

Although DeVries does not disclose the known facts of Jeanne’s background other than the “legend” of her divine inspiration, it is known from other sources, that Jeanne’s education must have come from the circles of the Brethren of the Common Life. This was the same religious order, devoted to providing superior education to children of all classes, that educated the great Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, Thomas à Kempis, and the father of the first nation-state, King Louis XI of France, who owed his throne directly to Jeanne. Evidence shows that Jeanne’s parents and brothers were very much a part of Jeanne’s conspiracy to free France. It is also known, that the religious order of the Monks of St. Augustine played a pivotal role in this mission.

Jeanne’s mission was twofold: By 1428, the English and Burgundians had secured the entirety of northern France. Their siege of the Loire Valley city of Orléans was undertaken to remove the last obstacle to finishing off their takeover of France. The citizens of Orléans heroically resisted the Anglo-Burgundian besiegers, but were on the verge of defeat. Jeanne understood that lifting the siege would have to deliver a double blow: It would have to free the city, and also, would have to bring a halt to the gentlemanly sport of continuous warfare, which had cost so many lives, military and civilian. A crushing blow was urgent and vital; however, since none was coming from the King, Jeanne deployed herself to carry out that task.

Secondly, Jeanne understood the strategic urgency of quickly securing the official coronation of the King at the Cathedral of Reims, where all of France’s kings had been consecrated, in order to lay to rest the Anglo-Burgundian claim that the Dauphin (as France’s Crown Princes are known) was illegitimate. Jeanne was no monarchist; as she is reported to have told Bertrand de Poulengy, esquire of the

King of France, “The kingdom did not belong to the Dauphin but to her Lord and that the Lord wanted the Dauphin to be made King.”

### The Battle of the Herrings

DeVries recounts the popular version of how Jeanne attained an audience with the Dauphin Charles VII, but he does not fully understand the political faction to which Jeanne belonged.

Her first task was to travel north from her home in Domrémy, to the fortified town of Vaucouleurs, in order to bring news to Robert de Baudricourt, the only military chief in that part of the country still loyal to the Dauphin, of the devastating Battle of the Herrings, just north of Orléans. In this battle, the French had intended to cut off supplies from reaching the besieging English forces. Even though the French forces greatly outnumbered the English, and could have deployed cannon artillery, against the English longbows, the English won the battle and General Sir John Fastolf was able to resupply the English siege forces around Orléans. The reason was that the French, commanded by nobility, did not use their artillery to advantage, deploying instead the tactic of attack and retreat at will, thereby fatally weakening their position, despite their superior forces and weaponry.

The defeat marked a breaking point in the demoralization of the French. Action to reverse the course was imperative: Hence, Jeanne travelled to the garrison town of Vaucouleurs, where she briefed not only Baudricourt on the crisis, but also, in the public marketplace, she briefed the townsfolk, whom she was thus able to rally to her cause. Thus, also, she secured from Baudricourt the permission she needed to confront the Dauphin, as well as to muster troops who would accompany her the 300 miles though enemy territory to Charles VII’s residence in Chinon.

At the royal residence, Jeanne continued to make public, noisy interventions as to the necessity of liberating Orléans and having the Dauphin crowned King at Reims. She was the only military leader whose faction had no other agenda than the liberation of France. It was clear that, if there were any chance of saving the nation, some radical, revolutionary action had to be taken. After much delay and bureaucratic foot-dragging, Charles finally gave Jeanne a commission to lift the siege at Orléans and to resupply its desperate people.

Immediately, Jeanne found herself locking horns with the aristocratic commanders of the French army whose habitual method of engagement was attack/retreat, rather than to deploy all-out for victory. These commanders had tremendous difficulty understanding that Jeanne was determined to actually fight and win, rather than engage in the outmoded rules of gentlemanly combat that had decimated so many men on both sides. She ran roughshod over their objections, not only citing the authority of God for her action, but also confronting every objection by a personal demonstration that her method led to victory.

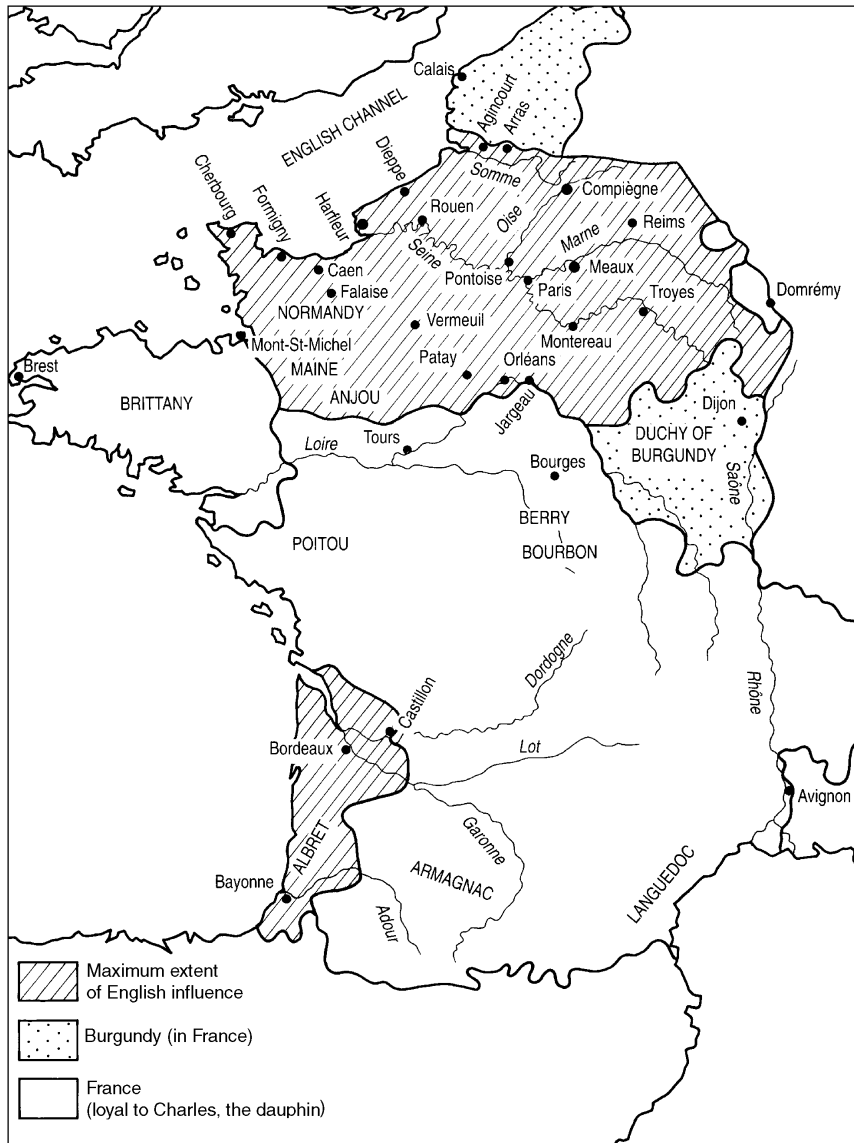


*This statue of Jeanne d'Arc, outside the Eglise Sainte Jeanne d'Arc in Paris, was erected sometime after her canonization, which finally occurred in 1920.*

Upon arriving at Orléans, Jeanne sent a letter to the English, making her declaration of unremitting war:

Jesus-Maria, King of England, and you, duke of Bedford, you call yourself regent of the kingdom of France, you, William de la Pole, Sir John Talbot, and you, Sir Thomas Scales, who call yourself lieutenant of the aforesaid duke of Bedford, render your account to the King of Heaven. Surrender to the Maid, who is sent from God, the King of Heaven, the keys to all the good cities that you have taken and violated in France. She has come here from God to proclaim the blood royal. She is entirely ready to make peace, if you are willing to settle accounts with her, provided that you give up France and pay for having occupied her. And those among you, archers, companions-at-arms, gentlemen, and others who are before the city of Orléans, go back to your own countries, for God’s sake. And if you do not do so, wait for the word of the Maid who will come

## France in 1429



*DeVries's map shows France in 1429 as it appeared when Jeanne d'Arc took the decision to free France from the Anglo-Burgundian occupation and from the shackles of feudalism.*

visit you briefly, to your great damage. If you do not do so, I am commander of the armies, and in whatever place I shall meet your French allies, I shall make them leave it, whether they wish to or not; and if they will not obey, I shall have them all killed. I am sent from God, the King of Heaven, to chase you out of all France, body for body. And if they wish to obey, I shall have mercy on them. And have no other opinion, for you shall never hold the kingdom of France from God, the King of Heaven, the son of St. Mary; but King Charles, the true heir, will hold it; for God, the King of Heaven, wishes it so and has revealed through the Maid, and he

will enter Paris with a goodly company. If you do not wish to believe this message from God through the Maid, then wherever we find you we will strike you there, and make a great uproar greater than any made in France for a thousand years, if you do not come to terms. And believe firmly that the King of Heaven will send the Maid more force than you will ever know how to achieve with all of your assaults on her and on her good men-at-arms; and in the exchange of blows we shall see who has better right from the King of Heaven. You, duke of Bedford, the Maid prays you and requests that you cause no more destruction. If you will settle your account, you can join her company, in which the French will achieve the finest feat in Christendom. And give answer, if you wish to make peace in the city of Orléans; and if you do not do so, be mindful soon of your great damages.

The Augustinian concept of a just war was as foreign an idea, up until this time, as the idea of a war for the general welfare of all men equal before God. Jeanne's letter declared war not just on the English, but on feudalism itself, the evil order of man subjugating man. Her conception of man was based entirely on optimism. She fully expected her enemy, because he was human, to be able to understand the error of his ways. However, if the enemy refused to understand, she was fully prepared, as she stated, to destroy him rather than allow the destruction of all of Europe.

DeVries shows crass cynicism in his refrain that Jeanne was quite willing to spill the blood of her men, because she was convinced that they would all go to Heaven for their good deeds. In fact, she was anguished by blood spilt from both sides. But she knew that, unless victory were accomplished quickly, far more blood would be spilled; that, indeed, civilization would destroy itself by its immorality. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse would thunder throughout all Europe, unless she, as sent by God, were fully obeyed, without restraint.

In Orléans, Jeanne expected her generals to launch an immediate attack on the English and Burgundians, but in-

stead, they advised caution and delay. She was incensed. She jumped on her horse, gathered her army, and led the way to the city gates, personally demonstrating that what she was demanding could absolutely be accomplished. The mayor had been ordered to block her path. She instantly drew her sword and threatened to cut off his head, if he did not lower the drawbridge. He did so, and Jeanne led the charge, while the aristocratic generals scrambled to keep up with her.

In the bloody battle that ensued, she was wounded. Despite her wound, she returned the next day to fight again, and again led the attack to victory. By the end of the day, she knew the English were defeated.

On the third day, the English assembled in battle formation, with rows of longbowmen behind a barrier of sharpened stakes in the ground pointing toward the enemy, a defensive method that depended on the French attacking them. Using the principle of the flank, Jeanne exploited that weakness, by, likewise, arranging her army in battle formation, whence she had them wait, facing the English. The English did not know what to do. They were so confounded by this dramatic change of the rules of warfare, that, after standing and facing the French for some time, they retreated, conceding the victory. On that day, not one shot was fired, nor sword drawn. Jeanne's method again proved to be superior.

DeVries's claim that the Battle of Orléans was the bloodiest of the Hundred Years War may be true, but, then, this was the first battle in which a winning tactic was deployed, rather than adhering to traditional rules of combat. Jeanne's purpose was to win the war quickly, not to prolong it.

Her stunning victory turned the tide of a century of war. The pattern of French defeat and English might was reversed in a single blow by the daring and decisive Jeanne d'Arc. From that point onward, there was no question that Jeanne was totally in charge of the French army, its strategy, and tactics. She gained the trust and admiration of the aristocratic generals, and the love of the ordinary soldiers.

Jeanne immediately wanted to march on Reims to have the Dauphin crowned and consecrated as King. However, again, she had to do battle with Charles's advisers and generals, who counselled him to attack the enemy-held area of Normandy. Jeanne's argument ultimately won out; had it not, France would have been lost. Even though Charles had been named King some years earlier, he had no real power, except over a few provinces. The Rectors at the University of Paris, who in 1431 burnt Jeanne at the stake, had concocted the legalism of a Double Monarchy, whereby the King of England was also the King of France. For Jeanne to have Charles consecrated at Reims Cathedral would deliver a devastating blow to the English and their Burgundian partners.

But, to reach Reims meant clearing a path through the mostly strongly fortified Anglo-Burgundian territory. DeVries's description of this campaign through the Loire Valley, demonstrates Jeanne as a brilliant strategist, and valorous commander, always personally leading her men

into battle, always setting out for them the goal of attaining victory.

## The Artillery Revolution

Jeanne's use of cannon artillery revolutionized the science of warfare and changed the fate of nations. She was especially skillful in placing her artillery. Although, before Jeanne took command, the French had had cannons and artillery, it was her genius in deploying them, that altered the course of the warfare so dramatically, for it was well-placed artillery that had enabled the French to defeat the famous English archers.

As the Duke of Alençon testified: "In everything that she did, apart from the conduct of the war, Joan was young and simple; but in the conduct of war she was most skillful, both in carrying the lance herself, in drawing up the army in battle order, and in placing the artillery. And everyone was astonished that she acted with such prudence and clear-sightedness in military matters, as cleverly as some great captain with twenty or thirty years experience; and especially in the placing of artillery, for in that she acquitted herself magnificently."

The stunning success of the Loire campaign depended on proper use of artillery, and also on Jeanne's ability to instill the concept of unified command in her army. Previously, lacking leadership, the French soldiers would attack and retreat at will. With Jeanne's firm and decisive leadership, they came to know the discipline of attacking as a united force, and retreating only when ordered to do so. Thus, the French were able to repeatedly pound holes in enemy lines and rout them. In this way, the Maid of Orléans cleared the path to Reims.

Once the King was crowned, Jeanne set her eyes immediately on the march to take Paris, where the Burgundians had established a stronghold. Inexplicably, the King temporized; in fact, he had agreed to a deal with his enemies, which had allowed them time to fortify Paris. When, finally, the King gave the order to attack, Jeanne's army was unable to storm through the defenses. Jeanne was again wounded in the battle. As was her wont, she returned to battle the next day, only to learn that the weak-willed King had called for retreat. Charles negotiated another deal with his enemies, and disbanded her army.

Jeanne was furious. Not only was Paris lost to the enemy, but also most of the towns along the Loire River that she had liberated, were now handed back to the Anglo-Burgundians. Her army disbanded, she was on her own, ignored and certainly reviled by her enemies in the court. In the Spring of 1430, the King admitted that his war-by-diplomacy was a failure. However, he did not realize just how tragic his error was, of cutting off Jeanne. Had she had her way, Paris would have been freed. But more significantly, Jeanne's entire military career had demonstrated conclusively, that had she remained making the strategic decisions, and personally leading her men into battle, the Hundred Years War would have come to an abrupt end, then, rather than 24 years later.

## Capture at Compiègne

After Jeanne's betrayal by the very King she had fought to crown, the Burgundians moved to lay siege to the strategic city of Compiègne, just north of Paris. Jeanne could no longer be restrained in her enforced idleness: As at Orléans, the patriotic forces inside Compiègne resisted heroically, despite the fact that Charles had ceded to the Burgundians, but the city's inhabitants needed reinforcements quickly. Hanotiaux reports that Compiègne was the command center of all communications between Duke Philip of Burgundy and his stronghold at Paris. Freeing Compiègne would cut his line of communication. She immediately organized a battalion of Italian mercenaries, leading them to Compiègne, which she was able to

enter. DeVries charges that Jeanne committed treason, because she left for Compiègne without permission from the King. In fact, it is obvious that it was King Charles VII who had committed the treason, by disbanding the army that had brought him victory.

In order for his siege on Compiègne to succeed, Duke Philip of Burgundy amassed a huge army and artillery train, directing it entirely against Jeanne and Compiègne. Her forces fought valiantly, but since no help came from the King, she was beaten back, again and again. The Burgundian chronicles of this battle, cited by DeVries, show their reluctant admiration for this sainted warrior. When Jeanne and her army became trapped in a Burgundian ambush, the Burgundian chron-

## The Historical Jeanne d'Arc

*This memorandum, dated Nov. 7, is part of a dialogue with researchers investigating the historic role of Jeanne d'Arc.*

It would be important to compare the account [*Jeanne d'Arc*] by [France's late 19th-Century former Foreign Minister Gabriel] Hanotiaux for presence, or absence of attention to this point: Beginning on p. 237 of the English translation of Régine Pernoud's *Jeanne d'Arc*, and ending at the beginning of the following page, there appears a most significant interpolated commentary, situating not only the case of the inquisition against her, but also a number of the most significant persecutors, as partisans of that Conciliar movement, as at Basel, which aimed at that destruction of the Christian Church actually accomplished under later, Venetian direction, during the schisms and religious warfare which came to dominate most of the Sixteenth Century and most of the first half of the Seventeenth.

It was the turn within the Conciliar movement steered largely by Nicholas of Cusa, and the aftermath of the great ecumenical Council of Florence, which set into motion Jeanne's rehabilitation from the fraudulent charges which had been placed against her by those scalawags, based in the University of Paris, who had operated under the cover of the orders directed from the King of England and the Duke of Burgundy.

Add to this, that it was the establishment of the first sovereign nation-state, under France's King Louis XI, which brought together not only the role of Jeanne and the Council of Florence in creating modern Europe, but which, by leading to the founding of the first English state based

on the same principle of the general welfare, that under the Henry VII, whose principle of law was best expressed by the great statesman Sir Thomas More, that chain of circumstances leading into the unique historical role of the 1776-1789 American Revolution has played in shaping world history since.

This approach to the appreciation of Jeanne d'Arc's living place in modern history, frees her reputation from those would-be historians who seek to account for her role in terms of one or another sort of banal, "connecto" variety of conspiracy. That is to say, if one grasps the sweep of and within European history, from the Thirteenth-Century beginning of the Guelph League's ultramontanism, through the Fourteenth-Century New Dark Age which that ultramontanism produced, and situates the struggle for the belated establishment of a form of political society based upon natural law, the sovereign form of nation-state republic dedicated to the general welfare, we see Jeanne in the context of an individual who, in her special way, played a crucial historical role, contributing crucially to defeating the cause of her opponents within that century, the opponents of the Fifteenth-Century Golden Renaissance.

By recognizing the role of the Spanish monarchy, in betraying the anti-Venice League of Cambrai, and thus setting into motion that takeover of Henry VIII which led to the judicial murder of Thomas More, real history comes to life before our eyes, rather than some silly "connecto" chronicle with its customary, fraudulent "explanations."

The key fact, is the identity of the University of Paris, and of the figures associated with the evil tradition of that University, behind the figures used by England and Burgundy in the case of Jeanne, which closes the principal gap in the account. That these were also leading figures of the variety of ultramontanist faction behind the anti-Pope and the Basel Council, brings several centuries, before and following, into focus in presenting to issue the stream of history in which the individual historical role of Jeanne was actually situated.—*Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.*

icler Georges Chastellain reports that she refused to retreat, telling her men: “ ‘You be quiet! Their defeat depends on you. Think only of striking at them.’ Even though she said this, her men did not want to believe it, and by force they made her return directly to the bridge. And when the Burgundians and English saw that she was trying to return to the town, with a great effort, they came to capture the bridge. And there was a great clash of arms.”

Her only means of escape was to return into the city over the bridge, but, the Governor of Compiègne, seeing the troops coming, raised the bridge and shut the city gates, cutting off Jeanne’s entry. Jeanne was captured, on May 23, 1430, and made prisoner of war. Her captor, the Duke of Luxembourg, could have set a ransom for her or set her free. The King could have negotiated to exchange some English generals whom the French held prisoner for her.

But, no one did anything at all. Soon after, the Duke of Luxembourg sold her to the English for 10,000 pieces of gold.

From January to May 1431, she was subjected to an almost daily inquisition in a kangaroo court. She was found guilty of heresy and witchcraft, and condemned to death as a witch. On May 30, 1431, Jeanne d’Arc was burnt at the stake in the public marketplace in Rouen.

DeVries’s final judgment of Jeanne is shockingly cheap. His conclusion is that she only indirectly brought about end of the Hundred Years War. In fact, the tragedy is that the

war could have been ended quickly, had it not been for the blindness of Charles VII. DeVries admits, although grudgingly, that Jeanne owes her renown to her military ability, and that after her death, France’s military leaders did adopt her method of direct engagement/frontal assault. Jesuitically, DeVries adds that, although this tactic did indeed lead to victory, it was a costly method of fighting. But perhaps, he coyly concludes, those French leaders also believed with Jeanne, that their soldiers, should they die, would go to Heaven.

Regarding her tactic, though, DeVries is forced to admit that, “in the long run, it was more effective in wresting France from the English than any other tactic.”

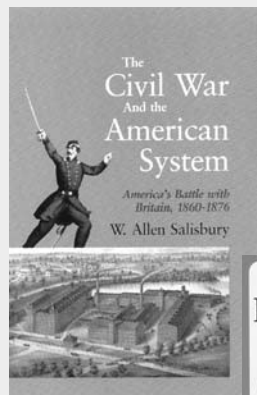
What he is too miserly to admit, is that Jeanne d’Arc was a genius, with an incredible force of will, enabling her to overcome any obstacle whatsoever, in her determination to fight, and achieve victory, for the general welfare. Her inspirational leadership caused great numbers of common people to join her in battle for the freedom of their country. Military leaders bent to her will. She, however, bowed to no one but God, and assumed that any ordinary person should do the same as she was doing: act on God’s will. Her personal action in leading the battle, inspired the ordinary people to fight for their nation, and in so doing, they suddenly discovered the idea of the nation-state. Thanks to her, Charles VII’s son, Louis XI, similarly educated as she had been, would establish the first nation-state on the foundations of Jeanne’s victory.

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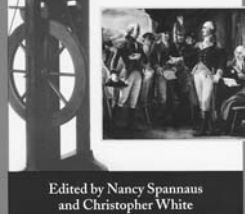


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