PART THREE

NATIONS AND EMPIRES
At the beginning of the Hussite revolution, Hussite religious thought, the politics of the second decade of the fifteenth century, and the nobles’ comprehension of Czech law all converged in manifestos sent out by Hussites who wanted to explain their reasons for revolting against their would-be king, Emperor Sigismund Luxemburg.\textsuperscript{1} Two manifestos, from 1419 and 1420 and using two different methods but containing very similar themes, provide a window into the Hussites’ reasons for rejecting Emperor Sigismund as their king.

In the various manifestos from Hussites are explanations for rejecting Sigismund and arguments for more independent, more domestic governance of the kingdom. For example, that Sigismund did not fulfill his obligations in Jan Hus’s safe-conduct was one of the objections the Hussites raised against Sigismund as a candidate for the Bohemian throne. On July 6, 1415, as is well known, Hus was burned as a heretic at the Council of Constance. Emperor Sigismund had provided Hus—who was a subject of his brother King Wenceslas IV—with safe-conduct. In Sigismund’s opinion the safe-conduct was to the Council, but in the opinion of many nobles in Bohemia and Moravia the safe-conduct was supposed to be to the Council and back to the safety of Bohemian land. The execution galvanized many Czech nobles against the logical successor of their aging king four years before King Wenceslas died. The rejection of Emperor Sigismund as king of Bohemia, therefore, had roots in the time when the Hussite reformation was barely starting. Another recurring argument in the manifestos is more general and less specific to the Hussite reformation: the expectation that a king would be an augmenter of the realm. This expectation occurs in a satire, but it

\textsuperscript{1} In my dissertation, “The Political Side of Hussitism: Late Medieval Law in Bohemia and the Holy Roman Empire,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005), I examine a law book written between 1394 and 1412 called The Interpretation of Bohemian Land Law, which contains the nobles’ understanding of the law. The author, Lord Ondřej z Dubč, did not live to see the Hussite reformation become a political revolution because he died in 1412, possibly in early 1413.