

17 The Recantation of Ezekiel Beach

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When, for whatever reason, opponents of the popular front renounced their earlier Loyalist convictions and declared their adherence to the common cause, they almost invariably were forced to make a public declaration of their conversion. The procedure itself is important as something of a religious ceremony: a public confession of secular sin, a vow of repentance, and a plea for forgiveness. The nature and content of such declarations reveals the emotive quality and moral dimension of what was in large measure seen as an ideological contest between the righteous Americans and the corrupt British.

December 23, 1775

I, Ezekiel Beach, of the township of Mendham, in the county of Morris, have heretofore, by my words and conduct, been guilty of opposing the good people of this country, in the measures by them adopted for preserving American Freedom, particularly saying, "I had rather the Ministerial troops would conquer the Continental; and further declared, that the Parliament of Great Britain had a right to levy the oppressive taxes and acts upon America, particularly the act for changinge the government of Massachusetts Bay, and further declared, that "I would assist the Ministerial troops with provisions and other necessaries, provided they wou'd pay for the same." And, having, on the most mature deliberation, considered of such my conduct, do most heartily disapprove of the same, and do hereby promise that, for the future, I will observe, as far as in me lies, the rules and regulations of the Honourable Continental Congress and the Provincial Congress of New-Jersey; and will use my best endeavours to promote and carry into execution every measure adopted already, or that may hereafter be adopted by said Congresses for preserving the rights and liberties of this country, and I will most cheerfully sign the Association adopted by said Provincial Congress when thereunto required; and do hereby desire, that in future the good people of this country would consider me as a friend to the same, which I hope to mainfest by my conduct.

EZEKIEL BEACH.

Signed at Morris-Town, this 23d day of December, 1775.

Witnesses present: Thomas Milledge, Cornelius Ludrow, Peter Layten.