

183. Information Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs (Fischer) to Secretary of State Haig¹

Washington, April 27, 1982

SUBJECT

Public Sides with Britain in Falklands Dispute

Americans overwhelmingly disapprove of Argentina's takeover of the Falklands and favor "backing" Britain in the dispute. These findings come from an ABC poll, the first on this issue publicly released, conducted April 8-10.

Nearly four-fifths of those polled said they were aware of the dispute. Their views: (1) Argentina did *not* have "good reason" to seize the Falklands (by 61 to 15 percent). (2) Britain would be justified in using military force to try to recapture the Falklands if negotiations failed (by 46 to 36 percent). (3) The U.S. should "back" Britain in case the dispute resulted in a war between Argentina and Britain (50 percent favored backing Britain, only 5 percent favored backing Argentina; a substantial minority, 30 percent, volunteered a preference for neutrality).

Previous polls on attitudes toward other U.S. security commitments suggest that the public supports "backing" in the form of diplomatic and economic measures, but almost certainly opposes direct U.S. military involvement. What attitudes would be to U.S. military facilitation of the British fleet are less certain.

Additional details are attached.²

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, P820066-0303. No classification marking. Drafted by Alvin Richman (PA/OAP) on April 26. Haig initialed at the top right-hand corner of the memorandum, indicating that he saw it.

² Not printed is a page entitled "Falkland Islands Poll: The Q's and the A's," which contained the text of the questions asked by the ABC poll as well as the answers given by those polled.