

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

Washington, May 5, 1982

SUBJECT

In Falklands Dispute, Americans Much More Sympathetic to Britain, But Overwhelmingly Favor Neutrality

Listening to the war of words between Argentina and Great Britain, Americans respond sympathetically to the British argument for self-determination by the Falkland Islanders, but not to the Argentine argument against British colonialism. Moreover, Americans react much more sympathetically to Britain's self-justification that it is repelling aggression than to Argentina's self-justification that the British have dragged their feet in negotiations.

All in all, *a far larger proportion of the American public is sympathetic to the British than to the Argentines (60% vs 19%). Hispanics are also more pro-British than pro-Argentine (56% vs 27%). The overwhelming preference, however, is that the U.S. remain neutral in the war (83%), rather than help Britain (favored by 12%) or Argentina (favored by a mere 1%).*

The public's predominantly pro-British sentiment probably disposes it to support Britain diplomatically and economically, but certainly not militarily.

These findings come from a Harris poll conducted April 16–22. Additional details about the poll are attached.²

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, P820069–1768. No classification marking. Drafted by Roshco and A. Richman (PA/OAP) on May 4. Haig initialed the memorandum, indicating that he saw it. A stamped notation also indicates that Haig saw it.

² Attached but not printed.