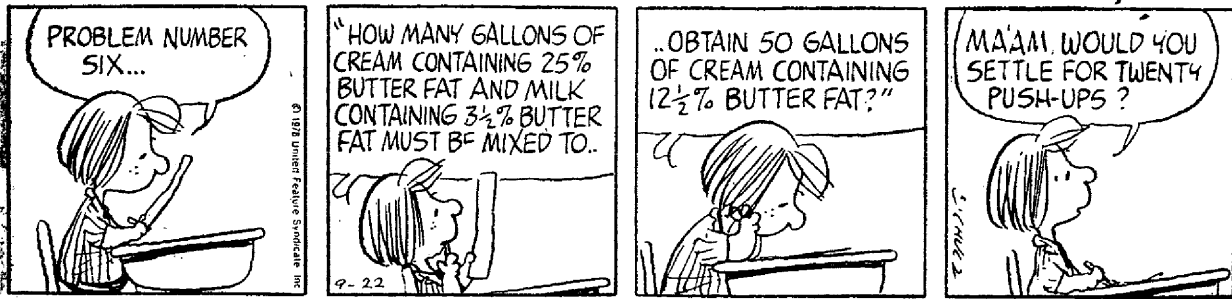


Peanuts

By Schulz



Warren Probe Would Have Been Wider if It Knew of Plots on Castro, Ford Says

BY ROBERT L. JACKSON
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Former President Gerald R. Ford told House investigators Thursday that the Warren Commission would have widened its inquiry into President John F. Kennedy's slaying if it had known about secret U.S. plots to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro.

But Ford, who served on the Warren panel, said he believed the commission still would have concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald, a Castro sympathizer, had acted alone in killing Kennedy.

"To date I have seen no new evidence that would change my views," Ford told the House Assassinations Committee.

The former Chief Executive said he had not learned until 1975 that the Central Intelligence Agency had withheld information from the commission in 1963 about its prior involvement in three unsuccessful plots to murder Castro.

These plots, which came to light while Ford was President during a 1975 Senate investigation of the CIA, involved cooperation between the federal government and underworld figures Sam Giancana and John Rosselli.

If word of these assassination attempts had reached the commission, "it would have required the commission to extend its inquiry into those kinds of operations," Ford testified.

But he added, "I do not believe that if there was an association between the CIA and some underworld characters, that would have changed the conclusions of the commission."

Castro has told House investigators who visited Cuba that it would have been "insane" for him to conspire to murder Kennedy. He said it would have given the United States "the most perfect pretext" for invading Cuba.

Ford, who was a Republican congressman from Michi-

gan when he was appointed to the Warren Commission, denied suggestions in a 1964 memo obtained by the committee that the Warren panel might be pushed to reach a "lone assassin" finding.

The memo, written by former presidential aide Walter Jenkins, quoted FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as saying that a report should be issued soon "so we can convince the public that Oswald was the assassin."

"I can fully understand the concern of the White House staff for some early resolution," Ford said. But he added that "the commission set its own schedule" and he could recall no pressures for "any particular conclusion" at an early date.

Calling the September, 1964, Warren Report "an authoritative document," Ford said that "in too many instances critics have misstated or omitted facts uncovered by the commission." Ford has written a book about the investigation, titled "Portrait of the Assassin."

There is "a general public cynicism," he said, about believing that political assassinations can be the work of one man.