Westmoreland Charges
by Art Silverman

"The thing that people in this country don't understand about Vietnam is that they don't regard life over there like we do. Life is plentiful in the Orient; life is forever." 

- General William C. Westmoreland from the film Hearts and Minds

**US Cowardly In Vietnam**

Charging that America's involvement in the Vietnam War was a mistake and a cowardly betrayal of an American ally, retired General Westmoreland received a standing ovation from San Francisco's Commonwealth Club last week.

It was a shabby performance, said the former Commander of American Forces in Vietnam, now travelling the lecture circuit to promote his new book, A Soldier Reports. "It is a blench on our history and a possible blight on our future."

Just back from an unsuccessful run at the U.S. Senate in his native South Carolina, the one-time U.S. Army Chief of Staff (1965-1972) had nothing kind to say about the Vietnamese victory. "South Vietnam no longer exists, it has been grabbed up by North Vietnam following blatant aggression. The flame of freedom has been extinguished there probably forever."

Westmoreland offered his audience of conservative businessmen at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel half-a-dozen explanations for what happened in Vietnam:

- The antiwar movement. "As our soldiers were fighting and dying for the principle of Vietnam and the right to exist, what did we see at home?" Westmoreland demanded, his voice full of anger. "Unfortunately, a few hundred pacifists, politicians, who had a schematic plan for the world, have been able to sabotage that war, the world's most important war."

- The draft deferment was, to Westmoreland's mind, "a cardinal mistake. . . I attribute: 'It takes the full strength of a tiger to kill the rabbit.'"

- Blatant aggression. The flame of freedom was in Westmoreland's opinion "inadequate aerial bombardment in history, was in Westmoreland's opinion "inside-out."" The bombing of Vietnam, the most intense aerial bombardment in history, was in Westmoreland's opinion "inside-out.""

- The news media. The press 'were taken in' by fire, in which a platoon of 40 infantrymen would be sent out as human rain darts to wander through the jungle until they got wiped out. After a short while, soldiers assigned to these suicide squads learned to simply march out a few hundred yards, sit down on mass, and smoke dope until their assigned patrol time was over.

- Having thus spread blame for the war, and after noting "the sad commentary on our open society was masterfully manipulated by Moscow and Hanoi," Westmoreland offered his audience a few suggestions to prevent the reoccurrence of our same experience.

- "We must select our leaders carefully... when there is the threat of war, the military leadership must make reasonable military decisions (made by politicians)... when our national reputation and a man's conscience are at stake... We must now show a more convincing sense of reality."

"We should heed an old Oriental saying: 'It takes the full strength of a tiger to kill the rabbit.'"

Snyder Back In Bay Area

State Assemblyman John Vasconcellos (I.) and poet Gary Snyder addressing the California Arts Commission meeting last week in Richmond, Snyder, who is Arts Commission chairman, also appeared recently at the San Francisco Poetry Festival and the California Celebrates the Whole Day festivities in Sacramento.