



## Aikido Seminar in Bratislava

*The October Aikido Seminar in Bratislava called me to see this beautiful city again. Only this time it gave me extra-feelings. Wonderful feelings.*

Although it had been only a month since I had met Waka Sensei in Cluj-Napoca, I was eager to attend his practices. I was also looking forward to seeing again Asai Sensei, for I have met him for the first time two years ago, when the Congress in Tokyo. Regarding Quaranta Sensei, I had an innocent curiosity of how his practice is like. I had never had before the pleasure of practicing Aikido under his guidance.

I must say the experiences on the tatami were beautiful and educational. Waka Sensei has this friendly way of teaching. I think that when he works with you, you get the impression that something that seemed complicated is actually simple thanks to a friend that pointed out for you the detail that made the difference. For instance, I was doing a juji garami and, the next moment, Waka Sensei came and draw my attention to the way one of my hands should be in order the technique to come out correctly. There was no brag or tedious attitude although he must have shown the technique thousands of times. And I had this feeling that a friend helped me with my progress.

Nevertheless, Waka Sensei has the attitude of a leader who knows exactly

what will happen next and what to do. He is very young? Indeed, but he is so into everything that is Aikido. I like the energy he spreads on the tatami. I also enjoy his demonstrations. He has a very fluid way of working during the demonstrations. It was the same in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Masaya Tokuda 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan Shidojin was uke for Waka Sensei at this seminar and, as I use to pay special attention to the ukemi of the uke, I noticed his slaps on the mat, the constant speed and sound of the thumps, his circular moves, the breathing and the connection with the tori. Asai Sensei said that he thinks ukemi should be made very silent and smooth because when you fall and hit the concrete you can hurt yourself if you slap too hard. In my opinion, the two visions donot necessarily exclude each other. I think that depending on situations, speed of counter-attack, ground, free space and so on, uke should do what it'd fit him best. I remember when I experienced a falling on ice and I made a simple yoko ukemi, but with a good slap. I know my hand hurt a little, but other than that I was fine. Had someone else hit the ice in a smooth way? Perhaps so. But the important thing is that both ways give protection. Anyway, I am still working on improving my ukemi and I have many things to learn on this matter (and not only).

Asai Katsuaki 8<sup>th</sup> Dan Shihan pointed out the fact that if you donot master

the sabaki, it is almost useless to study complicated techniques. A great deal of the class was focused on the thai sabaki. It was mostly individual practice so everyone could pay attention to his own moves, cuts, ashi sabaki, tenkai and so on. Posture, stay straight. Have same speed. I think every aikidoka has to practice these things constantly. Basic of the basic. No matter how ahead in development one is, he always returns to the basics and, going round, being in control of the basics means one can be in control of complex things as well.


I couldnot help being impressed with the fact that Asai Sensei was a direct student of O'Sensei. The circle of life took many of such students away from us and yes, we are grateful that the art of harmony could be spread in such a way that it overcame time and distance. And this particular master, standing in front of me, in front of the large class, had a special glitter. The glitter of vanquishing time and distance.

Michele Quaranta 6<sup>th</sup> Dan Sensei beautifully surprised me with his energetic class and the joyful mood he created. One said you cannot truly practice Aikido if you donot smile. Quaranta Sensei seemed to follow the saying fully. He didnot spend much time showing a technique in front of the entire audience. Tops 30 seconds. You had to be very attentive so you should know what to do. But Quaranta Sensei was working a lot with the people on the

tatami so he could correct different details of the technique. It is difficult for me now to say what defines his style, because he does have a specific way of moving, twisting, speeding. But it is a winsome Aikido and one could only most enjoy it. I would love to see him at a seminar in Romania in the future.

Besides the tatami practices, I perceived Bratislava as a welcoming city. I visited the old town and the famous castle. Also had fun in a great brewpub, a dancing rockpub and a fancy restaurant. I specifically visited the photo&graphic Aikido exhibition that had the vernissage during the seminar. The Romanian photographer

Anca State had some works there and I must admit I was happy to find myself in one of her pictures. The sayounara party was an interesting moment, when I had the chance to meet and talk to new friends. All gathered under the same tent it was impossible not to get close to Aikido colleagues. The ties of Aikido have all kinds of forms!

All in all, it was a very pleasant journey and there were very good Aikido practices! Congratulations to the organizers! Hope to see as many of the new Aikido friends at the following seminars! 

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... waka Sensei zeigt Suwariwaza – © Horst Schwickerath 2014

