

Andre Nocquet, his aikido and message

by Eddy Wolput 7th dan (Japan Aikido Association)

„Le troisième jour c'est le jour des morts”

“The third day is the day of the dead”



1972 : The dojo was located near the centre of La Baule (France), a „balneal” in the south of Brittany. The mat was slightly covered with sand of the nearby beach. Most of the practitioners were mudan , but not really beginners. The majority were French practitioners, but also people from Belgium, Germany and other countries. The teacher was „Andre Nocquet”, a small well-built man in his late fifties. His uke had bandages around his wrists. After a few demonstrations I understood very well why the uke had many bandages. Andre Nocquet enjoyed his aikido and sometimes he forgot the limitations of the human bodies.

Andre Nocquet explained very well the techniques and add a lot of stories with his teachings. Stories about his staying in Japan with Morihei Ueshiba, but also stories about his time before the war doing judo and jujutsu with Kawaishi sensei..

I believe a lot of the people practicing at those seminars were a little afraid of him when he came around to correct you. When he explained a technique on you, you felt the technique in your whole body, especially at the weak parts. His ni-kyo and san-kyo were very efficient and if you tried to resist (consciously or unconsciously) suddenly there was the pain and no more resistance. During those seminars, 6 days a week, a very understandable program was taught spiced up with jujutsu tricks. Some sessions were finished with lectures, and he read from his book to be published yet.

Each session started with a „short” warming-up, and ended with a cooling down, sometimes with exercises from his experience as a physiotherapist or shiatsu therapist.

He was not afraid to approach a politically charged topic. In that time (early seventies) he tried to establish a joint aikido union together with Nobuyoshi Tamura and Hiroo Mochizuki and he spoke about the difficulties of forming such a joint group with a common syllabus.

In 1972, the seminar was in the dojo near the center of La Baule, the next year we moved to a newly build sports centre and some of the magic was gone. The sporthall was too big and the acoustics was not optimal for listening to Andre Nocquet lectures.

The first time when I went to those seminars, we also practiced at the beach under a radiant sun. In some way this was one of the best sessions with him, because only about 15 people were brave enough to defy the sun and sand. I and my fellow mates had a lot of attention of him.

I went always to those seminars for a 2-week sessions. The second week was almost identical to the first week, even the stories he told were the same.

The strongest memory of him is his statement : „Le troisième jour c'est le jour des morts”
"The third day is the day of the dead". In his belief, the 3rd day of a long seminar is a day where you can have injuries, and he insisted to be very carefully on the 3rd day.

In 1975, another instructor, Minoru Kanetsuka, was programmed and this had an impact on the number of people present. Minoru Kanetsuka was lesser known by the French and not so many people attended this seminar.

About the technical content :

His seminar was a 6-day course with a session in the morning and in the afternoon. I had the impression he was following the structure of the post-war AikiKai syllabus organized by Kisshomaru Ueshiba. This impression came after reading the book „Aikido” written by Kisshomaru Ueshiba (1969) based upon 2 earlier books „Aikido” (1958) and „Aikido Giho” (1962).

Andre Nocquet believed suwari waza is very basic to learn more about aikido and he started many basic techniques from a suwari waza perspective. This was rather new for me because my first aikido teacher didn't do suwari waza probably due knee injuries.

Tanto, bokken and jo was an important part of the seminar. The teaching of the weapons was not based upon how to use the weapon, but more how to defend yourself against an attack of the weapon. Of course, without the proper teaching „how to use the weapon” the defenses against weapon attacks were not high skilled.

Andre Nocquet also introduced some shiatsu techniques at the end of a session.

1st day

M:

Irimi nage - gyaku katate dori (suwari waza)

Irimi nage - yokomen uchi

Irimi nage - morote dori (katate & kata)

Sokumen irimi nage - ushiro ryokata dori

A:

Accepting yokomen uchi

Shiho nage - yokomen uchi

Kote gaeshi - gyaku katate dori

Kote gaeshi - mune tsuki (one hand kote gaeshi)

2nd day

M:

Kokyu nage - ryote dori

Kokyu nage - ushiro ryote dori

Kote gaeshi - mune tsuki

Kote gaeshi - jodori

Irimi nage - shomen uchi/Shiho nage - yokomen uchi/Kote gaeshi - mune tsuki

Soto kaiten nage - katate dori (suwari waza)

A:

Study kata dori/shomen uchi

Preparation for tenchi-nage

Tenchi nage - ryote dori

Irimi nage - shomen uchi/Shiho nage - yokomen uchi/Kote gaeshi - mune tsuki/Soto kaiten nage - katate dori/Tenchi nage ryote dori

3rd day

M:

Ik-kyo - shomen uchi (suwari waza)

Ni-kyo - shomen uchi (suwari waza)

Ni-kyo - gyaku katate dori

A:

Ik-kyo - shomen uchi

San-kyo - shomen uchi (suwari waza)

San-kyo shomen uchi

4th day

M:

Koshi nage - ryote dori (uchi)

Koshi nage - ryote dori (soto)

Koshi nage -kata dori

A:

Yon-kyo - shomen uchi

Ushiro waza study

5th day

M:

Ushiro waza - 5 applications - kokyu nage, kokyu nage, san-kyo, juji garami, kote gaeshi

A:

Tanto dori - preparation

Go-kyo - yokomen uchi (tanto)

Kote gaeshi - shomen uchi tanto)

Ude kime nage -yokomen uchi (tanto)

Kote gaeshi - tsuki (tanto)

6th day

M:

Jodori

A:

Rehearsal

Randori