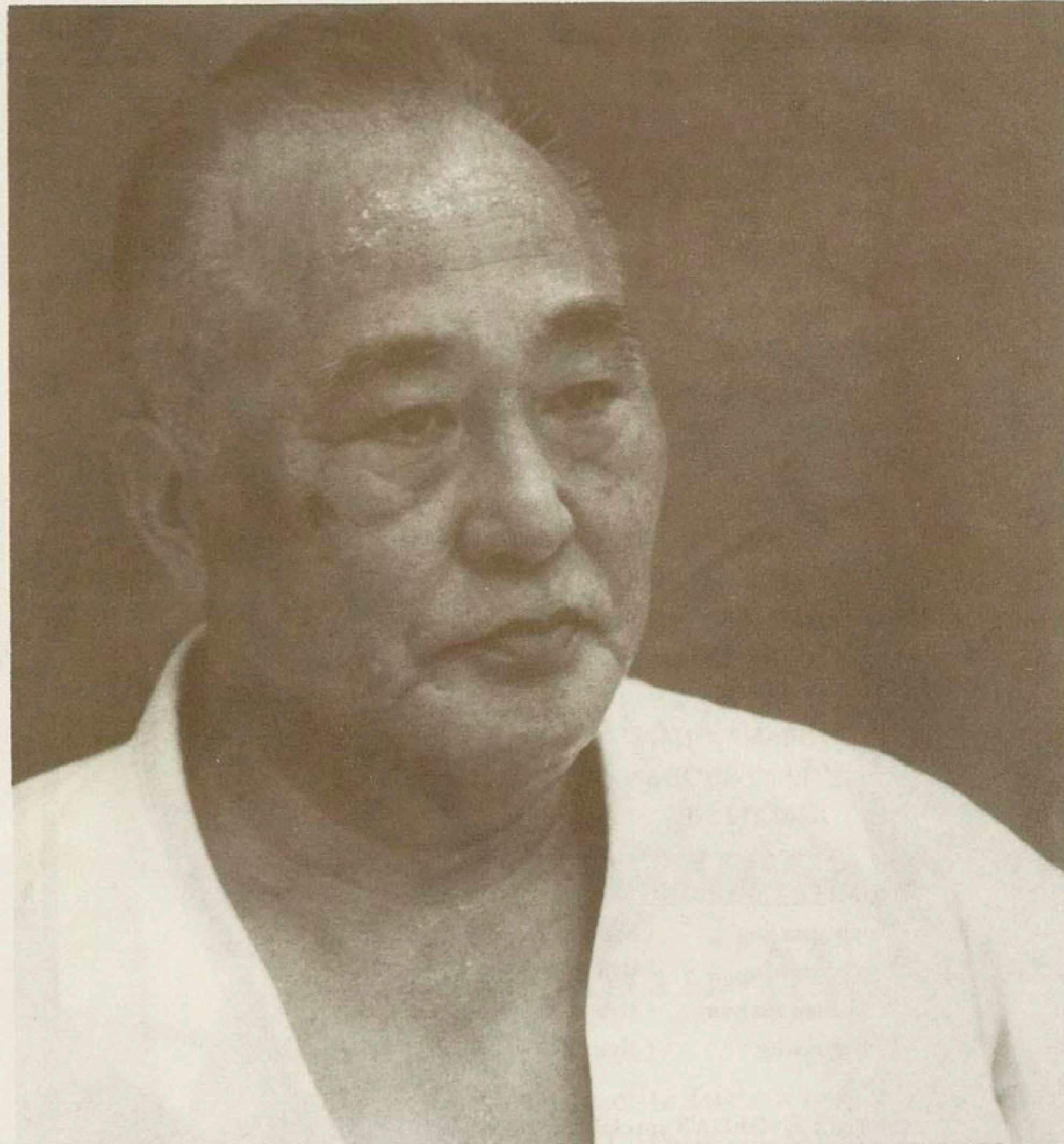


SENSEI KASE IN LUXEMBOURG 'STEVE CATTLE MEMORIAL COURSE'

Report and Photo's By Peter Taylor



Master Taiji Kase, Chief Instructor to the World Karate Shotokan Academy (based in France).

On 24th February this year, some 200 karateka, many of whom had come a long way to train with Sensei Kase, assembled for the third WKSA (World Karate Shotokan Academy) course in Luxembourg.

As Steve Cattle died on his way home from Luxembourg last year, this years course was dedicated to his memory and a minutes silence was observed before the training started.

People who attend Sensei Kase's courses regularly will know that he is keen to pack as much information as possible into his sessions so that people can go home with plenty of training material to be assimilated and practiced in their dojo's. This course was no exception and he gathered us around at intervals to explain what an exercise was intended to achieve. He would demonstrate with a student or correct two students demonstrating in front of the class (a stressful experience for those involved,

under the watchful eyes of Sensei Kase and 200 students, but a useful opportunity for him to observe their reaction to pressure) or to pass on some of his fifty years experience of martial arts.

As usual, he had a wealth of anecdotes and memories to offer, all delivered in his own inimitable style and all underpinning his views on how to make progress in and benefit from a martial art.

While he stresses the practical nature of Karate - distinguishing sharply between 'reality' and 'formality' - and the years of unremitting effort that are required to make progress, he is critical of mindless repetition, which in the long run, can lead to frustration and physical wear and tear. He encourages his students to explore the benefits of breathing and mental exercises so that the body can be used more economically to generate speed and power, even at an age when physical decline is normally setting in.

In his introduction to the kata Sochin, he told us about a famous school of swordsmen in Japan where they practiced striking enormously thick tree trunks with a wooden *bokken* until they could cut a deep groove into the wood. This could only be done by cultivating a fearsome *Kiai* and deep powers of concentration - a perfect example of synergy of the mind, body and breathing.

As an illustration of mental training, he talked about the kata Meikyo, which could be understood as a code for introducing an out-of-body experience when a practitioner would conjure up a mental image of his own reflection in a mirror and then, as it were, slip into this image and observe his own body performing the kata. Interestingly enough, at last year's course Steve Cattle had told us about precisely the same experience in the final of a national championships when he was fighting Terry O'Niell, he had the feeling that he was detached from his body and watching the fight from a few feet away. Apparently Terry O'Niell experienced the same thing.

Sensei Kase insists that the ultimate goal of karate is not technique but something which is beyond technique - control of one's energy. He compared technique to a starting handle, which is not an end in itself but simply a means of getting the (internal) engine running.

At a much lower level - and one more relevant to bog standard karateka like most of us - this is a reminder that physical strength and agility are not the only yardstick of proficiency and that more natural breathing, keener concentration and better use of our mental facilities can help us to be more relaxed and effective in the dojo.

For the people who graded (on the course) to *sandan* and *yondan* Sensei Kase certainly wanted to see more than just physical prowess. After the basics, the candidates had to alternate between *kata* (*omote* and *ura*) and *jiyu kumite* without a break until they were exhausted and Sensei could see whether they had the inner resources to stop them from going to pieces. Fortunately, they had. Afterwards he explained laconically, "I know exactly how good these people are but sometimes 'they' don't, so I have to show them."

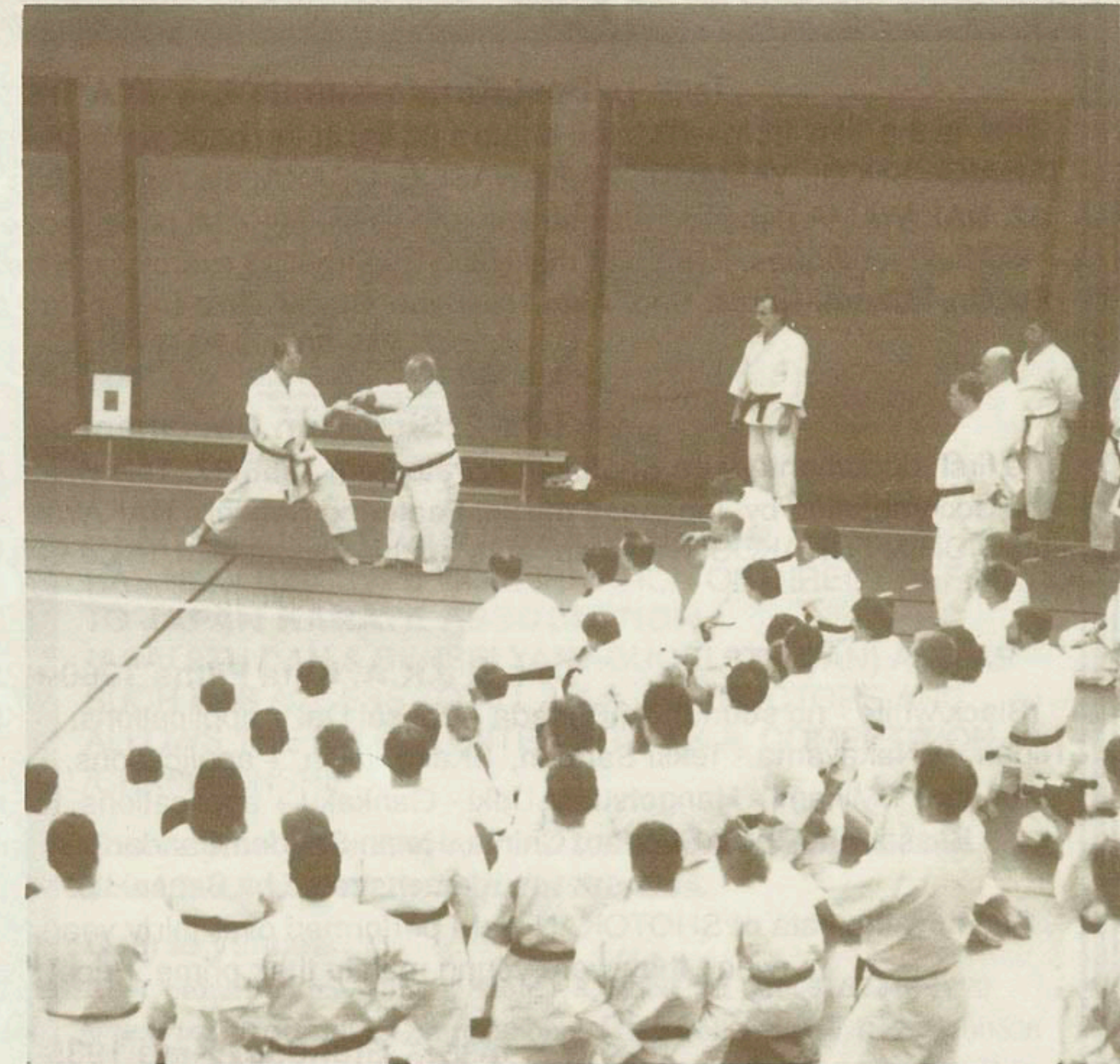
After the gradings there was one more session then it was all over for another year. Addresses and dates for other courses with Sensei Kase were

exchanged and everybody set off back to Aberdeen, Berlin, Brittany or whatever corner of Europe they had come from. One of the features of the course was its international flavour, with strong contingents from Belgium, England, Scotland, Germany and France and it was also a great tribute to the memory of Steve Cattle that so many senior grades, including top-level instructors such as Dirk Heene, Jim Martin, Ken Button and Francois van Binst (to mention only the 5th Dans and above!) had made the journey to Luxembourg.

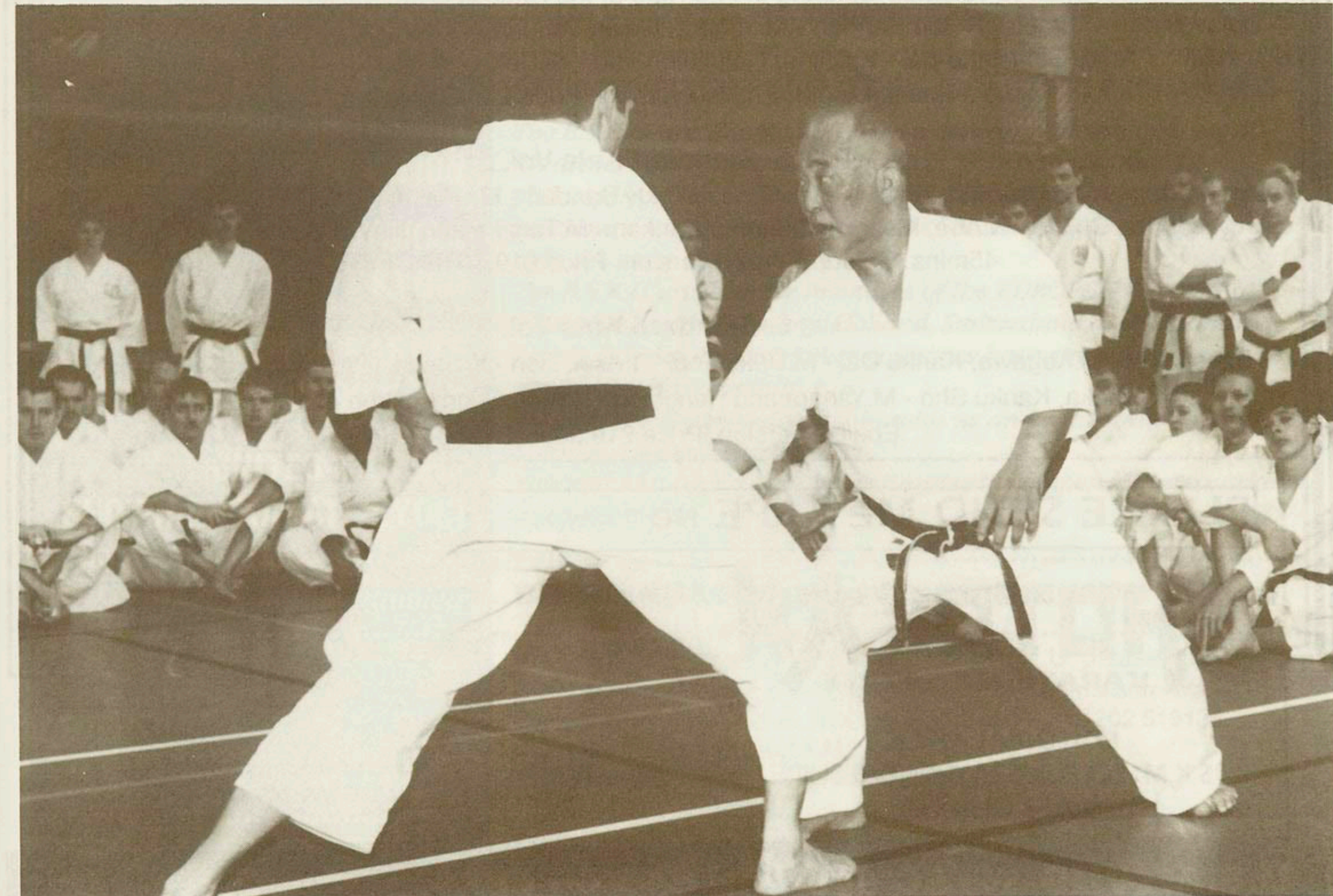
Once again Sensei Kase had managed to create a very special atmosphere where his students could learn a lot, train hard and get to know each other. As a bonus, Sensei Kase offered to teach on this course every year in memory of Steve Cattle.

The Shotokan Karate Club EC Luxembourg would like thank everybody who came to the course and helped make it an enjoyable and memorable occasion. We look forward to seeing you again next year.

Note: The next Steve Cattle Memorial Course will be held on 22nd and 23rd of February 1997. Details available from: Peter Taylor, 42 Rue J. Massarette, L-2137 Luxembourg. Fax: 00352 4301-34389.



Kase Sensei explains the hand positioning and meaning from - Jitte with F. Van Binst (Belgium).



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