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Cover:

Battle scene depicted on cards from the year 1810. Card-playing is supposed to have been spread by mercenaries.
(Photo: Max Baumann)

IMPRESSUM

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 23rd year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 310,000. Regional news appears four times a year.

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You can tell from the regional news in Swiss Review that jass evenings figure prominently in Swiss community reporting the world over. For many Swiss Abroad playing jass is an integral part of social life and reflects something of the feeling they still have for Switzerland.

Although this card game in its present form was in fact "imported" in the eighteenth century by returning mercenaries, jass is considered an archetype of Switzerland. There is hardly a Swiss citizen anywhere who does not know what words like "bock" and "stöck" mean. It is a real popular game which has become a long-running television series and largely because of this has kept its appeal.

The popularisation of jass through television and through the boom in championship matches has led to the publication of the "Official Swiss Jass Regulations". The aim of these is, as the foreword states, to "bring some sort of order to the confusion brought about by differing local and cantonal interpretations". These regulations have in their turn brought a diversity of "jass free spirits" out of the woodwork – who believe that rules are neither useful nor necessary.

But remembering that the world is certainly faced with more important problems, the vast majority of jass players will not worry much about a dispute which sounds so academic. They will simply go on playing jass with merry cheer. Making up their own conventions and rules. With or without regulations there will now and then be heated tempers and red faces.

There will be good luck and bad luck in the cards, making some people boisterous and others enraged. Mistakes will provoke black looks. But in spite of everything jass will remain above all a leisure pastime in which having fun comes first.

The wide popularity of jass throughout Switzerland, including the Fifth, has encouraged us to try

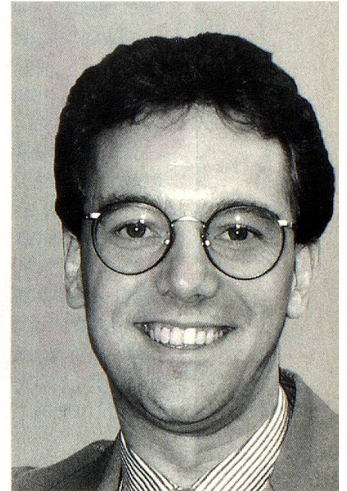
to get to grips with the national game in this issue.

But we do not want to supply jass recipes, and we do not even desire to expatiate about the pros and cons of this and that type of jass.

We are more interested in taking a look at the historical and social aspects of the game.

It is our aim to offer to those of our readers who play jass information about something over and above the technical and tactical. We also want to avoid boring those of them who do not play jass with incomprehensible "jassisms".

We had an idea which is really typically Swiss. We gathered people from the various language regions around a table to play jass. They all won and lost, and they all enjoyed themselves. As is the case with so many things that are supposed to be typically Swiss, jass – even if we were not the first to dream it up – has become an element which binds us all together. And this probably applies most particularly to the Swiss Abroad.



René Lenzin