



Secret Hitler

Designing Conflict & High Tension Moments

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SECRET HITLER



Liberals



VS

Fascists



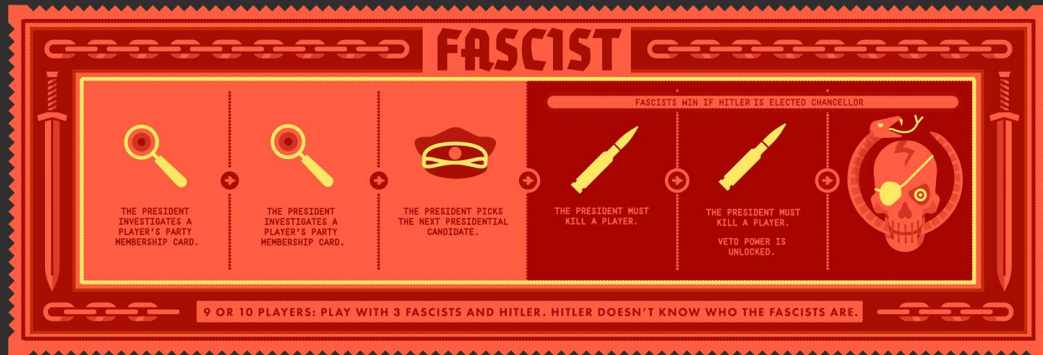
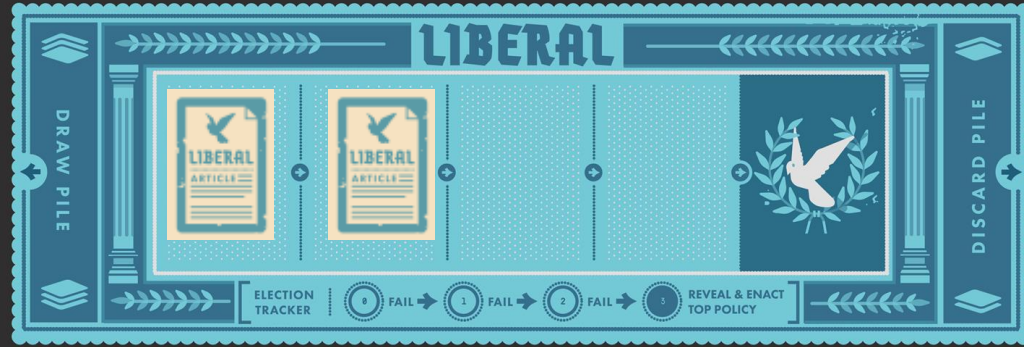
SECRET HITLER



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Social Deduction = Coolest

Easy roleplaying

Tight behavior constraints

Mechanically Driven

Motivation



The Resistance: Avalon

Perfect Game?

Yes.



Early Inspiration

Mechanics based approach was too dry

Researching Hitler's rise, seemed like a compelling setting

Historical research led to mechanical ideas



Design Focus

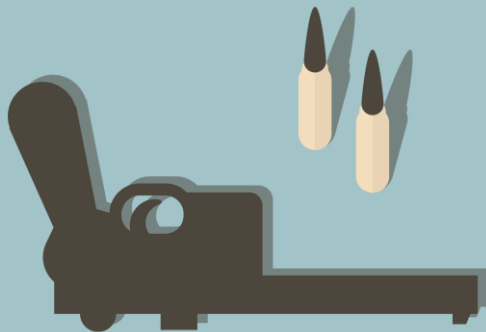
Individual player experiences, not the game itself

Focus on intense and personal moments

Keep the drama high through the whole game

Always let either team feel like they could win

Never let the game slow down to an inevitable
Give them a story



PLOT STRUCTURE



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HITLER**

STRUCTURE



Our Path

Personal Drama

One on One conflicts

Hitler Mechanic

Dramatic Tension

Hitler as Antagonist

Shifting Policy Deck

Extending the Climax

Personal Betrayal as Story

Two player conflicts

More dramatic

Feels like a real betrayal

Can split the table



Avalon's Merlin

Both strength and vulnerability for team

Felt cheap to lose to Merlin death

Secret Hitler's Hitler

Inversion of Merlin

Has no information

Can end the game early instead of late



FASCISTS WIN IF HITLER IS ELECTED CHANCELLOR

YOU CAN ALWAYS LIE
ABOUT WHAT YOU SAW.
NEVER REVEAL
DISCARDED POLICIES.

Members of the most recently
elected government may not
be nominated as Chancellor,
but MAY serve as President.



YOUR ROLE

LIBERAL

Pass 5 liberal
policies or
kill Hitler

dossier

A
VERY
SECRET

dossier

A
VERY
SECRET

dossier

A
VERY
SECRET

dossier



Prototype Success!

Was it working?

Players would tell their own stories

Fascists love close calls

Liberals love to admit mistakes

Always a liberal who knew who was bad and nobody listened (ME)

Why was it working?

Initial prototype focused on creating conflicts

Game felt more tense and told a full story



Policy Deck

Initially had static draw chances

Just wanted a way for fascists to hide evil deeds

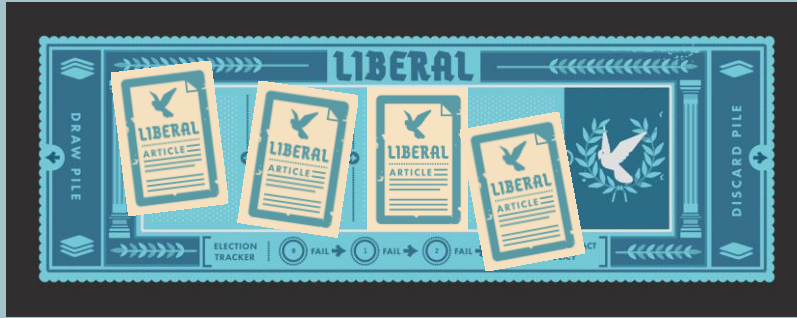
Realized that using a deck that depletes self-balances

Works to naturally set up dramatic tension



Natural Rubber Banding

When Liberals are way ahead, you can expect a backlash



Balancing the Deck

We started with a **6:10** liberal to fascist policy deck

Picked mostly random numbers

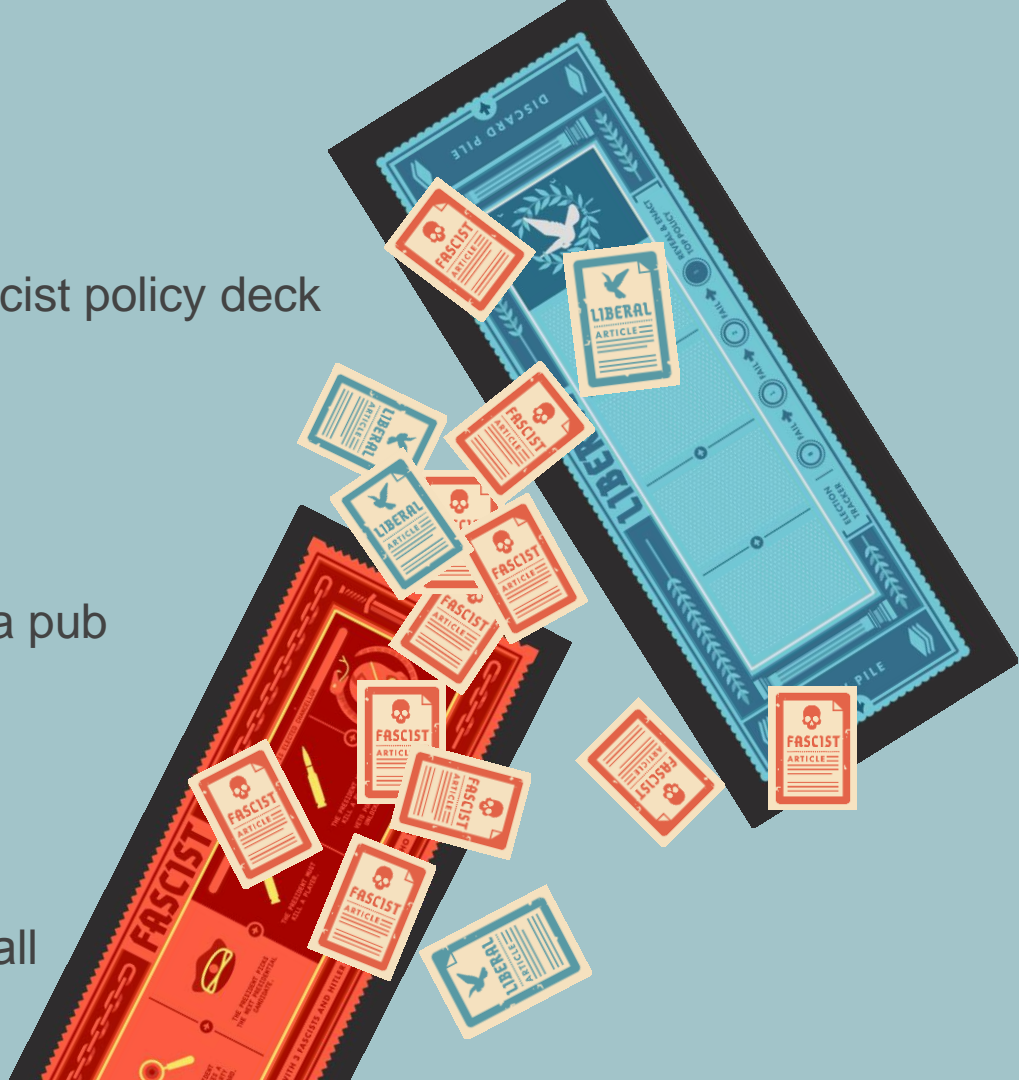
The Red Lion Playtest

Tried **6:12** one night, playtested at a pub

I was Liberal 3x

The game was TERRIBLE

I couldn't tell who was going on at all



Fixed With a Tiny Tweak

I guess it turns out **6:11** is just a magic number

My math brain wants to add that last fascist

Difference between feeling like the game was chaos and just a difficult puzzle



Maintaining Hitler's Threat

Once Hitler is an active threat, the game becomes very tense

Liberals would try to circumvent

Centralizing power in the hands of a few

Needed to force Liberals to seek out new Chancellors

Presidential succession

Term Limits

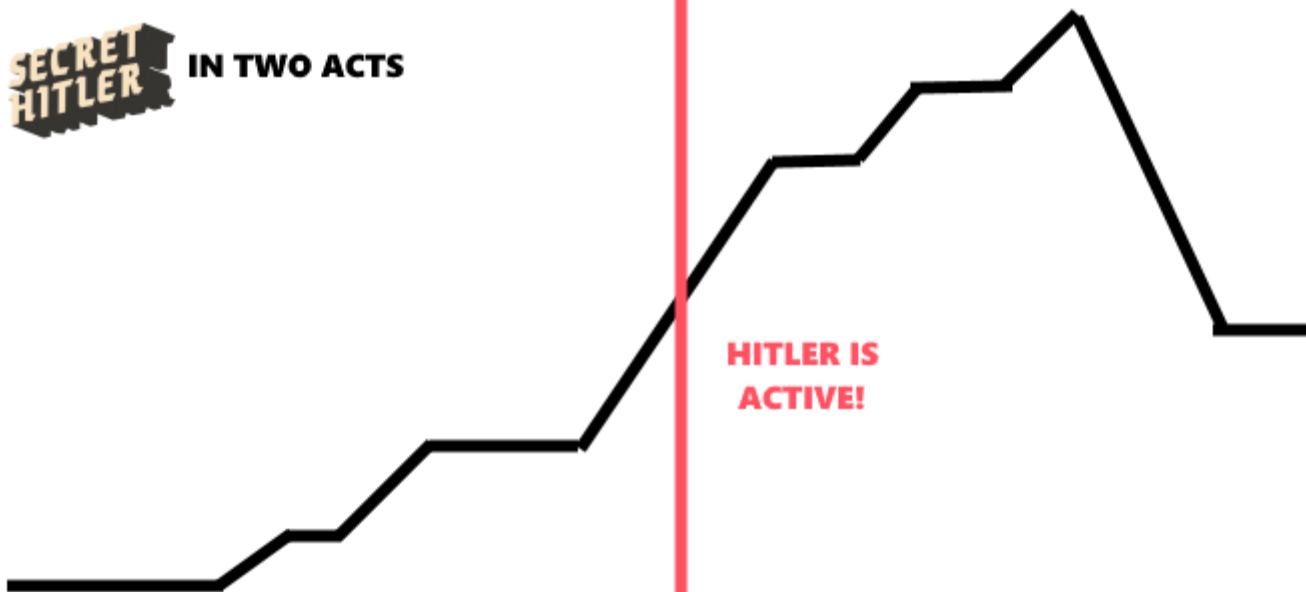
Assassinations



**SECRET
HITLER**

IN TWO ACTS

**HITLER IS
ACTIVE!**



Extending the runway

Didn't want to force two liberals to play the last fascist card

Veto allows a second chance

Extends the climax of the game

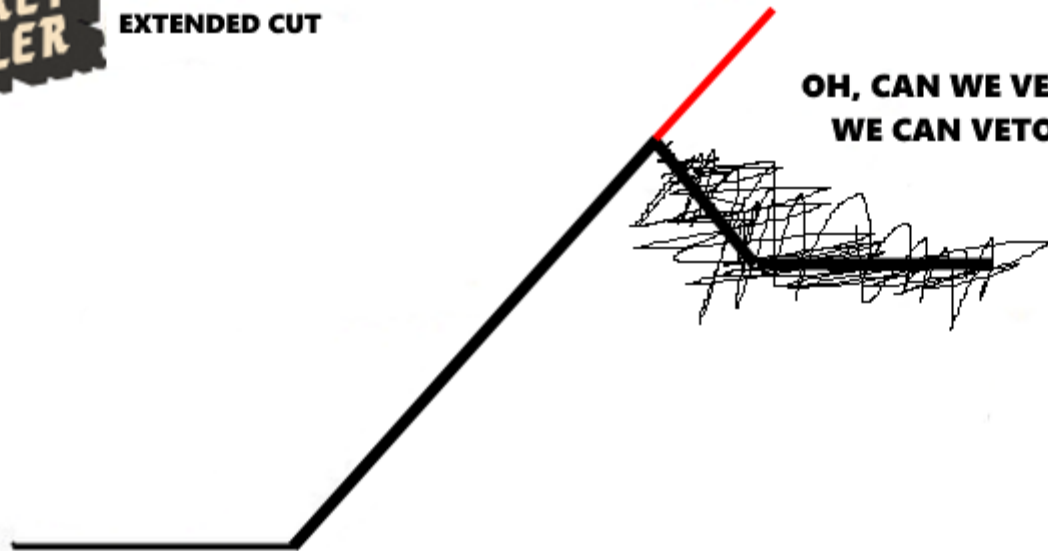
Allows more chances for a fascist player to betray



**SECRET
HITLER**

EXTENDED CUT

**OH, CAN WE VETO?
WE CAN VETO!!**



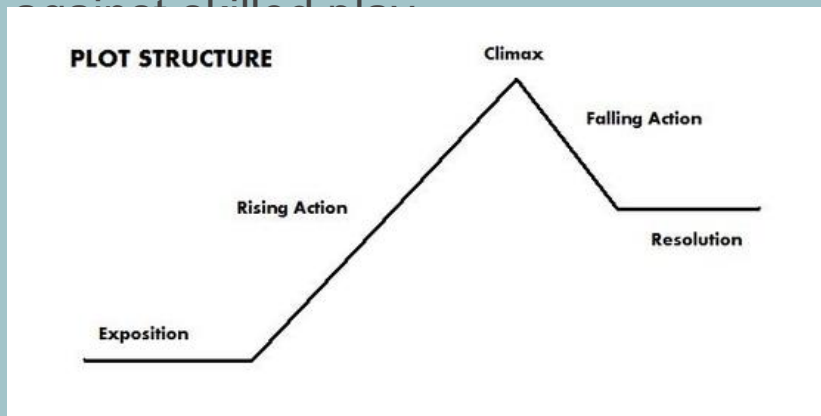
Can you be good at Secret Hitler?

Probably not?

There is a difference between beginners and experienced players

But the game is very random

Self-balancing against skilled players



Is it important that the most skilled players win?

We optimized for a game which generates compelling twists and turns, and created something which people talk about.

We don't care who wins, as long as the experience is rewarding and exciting for those playing.

