

*I came to the cities in a time of unrest,
When hunger reigned.*

Bertolt Brecht

The frenetic gaiety of Berlin's cabarets and cafes formed a glittering counterpoint to the economic chaos and political upheaval that characterized the interwar period. The forced abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1918 left the nation struggling to establish a secure government to replace the monarchy, while left- and right-wing factions clashed openly in the streets.

While extremists battled, the government frantically printed currency to keep up with reparation payments imposed in the wake of Germany's defeat in the First World War. Inflation skyrocketed, reaching terrifying levels in 1923. Money became worthless in days or even hours. Old values of thrift and hard work were shattered; a life's savings could no longer buy a single meal.

This atmosphere of uncertainty and decay provided a breeding ground for both the hedonistic culture of the kabarett and the fascist uprising that would soon snuff out the light of Berlin's 'Golden Twenties'.



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