

# ***Im Schatten der Maschine* [In the Shadow of the Machine] (1928)**

## **Abstract**

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The continuous introduction of new technologies into the workplace and daily life in the 1920s transformed the relationship between humans and machines. An optimistic belief in automated progress coexisted uneasily with feelings of insecurity, overload, and alienation. The 1928 film *Im Schatten der Maschine* [In the *Shadow of the Machine*], directed by Albrecht Viktor Blum (1888–1959) and Leo Lania (1896–1961), compiled clips of industrial and military mechanization into a cinematic collage that evoked both the awesomeness and the destructiveness of the modern condition. The production company “Weltfilm,” founded in 1928 by the leftwing media titan Willi Münzenberg and affiliated with the Communist Party (KPD), funded this picture. In rapid succession, we see footage shot in a range of workplaces, including coal mines, steel works, telephone exchanges, households, and battlefields. Against this omnipresent backdrop of industrial production, people themselves seemed to disappear. Later images highlight the dangers of modern technology in even more immediate terms: collapsed bridges, derailed trains, explosions, and the unprecedented destructiveness of technologized warfare, which still loomed large in the memories of viewers who had lived through the First World War that had ended just ten years earlier.

## **Source**

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Intertitles:  
Downwards!  
Upwards!  
No escape  
Iron  
Steel  
Energy  
Hands -  
off!  
One push of a button  
Fire  
War  
Piecework

Source: *Im Schatten der Maschine*, dir. Albrecht Viktor Blum, Leo Lania, Filmkartell "Weltfilm" GmbH, 1928. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 6661,  
<https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/6661/687331>

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