

SLOVO

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Review: *Fiume o Morte!* (2025)

Directed by: Igor Bezinović

Written by: Igor Bezinović

Production companies: Restart, Videomante, Nosorogi, Croatian Radiotelevision

Running time: 113 minutes

Countries: Croatia, Italy, Slovenia

Languages: Fiuman, Croatian, Italian

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No movie released this year was able to blend language, people, and place as successfully as *Fiume o Morte*. From the very first scene of the movie, it becomes clear that this is not simply a historical film, but a cinematic achievement that brings history, culture, and lived experience together in a way that feels both intimate and ambitious. We simply cannot look past the extraordinary way the film blends its cast, its language, and its locations into a single coherent vision.

Throughout the film, dialogue moves fluidly between Croatian and the Italian dialect of Friulian. This linguistic choice is not a stylistic flourish, but a fundamental part of the movie's realism. It reflects the beautiful and rich cultural and linguistic tapestry of Rijeka in present-day Croatia and its surrounding region, a space historically shaped by overlapping Slavic and Romance influences. Hearing these languages exist side by side on screen mirrors the way they coexisted in everyday life years ago, grounding the narrative firmly in place and time. As a speaker of Italian and someone who is learning Serbo-Croatian, this was a beautiful experience to witness. Rather than simplifying the past for viewers, the movie trusts its audience to engage with its complexity, which becomes one of its greatest strengths.

Visually, *Fiume o Morte* is gorgeous. The cobblestone alleys of Rijeka and its coastal settings used throughout the movie are not merely backdrops, but active participants in the storytelling, especially when compared to the rebuilding that happened after the 1920s and 1930s. Being shot on location, these spaces allow the city itself to speak. The film recreates key aspects of the Siege of Rijeka during the 1920s, a period marked by political uncertainty, ideological experimentation, and competing national claims by different powers of the era. Importantly, this historical context is presented without heavy exposition or narrative

handholding. Instead, the viewer is invited to sit back and absorb the atmosphere of the time through fragments, gestures, images, and photographs, making history feel lived rather than explained.

The cinematographic magic of the movie lies in its ability to transform archival memory into motion. Under the direction of Igor Bezinović, historical photographs and documented moments from Rijeka's past are reimagined as living, breathing sequences. The recreated scenes never feel like traditional reenactments. Instead, they feel as though the viewer is stepping directly into the past, as the camera lingers on faces, streets, and movements in a way that blurs the boundaries between documentation and performance.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the movie is its use of street casting. The filmmakers recruited people directly from the streets of Rijeka. These are not trained actors; they work everyday jobs, and yet their performances are among the most compelling elements of the movie. Every single scene carries a sense of sincerity and immediacy that would be difficult to manufacture through traditional casting methods. The choice to have the main character played by roughly ten different people is especially powerful. This fragmentation resists the idea of a single heroic figure, or villain in this case, and instead suggests a collective experience.

Beyond its artistic success, *Fiume o Morte* is an invaluable film for anyone studying the SSEES region. The movie offers insight into many of the themes that students at SSEES engage with in their day-to-day academic learning. Unsurprisingly, *Fiume o Morte* has already attracted significant critical attention and is well-positioned for recognition at European film festivals and award circuits.

Ultimately, this isn't just a movie; it's an experience that stays with you long after the credits roll, especially in the final moments, during the post-credit scene, where the audience is allowed to see the cast celebrating together after the shooting ends. In that brief glimpse, the movie quietly reminds us that history is not only something we study or remember, but something we live, share, and carry forward together.