

A Factory in Catalonia

Synopsis

This documentary explores the life and legacy of Cäsar Dubler (Wohlen AG, 1888 – Barcelona, 1948), a Swiss entrepreneur whose story mirrors the turbulent history of 20th-century Catalonia.

Born into a family of businessmen and straw plaiting merchants, Dubler emigrates to Barcelona in 1908 with a clear mission: to restore his family's honor and make a name for himself. He makes his first fortune speculating in cotton and, in 1910, sets up his first company, Casa César Dubler.

Between 1917 and 1919, Dubler builds his textile factory, Can Dubler, in Sant Boi de Llobregat. Over the next decade, the industrial complex doubles in size, employing over 1,000 workers. Despite the global economic crisis of the late 1920s, the company continues to grow. Dubler expands his product line, secures Swiss investors, and in 1931, launches TexTon, a broth product produced under commercial license from HACO Gümligen S.A. (Switzerland), along with other food brands.

Everything changes in 1936 with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. As a capitalist, Dubler fears for his life. The proletarian revolution in Barcelona puts his safety—and his business—in jeopardy. Fleeing to Switzerland with his family, he watches from exile as his factory is collectivized by its workers under a decree issued by the Generalitat de Catalunya.

After Franco's victory in 1939, the Dubler family returns to Barcelona. With the dictator's rise to power, Cäsar Dubler regains control of his factory and resumes operations. However, after his premature death in 1948, the business passes to his eldest son, César Emilio Dubler, a professor of Arabic languages and cultures at the University of Zurich. The company struggles under Franco's economic restrictions and international sanctions, ultimately declaring bankruptcy in 1976.

Dubler's entrepreneurial rise and fall reflect the broader history of Catalonia's textile industry. His story embodies Spain's deep social and political divides, the rise of militant labor movements, and the shifting role of corporate responsibility in times of political and economic upheaval.

The filmmaker embarks on a journey through Switzerland and Catalonia, following the traces of the Dubler family's past. Featuring Cäsar Dubler's grandchildren as the last keepers of intimate family memories, the documentary pieces together the past through family albums, silenced memories and archives, weaving the narrative threads together into an engaging story of one family's journey through history.