

Director:	Erez Laufer
Period:	Israel / 2009
Film Duration:	70 minutes
Language:	Hebrew, English
Subtitles:	Hebrew, English

## From Terror to Safe Haven and Back *Rafting to Bombay*



"*Rafting to Bombay*" is the remarkable true story of a boy and his mother as they escape from the Nazis in Poland and arrive in India by raft. The fate of this young boy and his mother, though little known, is shared by an estimated 1,000 other Jewish Holocaust refugees who also found a safe haven in India. The numbers are so small that most Indians are little aware of their own country's role in unwittingly saving the lives of these Jews. There are other true accounts of escapes via Shanghai to India on Sugihara issued visas. Whatever the route and no matter how small the number, British India is connected to these survivors' tales of freedom. The existing communities of Jews in India, dating back to the 18th century, were also said to have played a role in hosting their band of brethren.

In an effort to preserve this obscure piece of history, the history of the Holocaust refugees in India, filmmaker *Erez Laufer* took on this project. Laufer, the editor of

2 Oscar nominees for Best Documentary- *My Country My Country* (2006) and *The War Room* (1993), and the winner of the 2002 Israeli Academy Award for his film *Mike Brant - Laisse-moi t'aimer*, was however no stranger to this story.

The film was the story of his father, Nahum and his grandmother's own narrow escape from the Nazis. In an effort to preserve his grandmother's memories, Laufer began filming nearly twenty years ago in a series of taped interviews of her before she passed away. The story was meant to highlight the contrast between his father's boyish fascination and romanticism with India against with his grandmother's keen awareness of the fate they escaped from in Europe. Laufer, a renowned and trained filmmaker, was little aware that his plot was soon to be derailed and his set hijacked.

While in Mumbai in 2008 to film, Laufer and crew found themselves caught in the midst of the attack on Mumbai

thus inadvertently connecting the past and present in a poignant way he never intended. The story of his father and grandmother is now juxtaposed against the backdrop of the contemporary terror attack putting the filmmaker's own narrative into the film alongside those of his father and grandfather.

While it can't be suggested that the two events could ever be compared, they serve as an unbelievable contrast. While Jews, like Laufer's family, saw Bombay as one of the few safe havens in the 30s and the 40s, the 2008 attack would see them targeted. His family's story of survival would be told as those in the Chabad House perished. ✡

The film was produced with the participation of Yad Vashem and with support from the Geshar Multicultural Film Fund and the Makor Foundation.