Region in Yugoslavia. Before Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany in 1941, there were 16,000 Jews in Ba’cska, constituting 20 percent of the country’s entire Jewish population.

In 1940, under pressure from the Nazis, the Yugoslav government began issuing anti-Jewish laws. The Jews of Ba’cska protested the measures, and supported the new anti-Nazi regime that seized power in late March 1941. Most young Jewish men volunteered for the Yugoslav army to fight the Nazis, who invaded the country in April 1941. Dozens of Jewish soldiers were wounded, killed, or made prisoners of war.

Germany quickly defeated Yugoslavia, and divided up the country amongst its allies. The Ba’cska region was given to Hungary. Just as soon as the Hungarian authorities occupied Ba’cska, they began inventing incidents which they used as excuses to murder Jews and Serbs. Other Jews were exiled from Ba’cska or handed over to the Germans, while thousands of Jews were stripped of their citizenship and property. Jewish community and Zionist movement leaders were taken hostage by the authorities, and the various Jewish communities were forced to pay a war tax. By May 1941, males Jews were forced to do hard labor—during which many were tortured and beaten.

In July 1941 Hungary joined Germany in its war against the Soviet Union. At that point, the Hungarians in Ba’cska intensified their attacks on Jews and Serbs. Many Jews responded by joining the Yugoslav Partisan movement, led by Tito. By the end of 1941 all male Jews under the age of 60 were forcibly drafted into units of the Hungarian Labor Service System. In general, these units were linked to the Hungarian forces fighting the Soviets in the Ukraine; the Jewish men were often treated deplorably and many died. Some of the men successfully fled to the Soviet side, where they created a Yugoslav unit within the Soviet army.

During the winter of 1941-1942, the Hungarian authorities in Ba’cska used partisan activity as another excuse to massacre Jews and Serbs. Two special units were created to execute the massacre. During January 1942 some 5,000 men were slaughtered, more than half Jewish; six Jewish communities
were completely wiped out; and thousands of Jews were subjected to the whims of Hungarian "selection commissions," which chose the way they were to die, either by hanging, shooting, or other awful techniques. Altogether, one-third of the entire Jewish population in Ba’cska was destroyed. Only due to the intervention of moderates in the government did the massacre come to an end.

News of the massacre in Ba’cska led to protests all over the world and in Hungary itself. The Hungarian premier was forced to admit that innocent people had been slaughtered needlessly, and that those responsible should pay. However, "those responsible" escaped Hungary for Germany, where they were given refuge, and when Germany occupied Hungary in 1944, they were returned to their homes and even helped deport Hungarian Jewry to extermination camps.

Those Ba’cska Jews who survived the massacre found a slightly better situation during 1943. Many joined the partisans at that time, and Zionist leaders took the opportunity to step up rescue operations. Dozens of Ba’cska Jews managed to escape to Palestine.

German troops invaded Hungary in March 1944. SS units and the Hungarian Gendarmerie entered Ba’cska and began the deportation of the surviving Jews to Auschwitz and other camps. Over a third were sent to their deaths by May 1944; others died while serving in the Yugoslav army in its last battles against SS units or fascist forces in Croatia. Of the 16,000 Jews living in Ba’cska in early 1941, only 2,500 survived.