The debate about the Nazi past of the Austrian Federal President Kurt Waldheim in the 1980s left a landscape of conflicting memories. By presenting itself as the “first victim” of the Nazi regime, Austria banned all aspects of its participation in the atrocities committed by the Nazi dictatorship from public disputes and thus externalized complicity until that point. Since the Waldheim affair the “victim thesis” as the predominant narration lost its hegemonic status, the “Austrian memory” undergoes a narrative diversification. This process questions once more the existence of a collective memory.

By introducing the narratives of the past my article depicts the controversial ways in which the Austrian past was dealt with. Moreover, it discusses the positions that the parties adopted in this debate and highlights the differences and dividing lines between and within the parties.