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Moin Moin from USA

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Some debts — like the one owed to a mentor whose faith changed the arc of your life — can't be paid with euros or dollars. Gerhard Stoltenberg was such a mentor for me.

As a young student of history, Stoltenberg spent some time in the U.S. in 1952. There, he met the young Harvard professor Henry Kissinger, and the two men established a close friendship.

Fast forward 25 years. Perhaps remembering what his own U.S. visit had meant, Stoltenberg, now Ministerpräsident of Schleswig-Holstein, gave money to send a poor student from Flensburg to the New World.

Some years later, and now a professor myself in Minnesota, I received a call from newspaper editor Stephan Richter who had just published Stoltenberg's latest book. He was hosting a party for the author and asked me to produce a short video interview with Kissinger as a surprise. Speaking in his native German, „Heinz Alfred“ Kissinger expressed his deep admiration for „Stolti“, his German friend and colleague.

Watching the video, tears welled up in the eyes of the old politician, the man many thought would be Germany's next chancellor. Sadly, Stoltenberg died less than two years later with my „debt“ to the great man still on the books.

This October, I'm staging a conference on the legacy of that most remarkable immigrant group, the 1848ers. It will be dedicated to the friendship of historians Kissinger and Stoltenberg. Gerhard Stoltenberg's faith in me changed my life; I will always do what I can to honor his.

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