

How long-standing German policy blended with the EU Project.

Readers of Anthony Coughlan's article on recent German policy for a unified European federal state may have been surprised by his mention of

Hitler's domination of Europe as being reminiscent of conspiracy theory.

However, reliable documentary sources show that German politicians had

plans for European unification long before the Nazi era. In the early

19th century, Germany was divided into numerous smaller states, of which

the largest were Prussia and Bavaria. People realised that a divided

Germany could not gain the advantages of the industrial revolution

without a large economic area and technical developments like railways.

So they joined in a Customs Union (Zollverein) with a common external

tariff and internal free movement of goods. It was in operation thirty

years before Germany became a politically unified state in 1871.

There was nothing inherently sinister in this and it was remarkably

successful. The most prominent advocate of the system was the economist

Friedrich List, who appeared on the post-war postage stamps of both the

communist German Democratic Republic (as the unifier of the German railway system) and of the West German Post Office (as a forerunner and