One of the things we may miss about what the Africans did is that they did a lot of the thinking themselves.

Take the Swazis, in southern Africa.

In the mid-1800s, they not only got along with Europeans.

They welcomed them.

They let some of them come in to farm.

They even signed treaties giving Transvaal some overlordship power over Swaziland.

Sound nuts? Yes. But it makes plenty of sense.

Indian nations did the same thing, and for the same reason.

The big fear wasn’t what Europeans would do.

It was what ZULUS would do.

And the best way to keep off the little bully, is to get the big bully on your side.

But this also meant that WHEN the Zulus were gone, Swaziland was stuck.

Worse than stuck.

Because they hadn’t just given away the right to use their land.

They’d positively shingled Swaziland over with those rights.

Like shingles, they overlapped.
So here you have farm country that one, two, five, ten different Europeans have the exclusive rights to.

It’s like THE PRODUCERS, where the scoundrelly promoters promise away 10,000% of the profits.

What are you going to do, if you are in control?

If you’re the British, you work out a “compromise” — a deal.

Sort out who gets what; but make sure the Swazis themselves get something.

You do this by a land commission.

It’s very fair – very balanced. Some Dutch South Afrikaans
Some English south Africans
Some British policy-makers from back home.

Let’s see ... did we leave anyone out?

Oh yeah... Swazis.

Well, you can’t please everybody!

And the Commission didn’t ... especially Swazilanders.

Now, before you get any ideas that this is fair, keep this in mind.

What’s the consequences of England doing NOTHING?

The consequences are that the leases the Swazis made run out.
All the land – every bit of it – goes back to black Africans.

The Swazi rulers were more than miffed, but what could they do?

They got, oh, 37% of the land – enclaves here and there.
It was the very best of the land ... they were told.

In fact, about four acres in five was somewhere between poor and untillable.

Maybe about one acre in six, one acre in seven, was on land flat enough to really farm well.

Whereas the white settlers got about 69% of all the land that was good and relatively flat, too.

No, as far as best land is concerned, it wasn’t – and it wasn’t their land.

To make things go easier, chiefs didn’t have to move.

The maps were drawn to let them stay right where their farm was.

That, they figured, would keep them quiet.

Every royal cattle post, every royal burial ground, was put in the Swazi reserves.

But every town – every place where settlers had gathered – was kept in white areas.

Every acre that white people were farming and living on, was
left in their hands ... the primest of prime land.

Every place with mines or minerals that anyone knew about...
the white settlers got.

Every place where anyone had plans someday to build a railroad...
the white settlers got.

(But then, nobody ever built those railroads).

What are we talking about in plain English?

Two-thirds of Swaziland was given to the Crown and to some six hundred white settlers.¹

So what do you do?

Buy the white landlords out?

They could do it.

All they really needed was money.

The Queen Regent of the Swazis set up a land fund that all Swazi migrant laborers would pay three months a year wages into.

They would work in white-run South Africa – and buy black South Africa back.

This got some 68,000 acres – and then the Government put a ban on them buying land.

As for the lands still in the hands of the Crown ... those went to white Settlers and nobody else.²


² See C. P. Youe, “Imperial Land Policy in Swaziland the the African Response,” *Journal of Imperial and*
The story there is the story in Rhodesia.

There, too, the land was parceled out.

There, too, the natives tried to buy it back.

There, too, they hadn’t the money, and they weren’t able to get it.

The empire was built on cheap labor. Lots of it.
In Swaziland, child labor did a lot of the work.

From the time the British government took it over, it knew that the key to development was to open the land to European settlers.

Give them a proper title, and they can get loans and widen their farm acreage.

But nobody’s going to lend money to people who’ve got a temporary lease on land
that four or five other white farmers are claiming, too.\textsuperscript{3}

European farmers are much more efficient.
They can graze more cattle in less space.

They can bring in plows and better seeds

The land will last longer without the soil being impoverished.

What’s more, if you take that land away from the African peasants, they won’t be able to farm any more.

You can make them work in the mines instead.

So most of the land was passed over to Europeans.

2/3ds of it was reserved for them under one proclamation in 1907.

Swazis were given 30 reservations.

They had five years to leave where they were and move into there.

Not all of them did.
In fact, some 20,000 of them stayed on the land after the time limit expired.

But the land wasn’t theirs any more.

They were tenants, staying by permission of the European

Landlords needed workers inexpensively, and put them into tenancy, and paid children wages in some cases.

How did kids volunteer?

They didn’t. Parents signed them away.

Fathers were kings in the African families. They could do as they liked with their children. And did.

In signing up as tenant labor, their contracts would sign away their children’s labor, too.

And the law (1899: Masters and Servants Law) let a parent “Apprentice” any child on any terms he liked.

Oh, there were plenty of justifications:

– a 10 year old African is as strong as a 13 year old English child

– Africans are starving. At least the kids who work get a meal or two a day

– Africans have no schools. You don’t want they lying around the kraal idle, do you?

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– working in the field is like school. It trains you for future life.

– if the kids work, that brings money in for the parents. They eat better.

They’re saved from starvation.

You don’t want those poor kids to be orphans, do you?

How can you be so cruel as to keep them from working?

This was nothing new – nothing “colonial.”

Parents had been doing this for years before a white face darkened the Dark Continent.

Over time the labor changed.

Up into the 1930s, most children worked for free.

After that, landlords were likelier to pay.

They had to. They were running out of adult male workers.

Swazi men could make more money in the mines, and that is where they went. Wages were higher.

With the Second World War, many of them enlisted.⁵
