

Presenter : Tonight, Supplement with "Africa is on the North Pole"
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Voices:
Eboko: Hakim Traidia
Reveive home: Arno Peeters
Nr.15: Vincent van Engelen

The story with accompanying illustrations can be found on
special internet
page www.supplement.nl

Receive home : Send home: Date:

Nr.15 : 27.09.2030

Receive home : Place indication:

Nr.15: : Arctis, North Pole, 89 degrees north

Receive home : Ground temperature:

Nr.15 : Minus 25 degrees Centigrade

Receive home : Crew:

Nr.15 : Number 15 and number 4, section Liga North

Receive home : Airplane type

Nr.15 : "Norge"

Receive home : Order:

Nr.15 : Inspection of the Arctic Ocean and the North Pole route

Receive home : Report:

Nr.15 : 30.09.27 daylight. Discovered on our daily control a
strange object on a huge floating ice-floe. A kind of hill.

Receive home : Personal observation:

Nr.15 : The hill, with dark brown stripes, resembles an iglo of the Inuits. Because no entrance could be discovered (probably frozen up) we have opened the object with laser gun. At voice signal (calling out) I, number 15, did not get an answer and entered the object. No signs of life. The brown colour of the iglo is the result of the fact that the iglo, it is an iglo, is not only built of ice but also of twigs. Scan type of tree: Landolphia Owariensis, rubber liana. Country: environment river Congo.

Receive home : Roger

Nr.15 : Before it was abandoned, the iglo was tidied up. Apparently the occupant did not intend to return. A human body is not present. When opening the sleeping bag I discovered a laptop, brand name Shelf, registration number 63894. The voltage packs are in order.
Send home: Data flow from laptop to "Norge"?

Receive home : Yes, to direct home, file name "Rubber", no data flow to "Norge" computer.
Line protection 3.

Nr.15 : Roger

Computer voice : File name: Rubber
Home address: Shelf, registration number 63894
Owner: Eboko, family name unknown,
Meaning: hippopotamus,
Born: 21.6.1970 in Zaïre
EU-history: Belgian Congo,
Town: Makanza,
EU-history Nouvelle Anvers, New Antwerp, Equator District,
EU-history: province Equator, near Congo river: about 800 kilometres to Kinshasa, EU-history: Leopoldville,
Origin parents: unknown,
Tribe: Libindza,
Punishment record: none,
Registration: fingerprint, see laptop,
Profession: works on rubber plantation

File name: Rubber
Date: 27.9.2030
Text file: Africa is on the North Pole, by Eboko
Date: 15.6.2030
Open: Page 1

Eboko : First notch
The Leaving (1970-1999)

It will seem strange to the reader, that I have to tell him that Africa lies on the North Pole. We are now in the year 2029 and my story goes back to the year 1999, the famous changeover to the new millennium. The year in which unrest was felt throughout the world and the year in which everything began.

I was 29 years old when it all started. Yet I must say that my youth was not particularly rosy. Since the independence in 1960 my country was assailed by various civil wars and famines. A catastrophe, life was bad, to say nothing of other plagues which threatened our country. First Mobutu and in 1999 the threat from Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and other countries. I was fed up with it.

My life was tattooed. The cuts in my skin, caused by the slipping of my knife, the notches in the bark of the liana, accompanied my way through the jungle. Intarsia, carved out roads. I was branded by life, marked by my country. I wanted to determine my own fate. I didn't want the notched pattern of roads on the map of my skin to be intensified any further.

Nr.15 : Send home: Received complete transfer file "Rubber"?

Receive home : Transfer successful. An African from Zaïre, named Eboko, probably died on the ice. Trivial, not worth mentioning, private drama.

Nr.15 : Send home: Request consent flight.

Receive home : Receive home: Yes, continue Control Flight, 30.9.27, daylight.

Nr.15 : Send home: Roger. Number 15 and number 4, message out.

Computer voice : File name: Rubber
Date: 27.9.2030
Text file: Africa is on the North Pole by Eboko
Date: 16.6.2030
Continue: Page 7

Eboko : Second notch
The North

At the time it was easy to look outside. Simpler to lapse into dreams, to forget, so as to make daily life more bearable. That way I had something no one could take away from me.

At an age of 29 what matters is "to have" and (good or not good), that was also what I got to see on television. I saw African huts standing on ice under palm trees. Next to them a black man, my brother, scantily dressed, laughing, stubbornly defying the cold. As if he had always been here or at last had returned to his country of eternal ice. He chewed incessantly on chewing gum, gum, rubber. He was doing fine. Careless, with clean, refreshing breath.

This black skin on this white soil reminded me of the Inuit stories about the raven. He was superior to everything and could raise himself above everything.

This brown and green of trees and huts, which were sharply carved into the infinite white of the solid water, the ice. Ah, if only I could go with him, fly to him. Marks of honour of a past or future world. He was hunter and guardian at the same time. This black, this brown earth on white soil. Fixed shapes of transitory materials. I have something no one can take away from me.

Now, all this has as yet nothing to do with the North Pole, or more specifically with Arctica, the North Pole region. Yet it seemed as if the white spots on the map representing the North Pole and the South Pole were not merely a geological description of the expanse of ice covering these archipelagos. I was aware that this of course was only a figment of my imagination, because Reinhold Messner...

Eboko

: I wanted to determine my own fate. I did not want to let the notched pattern of roads on the map of my skin be intensified any further.

It was obvious that the human intruders had only drawn new lines. Had, with their aeroplanes, only left new vapour trails behind in the blue of the sky.

Had, with their icebreakers, only ripped up new graves, as proof of their presence.

But were ice and air not of a transitory nature? Wouldn't these trails only have to function as lateral links, in order to connect the net of longitudes and latitudes with each other?

Were these mathematical measurements just devised aids, visionary corner points, necessary means of orientation for man to go further and further, to a region he would never be able to reach? That's why....

We live on a giant magnet which, in endless terrestrial magnetic variations, causes the place of the poles to change and carries the field direction of the compass "ad absurdum".

I wanted to travel along with the poles; not fixed, always moving, like a dancing compass needle, I wanted to swim in the small stream circles near the North Pole.

But the very distance, which attracted me like a magnet and never let go, would have to be what determined my future actions.

This black, this brown earth on white soil. Solid shapes of transitory materials. So I had something no one could take away from me.

Computer voice

: File name: Rubber
Date: 27.9.2030
Text file: Africa is on the North Pole
by Eboko
Date: 18.6.2030
Continue: page 16

Eboko

: Fourth notch
The green country, departure and journey (4.11.1999 to 21.6.2030)

Eboko

: It was still far, I became restless.
By boat to Greenland took too long, I had to fly.
Greenland. From here I wanted to reach my ultimate goal: on foot to the North Pole.
For the time being I wanted to remain on Disko, which merely because of the name attracted me magnetically. Luke Kidlapik, this later friend, must have noticed that something was bothering me. He listened.
After a long pause, he looked out over the Disko bay, at the black birds which cut through the silence with their cries, and then said seriously:

"Your story is not yours, but that of your ancestors. They have called out to you and you are just following their route. Just go on. The snow will let everything that lies behind you get lost. The ice will carry you, the birds will accompany you. They know your fatherland, every year they migrate to Africa and return, like you too have returned. As from now only tomorrow counts. In our songs we celebrate our vocation again and again. The birds are calling you".

We live on the terrestrial figure Geoïde, a complicated geometrical body,
which races through space with a velocity of 20,1 kilometres per second.

We live on a planet, which lets the point Makanza turn around the axis of
the earth with a velocity of more than 1.600 kilometres per hour.

We live on a non-perfect bullet in the shape of an ellipsoid, because the axis lying near the equator is about 21 kilometres longer, the North Pole 10 metres higher and the South Pole 31 metres lower.

That is why it was the North Pole that arched up from the earth like a hill.
My stage on which at long last I could endlessly look out over the world.

I suspected that at one time the North Pole lay on my latitude, the equator.

Eboko

: I wanted to return to what was now lying so far away, my country, my origin.

500 Million years ago there was a different terrestrial magnetism. The magnetic North Pole lay in the eastern part of the Pacific, south of Hawaii.

170 Million years ago the North Pole lay in Siberia.

90 Million years ago temperatures occurred on the North Pole similar to those in the Congo now. Then that lasted 6 million years.

15 Million years ago the North Pole shifted frequently.

I had to get used to the cold, accept it.

I had to learn to accumulate food to take me through the winter.

I had to be able to sew my clothing from seal or caribou skins.

I had to learn to build an iglo.

I had to, I was driven by an inner urge that never let go of me. Now I too really had something, I too could live, experience, and no one could take that away from me.

The North Pole will show me the way.
I will find it.

About three weeks after my departure - I had left the mainland, the Meyer Bjerg of Greenland and Ellesmere behind me - the situation suddenly worsened.

The wind gathered great strength and continuously drove the whirling snow on. The temperature went down to minus 45 degrees. Often I couldn't see anything through my snow goggles. They were constantly misted up, my eyelids were freezing and my limbs became heavier and heavier, as if paralysed by the continuing struggle with the wind and the cold.

Eboko

: Eboko, hippopotamus, you must live up to your name, you must travel through water turned into ice, you can do it, you do have enough strength, you must carry on, you must find the North Pole, no black bird will accompany you now. Across an endless plain of ledges piled up by the wind, a washboard-like relief, "Sastrugi", I dragged the kayak and it seemed to me that this endless world would never meet *my* end, the North Pole. In my immeasurable exhaustion I heard the Inuit children doing inflections:

Pack-ice, plate-ice, loose-ice-floe-ice in the vicinity of pack-ice. Pack-ice, pancake-ice, plate-ice of ice-mush or ice-discs, when blowing 2 to 5 millimetres in diameter, thickened edge.

Pack-ice, new-ice, difficult-to-be-distinguished-from-water-ice, becoming plate-ice, slate-ice.

Pack-ice, plate-ice, loose-ice-floe-ice in the vicinity of pack-ice. Splash-ice, an ice-pieces-mixture-ice, 2,5 millimetres in diameter. The freezing point lies at minus 1,91 degrees. 200 Words for ice; I had understood them.

At each pause, and the pauses became longer, my strides shorter, my breathing harder, I looked at my GPS, 86th degree of latitude, 87th, 88th. The degrees of longitude danced, there were so many of them. Weren't these arithmetical measures meant as an aid, needed by man to orientate himself? To get further? Further to a spot he would never reach? But I wanted to reach it!

This giant expanse of ice, which spans the arctic sea like a skin, a water mass as big as Europe, which shifted 150 metres per day. This slow ice which with the help of various fields of energy crawled slowly over the crust of the earth, it wanted to deceive me, make me travel into other fields, away again from the North Pole.

Human progress is based on speed. Inertia increases the efficiency of thought.

I made less and less progress, I didn't feel my limbs anymore. Would the purpose of my quest not be to get there, not be about virtues like speed and inertia? I shouldn't let myself go either, let my feelings range at will, because then I would lose myself. I'd freeze in the ice.

Eboko : Everything inside me, meaning myself, had now melted into something, of which, admittedly, the parts were at once palpable, noticeably present, but could not be grasped. So there was something no one could take away from me, considering I'd always had this something inside me. I had nothing to lose in my life anyway, because the route was the discovery, the discovery of my own self and that's why in the area of tension of the poles I could leave the earth behind me.
The point is, the poles were within myself. They were the cutting faces in my world, which determined my character. With these thoughts I no longer glided like a bird in the wind.

Computer voice : File name:

Nr.15 : private

Computer voice : Authorization:

Nr.15 : no registration

Computer voice : Could not translate, please repeat

Nr.15 : no registration

Computer voice : Date:

Nr.15 : November 2042

Computer voice : Text file:

Nr.15 : "Africa is on the North Pole" by number 15

Computer voice : continue

Nr.15 : Since sending the file "Rubber" to "Home" 12 years had passed. Due to my age, I, number 15, had been given a job on the ground, which happened to be the base "Home", manned by the Liga North, together with the NPS, the North Pole Service, a radio station. It was my task to re-edit old files with obscurities and that's how I also came across the old file "Rubber". The same one I had directly sent home at the time.

Nr. 15 : While going through the file it struck me that Eboko, after the great winter darkness had set in, had not closed his diary. Had he meant to close his diary with the beautiful piece of prose, "Africa is on the North Pole"?

But then surely it was very strange that he didn't mention how he had reached the North Pole and what, during those last steps to his ultimate goal, his experiences had been.

In my opinion it seemed more plausible that the coming and going of aeroplanes on the geographical North Pole was beginning to annoy him.

One pole he had not yet discovered, the pole of inaccessibility. Yes, that's what he had wanted to reach, to make it accessible for himself. Fixed shapes of transitory materials, I read, then he would have had something. Making the inaccessible accessible and then only for himself. Wanting to attain something that could never be attained, against all earthly laws, the rotation of the earth did not allow it. He had to escape the rules of the earth if he wanted to reach this goal.

In the evening I returned to the base "Home", sat myself behind the computer and opened the file "Rubber" which I wanted to close and could close now.

Computer voice : File name:

Nr.15 : Rubber

Computer voice : Date:

Nr.15 : 27.9.2030, same

Computer voice : Text file:

Nr.15 : "Africa is on the North Pole" by Eboko

Computer voice : Date:

Nr.15 : 21.06 till 11.08.2030

Computer voice : Continue:

Nr.15 : page 27

Nr.15

: Seventh notch
The pole of inaccessibility (11.08.2030)

I wanted to go to the pole of inaccessibility and knew where it must be. From Greenland behind the geographical pole (consequently not 90 degrees North) but 84 degrees, 3 minutes North and 174 degrees, 51 minutes West, direction Bering Sea. I left the iglo which had been my home for 6 months behind, as well as my belongings, even my talisman from Zaire. I knew that if I reached the pole of inaccessibility I would never go back. Why go back? I would then be in a world where objects would be superfluous. So all I took with me was my kayak, some food, my GSP, my laser knife, my tent and an extra thermo blanket.

When, in the early morning, I reached the geographical North Pole, I stood there for a while and then travelled on. Later, I had lost track of time, it had probably been weeks, I landed up in a terrible storm. Daylight, which never quite dissolved, this harsh white, burned into my eyes. My goggles had disappeared, my eyes were unprotected. I could no longer see the horizon; heaven and earth melted into one white wall, "white out". In this storm I was no longer able to put up the tent, nor could I pull the kayak any longer. That's why I left both behind in a crevice in the ice where they could not be discovered. I knew I had only a few hours left.

Surrounded by this white nothingness I moved on. Tired, I looked at my GPS. What? 84 degrees and 3 minutes North, 174 degrees and 51 minutes West? The pole of inaccessibility? I was standing on the pole of inaccessibility, a nothingness, this couldn't be true!?

Tears that froze at once sprang from my eyes, my mouth was like leather. Suddenly I felt the pressure of the entire journey on me. All the strenuous efforts of the last months, my family in Zaire which I would never see again. Jermi, Luke, Joseph and all the others who had helped me reach my goal.

Was this all? Would my dream now melt away in the eternal ice? Surely, that couldn't be true.

Then, a little further to the right, I saw it emerge from the hazy mist! My path!

Nr. 15

: My degree, connecting all the degrees of longitude and latitude! My pole, which I felt inside me and which would never let me loose again!

An icebreaker had ripped open a long street of water, which had frozen up again, and there, in the middle, lay a black bird, the

raven. It must have come along with the icebreaker and on it got frozen. There was no other explanation. This was my sign, the raven had waited for me here. His end, it was the end of my journey. All I needed to do now was open up the ice on the spot where the raven was lying, and, through that hole let escape the breath which, for goodness knows how long, had been choked.

Here was the point that I wanted to reach and which now lay before me. With my remaining strength I cut open the not yet too thick layer of ice with my laser knife and saw the black sea. This black on white soil, which rose and poured itself forth. Again and again fresh, sparkling ice-flowers and crystals formed at the sharp edge. I took the bird in my hand. The entrance was open.