The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Genetic Mutation Found in Russian Survivors of Nazi Blockade – Study

June 22, 2015



Russians who survived the Nazi blockade of Leningrad may have benefitted from a genetic mutation that slowed their metabolism as they fought off starvation, a recent study revealed.

The Siege of Leningrad lasted from Sept. 8, 1941 to Jan. 27, 1944. During this time, more than 630,000 people died of starvation after Nazi forces cut off food supplies to the city.

Survivors of the 872-day siege were more likely to contain gene variations associated with economical energy metabolism in calorie-starved humans than control subjects, according to research published this month by Science magazine.

In an interview with Russian magazine Ogonoyk, geneticist Oleg Glotov — the author of the study — said scientists had reviewed 200 blood samples taken from blockade survivors, probing the DNA for the presence of genetic markers involved in energy exchange, consumption and temperature regulation.

“We have established that there is a link between the presence of certain genetic markers, and the fact that people were able to survive” Glotov was quoted as saying Monday by Ogonyok.

While noting that other factors were also responsible for influencing survival rates, Glotov told Ogonyok that the scientists were keen to extend their experiment to further test their hypothesis.

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