

# Rehabilitation of Disabled Veterans in Germany

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ON A NATIONAL LEVEL, the rehabilitation of disabled servicemen in Germany in its various aspects, including medical care, vocational readjustment, and financial assistance, is administered jointly by the High Command of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of the Interior, on the basis of the Veterans' Administration and Welfare Act of August 26, 1938,<sup>1</sup> and its several amendments.

On a regional level, the corps area commanders have charge of the military welfare offices attached to the principal garrison commands. Military welfare officers, usually majors or lieutenant colonels of the reserve, with a staff of noncommissioned and enlisted personnel, operate the local military welfare offices which are charged with general responsibility for all matters affecting the readjustment and welfare of discharged military personnel residing in the localities within their jurisdiction, particularly disabled servicemen and officers. The military welfare offices are expected to maintain close liaison with the local employment bureaus, the local sickness insurance offices, and, as the necessity arises, with the representatives of the National Socialist Party organizations, chambers of commerce, employers, and the like, in order to coordinate the functions and efforts of these agencies on behalf of the veteran.

The medical care of the disabled serviceman after his discharge from the armed forces is the responsibility of the plant, municipal, maritime, or guild sickness insurance office of which the individual veteran had been a member prior to his entry into the armed forces. These sickness insurance offices operate as units of the national social insurance system under the Ministry of the Interior. The retraining and placement of the

disabled veteran are handled by the employment service under the Ministry of Labor. Finally, all matters pertaining to the disbursement of funds and setting of rates for pensions and other forms of financial assistance for veterans fall under the general jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance.

Claims and disputes arising from the application of the Veterans' Administration and Welfare Act are acted upon by the Military Welfare Court presided over by a general or admiral who is directly responsible to the Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces.

The administration of the rehabilitation of disabled veterans is characterized by a high degree of flexibility and is primarily designed to meet the needs of the individual veteran, although the exigencies of the labor market and the casualty rate tend to influence the decisions of the authorities at various levels. For example, the greatly increased casualty rate in connection with the campaign in Russia has considerably altered the criteria by which a serviceman is either retained for limited service or discharged.

## *Medical Care*

The rehabilitation of the disabled serviceman begins in the military hospital before his discharge from the armed forces. Medical officers and psychologists of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as representatives of the employment service, cooperate in formulating retraining and reemployment plans for the individual serviceman. Such plans must be completed by the time he is ready for discharge. However, the commander of the corps area in which the hospital is located may, after consultation with the medical officers, recommend postponement of discharge and order further utilization of the serviceman in the forces for garrison duty, clerical work, guarding of prisoners of war, and similar "limited service" duties.

A serviceman is generally not discharged from the armed forces until his restoration has been

\* War Manpower Commission, Reports and Analysis Service. For a discussion of similar provisions in the U. S. S. R., see Cooper, Denis A., "Pensions and Rehabilitation Services for Disabled Ex-Servicemen in the U. S. S. R.," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (April 1943), pp. 22-24.

<sup>1</sup> *Reichsgesetzblatt*, No. 137 (1938), pp. 1077-1124. The latest of the various amendments to the original act available to the author was as of April 1943.

completed or at least advanced to a point where he is able to proceed to his home community. Immediately upon discharge, he becomes the responsibility of the sickness insurance office which provides further medical treatment, including if necessary a cure at a spa or a sanitarium, procurement and instruction in the use of artificial limbs and other prosthetic devices, medicines, and continuous nursing care in the case of incurable disability.

If as a result of heavy casualties the financial resources of certain sickness insurance offices are overtaxed, the offices may apply to the Government for additional funds. Under certain conditions the armed forces themselves assume the responsibility for all functions ordinarily carried out by the sickness insurance offices. This practice has become far more prevalent since the high casualty rate of the Russian campaign forced the German Government to requisition a very large percentage of municipally and State-owned, as well as private, hospitals for use by the Army, and to conscript for military service numerous panel doctors of the national health insurance system.

#### *Vocational Rehabilitation*

A disabled serviceman is generally retrained in his old or a related occupation. Only in exceptional cases is retraining in a new occupation encouraged. Retraining courses are set up as the need arises, either by industry organizations or by the plant in which the veteran is expected to be employed. Special workshops and working conditions, redesigned tools, and machinery adapted to individual needs are usually provided for disabled veterans. Organs of the National Socialist Party, such as the German Labor Front, may open special courses to provide basic training required to prepare seriously handicapped veterans for in-plant training. Special schools are set up by the National Socialist War Victims Aid Organization in cooperation with national health insurance and the National Socialist Doctors Association to teach Braille to the blind and to provide other types of remedial training. Students whose studies were interrupted as a result of military service may receive subsidies to enable them to obtain their degree. In formulating retraining programs, the veteran's individual wishes, inclinations, and talents are con-

sidered. Aptitude and intelligence tests are widely used to gauge his ability, especially if retraining in a new occupation is recommended.

#### *Placement*

A disabled veteran who is considered capable of resuming gainful employment is entitled to preferential treatment in the labor market. Employment offices are instructed to exert every possible effort to place veterans in work approximating their former jobs as to grade, rate of pay, and seniority rights. Placement is made either immediately after medical rehabilitation is completed or upon termination of such retraining as is found necessary or is recommended by the military authorities in consultation with employment service officials. A veteran with more than 50-percent disability is further protected through a provision that employers, including municipal and State authorities, must reserve at least 2 percent of their job openings for such veterans. Preferential treatment accorded to employed disabled veterans includes special hourly rates in occupations where piece rates are customary, longer rest periods, and special shopping and transportation privileges.

#### *Pensions and Other Financial Assistance*

Pensions and other financial aid to disabled veterans are calculated on the basis of length of service, rank, occupation prior to military service, degree of disability, number of dependents, and place of residence. In general, the German Government proceeds on the principle that veterans should, so far as possible, suffer no economic deterioration as a result of their military service or of injury suffered while in the service. Therefore, in the case of disabled veterans considered capable of earning their own living, financial aid assumes the character of supplementary subsidies to compensate for reduced earnings and of allowances paid to ensure their maintenance during the period of retraining or looking for employment. Likewise, professional military personnel, especially officers, are considered to be covered by the military retirement pension to which they have a statutory right after a specified length of service. Hence, only totally disabled veterans receive pensions adequate to assure full maintenance. Financial aid to disabled veterans includes the following types of subsidy payments:

### A. Subsidies for Veterans Capable of Work

1. The "disability allowance" (*Versehrte ngeld*) is paid to all disabled veterans for the rest of their lives, whether or not they are employed. Veterans are classed in one of four categories, according to the degree of disability, and the disability allowance amounts to:

	<i>RM</i> <sup>1</sup> per month
First category.....	15
Second category.....	30
Third category.....	50
Fourth category.....	80

An additional 20 RM a month may be given if the disability was incurred under unusually dangerous conditions of combat (*bei Sondereinsatz*). Veterans with brain injuries and those who lost their eyesight are automatically placed in the fourth category.

2. A monthly "training subsidy" (*Übergangsunterstützung*) is paid the veteran who is being retrained for his old or a new occupation, or who has not yet entered employment, or who, as a result of his injury, has again lost his job. The amount of this subsidy is calculated on the basis of the cost of living in the veteran's home community, which for this purpose is placed in one of five classes of locality. The subsidy amounts to a minimum of two-thirds of the pension paid to the unemployable veteran (see below) and is usually granted for a period not to exceed one year, although extension may be permitted by the High Command of the Armed Forces in case of meritorious service (for example, to a holder of the Iron Cross).

This subsidy may be paid also to a veteran who, as a result of his injury, is unable to reach the level of his former earnings even after the retraining period is completed. Its payment can be denied or discontinued if the veteran refuses to accept employment which, in view of the nature of his injury and of his training and experience, he can in all fairness be expected to perform, or if he reaches the level of his former earnings.

### B. Subsidies for Veterans Incapable of Work

In addition to the disability allowance of the third or fourth category, permanently incapacitated veterans receive:

<sup>1</sup> Average rate of exchange for Reichsmark for first 6 months of 1941 was still 40 cents; no official quotation available since June 1941.

1. A monthly pension (*Arbeitsverwendungsunfähigenrente*), calculated in RM as follows:

Locality class (according to cost of living)	Single veterans		Married veterans without children	Married veterans with at least 1 child
	Under 35 years	35 years and over		
S.....	65	80	95	105
A.....	60	75	90	100
B.....	55	70	85	95
C.....	45	60	75	85
D.....	40	55	70	80

2. Supplementary payments, in addition to the pension, are made to the permanently incapacitated veteran as follows:

a. A "rank" supplement (*Dienstgradzulage*) to veterans above the rank of private, in the following amounts:

	<i>RM</i> per month
Lance corporal, corporal, sergeant.....	10
First sergeant, staff sergeant.....	20
Master sergeant, second lieutenant.....	30
First lieutenant.....	50
Captain and above.....	80

b. An occupational supplement (*Berufszulage*) based on occupation prior to military service. It amounts to 10 RM monthly if the veteran's civilian occupation required a complete training course of several years' duration (carpentry or gardening, for example) and to 50 RM monthly if the veteran occupied a civilian post of unusual responsibility or of high educational requirements (law or engineering, for example).

c. A nursing supplement (*Pflegezulage*) of 50 RM monthly is granted a veteran requiring constant attendance. This sum may be raised to 125 RM if the veteran is continuously bedridden.

d. A special supplement (*Blindenzulage*) of 100 RM monthly is granted to the blind veteran; he also receives a guide dog and an allowance of 15-20 RM monthly for its maintenance.

### C. Special Categories of Veterans

Noncommissioned officers and enlisted personnel who are not professional members of the permanent military establishment but who, prior to the war, had voluntarily remained in the forces longer than their compulsory 2-year service, are eligible for a bonus (*Dienstbelohnung*) ranging from 200 RM for a total service period of more than 2 but less than 3 years to 1,800 RM for service totaling 18 years or more.

#### D. Other Financial Benefits

Disabled veterans are eligible also for other financial benefits, which include tax reductions, reduced railway and bus fares, lowered charges in spas and resorts, and increased financial assistance in connection with the purchase of homesteads and land parcels.

#### Illustrative Examples

The calculation of the total pension and other financial subsidies for disabled veterans is shown in the following examples:

A. A private with a total of 5 years of service; single, residing in Königsberg (locality class A); disability, loss of right arm (second category); former occupation, tool maker; average monthly earnings prior to military service, 200 RM. He would receive the following subsidies:

1. Cash bonus at time of discharge.....	RM 600
2. Monthly disability allowance.....	30
3. Monthly training allowance:	
During training.....	60
After training period and until he reaches full earning capacity (the difference between 200 RM and his new earnings as hoist operator, amounting to 120 RM)...	80

The veteran thus receives a total of 230 RM a

month at the end of his training period, of which 120 RM constitutes his earnings on the job and 110 RM represents the subsidies from the Government.

B. A sergeant, 36 years of age, 2 years of service; married, no children, and residing in small rural town (locality class C); formerly public school teacher; considered permanently incapacitated as a result of severe stomach wound and requires constant attendance. He would receive a total monthly pension of 255 RM, calculated as follows:

1. Basic pension.....	RM 75
2. Disability allowance (third category)....	70
3. Rank supplement.....	10
4. Occupational supplement.....	50
5. Nursing supplement.....	50

C. A first lieutenant, married, two children, residing in Berlin (locality class S); formerly a lawyer; blind. He would receive 425 RM monthly, calculated as follows:

1. Basic pension.....	RM 105
2. Disability allowance (fourth category)....	100
3. Rank supplement.....	50
4. Occupational supplement.....	50
5. Supplement for blindness.....	100
6. Allowance for maintenance of guide dog...	20