

Pensions and Rehabilitation Services for Disabled Ex-Servicemen in the U. S. S. R.

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Drafted Personnel and Volunteers

THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS of the U. S. S. R. issued on July 16, 1940, and July 28, 1941, two new decrees¹ providing pensions for disabled ex-servicemen, both drafted and volunteer. The decrees apply to all ex-servicemen,² except professional noncommissioned officers and enlisted specialized personnel, who were disabled after January 1, 1938, from injuries received or illness contracted in line of active duty. Ex-servicemen who are incapacitated by accidents or illness not directly connected with military duties are covered by the disability insurance provisions of the social security laws applicable to all Soviet citizens. If, however, they do not meet the eligibility conditions for civilian disability insurance, they receive monthly pensions varying from 70 to 120 rubles³ according to the degree of their incapacitation; these amounts are reduced by 20 percent if the ex-serviceman is domiciled in a rural community.

Pensions of ex-servicemen disabled while on active military duty are limited by maximum and minimum payments, based on their last civilian earnings before induction. They also vary with the degree of incapacitation. The decree establishes three disability groups, with the most severely injured men classified in group I.

Disabled men whose earnings before induction were between 150 and 400 rubles a month receive pensions related to these earnings as follows:

Disability group	Percent of prior earnings
I.....	100
II.....	75
III.....	50

If the man's civilian earnings were less than 150 rubles a month, his pension is calculated on the basis of a flat monthly income of 150 rubles.

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¹ *Sobranie Postanovlenii i Rasporiazhenii Pravitelstva U. S. S. R.*, No. 10, Aug. 5, 1940, Art. 465; No. 17, Aug. 23, 1941, Art. 336.

² The words "ex-serviceman" and "men," as used throughout the article, include both men and women who have served in the armed forces.

³ 5 rubles are equivalent to \$1 at official rate of exchange. In the U. S. S. R., 300 rubles is considered a satisfactory monthly income.

Flat pensions are provided for men who were unemployed prior to their induction, as follows:

Disability group	Monthly pension (rubles)
I.....	150
II.....	120
III.....	90

Ex-servicemen in this category who are domiciled in rural communities receive only 80 percent of those amounts.

For noncommissioned officers the basic pension is increased by 25 percent. The decree also provides that if a disabled man in group III earns more than 200 rubles a month from urban employment or more than 100 a month from agricultural employment after he has been pensioned, his pension is reduced, up to a maximum of 50 percent, by the amount of earnings exceeding these sums. It should be noted, however, that shortage of manpower induced the Soviet Government to suspend this provision for the duration of the war to give this class of pensioners an incentive to return to work.⁴

Pensions are allotted by commissions attached to the county and city offices of the pension departments of the commissariats of social welfare, which exist in each constituent republic of the U. S. S. R. Each commission is headed by the director of the respective welfare department and comprises, in addition, a delegate of the county or city council of workers' deputies and a representative of the People's Commissariat of Defense.

Commissioned Officers, Professional Noncommissioned Officers, and Enlisted Specialized Personnel

Pension payments for commissioned officers, professional noncommissioned officers, and enlisted specialized personnel—such as machinists, draftsmen, radio operators, and electricians—are administered by the People's Commissariats of Defense and of the Navy, respectively, under a

⁴ *Op. cit.*, No. 17, Aug. 23, 1941, Art. 335.

decree issued June 5, 1941, by the Council of People's Commissars of the U. S. S. R.⁵ Disability pensions of ex-servicemen in this category are based on the last service pay the man was receiving prior to his discharge from the armed forces. In calculating the pensions of professional noncommissioned officers and enlisted specialized personnel, the monetary value of food rations customarily drawn is added to the service pay. The amount of the pension varies with length of service, degree of incapacitation, and the circumstances of the injury. The pension rate for disability contracted in line of duty is considerably higher than the rate paid for nonservice-connected disability.

If the disabled ex-serviceman has had 5 years of service, his pension is increased by 5 percent of his basic service pay and another 1 percent is added for each additional year of service. In determining the service record, 1 month of active service during a period of war operations in defense of the U. S. S. R. is calculated as 3 months. Payments may not exceed the maximums listed in the following tabulation:

Disability group	Percent of service pay prior to discharge	
	Service-connected disability	Non-service-connected disability
Basic pension:		
I.....	75	60
II.....	55	45
III.....	40	30
Maximum pension:		
I.....	85	70
II.....	65	55
III.....	45	35

Pensions of generals of the Red Army and officers of equivalent rank in the Navy amount to 95 percent of their pay prior to incapacitation.

Vocational Rehabilitation

In addition to pension rights for ex-servicemen, the Soviet Government has formulated a liberal policy of medical and vocational rehabilitation and has enacted Nation-wide legislation to put the policy in operation.⁶ A decree of May 6, 1942, places upon the people's commissars of social welfare the responsibility of organizing vocational rehabilitation training courses and schools for

disabled ex-servicemen who are unable to return to their former occupations.

The process of rehabilitation begins in the military hospital, where the study of various possible professions and trades is recommended to the disabled serviceman. In making such recommendations, both the degree of incapacitation and his educational background and experience are considered. Many of the rehabilitation training courses and schools which have been established throughout the Soviet Union are attached to the hospitals. Thus the ex-serviceman can begin his vocational reeducation as soon as his physical condition permits and at the same time he can have the constant medical attention needed during the first stages of convalescence. In these schools the men are taught tailoring, shoemaking, bookbinding, watch repairing, photography, and similar trades, and they receive special wage rates for the work performed.

Men who are not in need of sheltered training conditions and are able and willing to seek their own training opportunities are encouraged to enroll, tuition free, in any educational institution they choose,⁷ provided they meet its requirements for admission. Such students receive stipends during the entire time they are studying if they maintain at least an average scholastic record. Special boarding houses and schools exist for ex-servicemen who have lost their eyesight, where they are taught net-weaving and other occupations.

The Nation-wide shortage of skilled personnel offers favorable employment opportunities to graduates of all schools. Many disabled ex-servicemen have already found employment as teachers, veterinarians, accountants, economists, technicians, drivers, telegraph and cinema operators, draftsmen, and the like. Severely handicapped graduates of vocational rehabilitation schools who are unable to seek their own employment have been placed by the placement departments of the people's commissariats of social welfare in suitable employment provided by the managers of industrial and business establishments as well as by the heads of public agencies, under the terms of the rehabilitation decree. In addition to employment, the employers must furnish the men adequate housing accommodations and working conditions adapted to the nature of their incapacitation.

To assist and control the vocational rehabilita-

⁵ Op. cit., No. 15, June 21, 1941, Art. 282.

⁶ Op. cit., No. 5, June 28, 1942, Art. 76.

⁷ Op. cit., No. 31, Dec. 19, 1940, Art. 786.

tion activities of the people's commissariats of social welfare, the decree created invalids' vocational rehabilitation commissions in each territory, region, and city. These commissions, presided over by the vice-chairman of the executive committee of the respective geographical area, consist of the secretary of the area communist party organization, the secretary of the area communist youth organization, the chairman of the respective area trade-union organization, and the head of the area social welfare department. The latter serves as secretary of the control commission. The voca-

tional rehabilitation and placement activities of the people's commissariats of social welfare are further controlled by the Council of People's Commissars of the U. S. S. R., to which monthly reports on the results achieved must be submitted.

The Soviet Government attaches great importance to its vocational rehabilitation program. Its progress and success are widely advertised throughout the U. S. S. R. and it has proved a great morale builder to the Red Army man, who is constantly reminded that he need have no fear for his future if he is disabled in the defense of his country.