Publ. Math. Debrecen
49 / 3-4 (1996), 359–365

On groups with a locally nilpotent triple factorization

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Abstract. The following theorem is proved. Let the group $G = AB = AM = BM$ be the product of three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G. If M has an ascending G-invariant series with minimax factors, then G is locally nilpotent.

1. Introduction

In the theory of groups which have a factorization, groups of the form $G = AM = BM = AB$ with two subgroups A and B and a normal subgroup M of G play a special role. A general construction of such "triply factorized" groups is due to the second author and can be found in Section 6.1 of [2]. There are many situations in which the triply factorized group G satisfies some nilpotency condition if the three subgroups A, B and M satisfy this nilpotency condition. For instance, if M is a minimax group or if G has finite abelian section rank, then it was shown in [1] that the local nilpotency of A, B and M implies that of G (see [2], Theorems 6.3.7 and 6.3.8). The following theorem extends these results.

Theorem 1.1. *Let the group $G = AB = AM = BM$ be the product of three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G. If M has an ascending G-invariant series with minimax factors, then G is locally nilpotent.*

Mathematics Subject Classification: 20F19.
The second author likes to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for financial support and the Department of Mathematics of the University of Mainz for its excellent hospitality during the preparation of this paper.

Observe that in Theorem [1] the normal subgroup M of G is hypercentrally embedded in G. Therefore, if the subgroups A, B and M are hypercentral, then also the group G is hypercentral. On the other hand, there exist non-nilpotent groups which have a triple factorization with three abelian factors, these groups are even hypercentral with Prüfer rank 2 (see [2], Example 6.3.5). It should also be noted that Theorem 1.1 cannot be extended to the case when M has an ascending G-invariant series whose factors have finite Prüfer rank. This can be seen from the example of a triply factorized group $G = AB = AM = BM$ in [2], Theorem 6.1.2, where the subgroups A, B and M are abelian and M has Prüfer rank 1, but G is not locally nilpotent.

Recall that the FC-central series $F_\alpha(G)$ is defined by the rules $F_0(G) = 1$, $F_{\alpha+1}(G)/F_\alpha(G)$ is the FC-centre of $G/F_\alpha(G)$ and $F_\lambda(G) = \bigcup F_\beta(G)$ $(\beta < \lambda)$ where α is an ordinal and λ is a limit ordinal. The group G is FC-hypercentral if $F_\alpha = G$ for some ordinal α, and it is FC-nilpotent if α is finite.

If G is FC-nilpotent, M is nilpotent and A and B are hypercentral, then it was shown in [3] that G is also hypercentral. It was asked whether this result extends to the case when G is merely FC-hypercentral and M is hypercentral. The following corollary gives a positive answer to this question.

Corollary 1.2. *Let the FC-hypercentral group $G = AB = AM = BM$ be the product of three hypercentral subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G. Then G is hypercentral.*

Using standard arguments it is easy to deduce the following corollaries from Theorem 1.1 (see for example [2], proofs of Corollaries 6.3.9 and 6.3.11).

Corollary 1.3. *Let the group $G = AB$ be the product of two locally nilpotent subgroups A and B. If G has an ascending series with minimax factors, then each term of the Hirsch-Plotkin series of G is factorized. In particular, the Hirsch-Plotkin radical R of G is factorized, i.e. $R = (A \cap R)(B \cap R)$ and $A \cap B \subseteq R$.*

Corollary 1.4. *Let the group $G = AB$ be the product of two locally nilpotent subgroups A and B. If G has an ascending series with minimax factors, the factorizer $X(N) = AN \cap BN$ of every normal subgroup N of G is ascendant in G. In particular, the intersection $A \cap B$ is ascendant in G.*

The notation is standard and can for instance be found in [6] and [2]. In particular, the factorizer $X(N)$ of the normal subgroup N of the factorized group $G = AB$ is the subgroup $X(N) = AN \cap BN$; it is easy to see that $X(N) = A_1B_1 = A_1N = B_1N$ where $A_1 = A \cap BN$ and $B_1 = B \cap AN$.

2. Some lemmas

We will need several lemmas, some of which are special cases of our theorem.

Lemma 2.1. *Let G be a group and A a torsion-free abelian minimax normal subgroup of G. Suppose that the factor group G/A is locally nilpotent and for every non-trivial normal subgroup N of G the factor group $A/(A \cap N)$ is periodic. Then either G is locally nilpotent or G has finite Prüfer rank.*

Proof. It follows from [6], Theorem 10.35, and the corollary to Lemma 10.37, that the factor group $G/C_G(A)$ is minimax. Let $\hat{A}$ be the radicable hull of A. Then $\hat{A}$ has finite Prüfer rank and the action of G on A induces an action of G on $\hat{A}$ and we can construct the product $\hat{G} = \hat{A}G$ in which $\hat{A}$ is a normal subgroup and $G \cap \hat{A} = A$. Clearly $C_G(\hat{A}) = C_C(A)$.

Since G/A is locally nilpotent, the factor group $G/C_G(A)$ is hypercentral. If $C_G(A) = G$, then G is locally nilpotent and the lemma is proved. Let $C_G(A) \neq G$ and $gC_G(A)$ be a non-trivial central element of $G/C_G(A)$. Clearly the centralizer $C_A(g)$ is a normal subgroup of G, and the factor group $A/C_A(g)$ is periodic if $C_A(g) \neq 1$. Since $A/C_A(g)$ is isomorphic with $[A, g]$ and A is torsion-free, this implies $C_A(g) = 1$ and hence also $C_{\hat{A}}(g) = 1$. Thus $[\hat{A}, g]$ is isomorphic with $\hat{A}$ so that $\hat{A} = [\hat{A}, g]$ (see [5], Vol. 2, p. 153). In particular $\hat{A} = [\hat{A}, G]$. By Robinson [7], Theorem 4.5, the group $\hat{G}$ splits over $\hat{A}$ so that there exists a subgroup H of $\hat{G}$ such that $\hat{G} = H \ltimes \hat{A}$ is a semi-direct product of a subgroup H and the normal subgroup $\hat{A}$. Obviously $C_H(\hat{A})$ is a normal subgroup of $\hat{G}$ and by the hypothesis of the lemma $C_H(\hat{A}) \cap G = 1$. Since the factor group $H/C_H(\hat{A})$

is isomorphic with $\hat{G}/C_{\hat{G}}(\hat{A})$ and so also with $G/C_G(A)$, it is minimax. Therefore the factor group $\hat{G}/C_H(\hat{A})$ and thus also G have finite Prüfer rank. The lemma is proved.

Lemma 2.2. *Let G be an extension of a torsion-free abelian minimax group by a locally nilpotent group and suppose that $G = MA = MB = AB$ with three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G. Then the group G is locally nilpotent.*

Proof. Let X be an abelian minimax normal subgroup of G with minimal finite Prüfer rank such that the factor group G/X is locally nilpotent. If N is a normal subgroup of G which is maximal with the conditions that $N \cap X \subset X$ and $X/(N \cap X)$ is torsion-free, then the factor group $\bar{G} = G/N$ satisfies the hypothesis of Lemma 2.1. It follows that $\bar{G}$ has finite Prüfer rank. Moreover, $\bar{G}$ has a triple factorization $\bar{G} = \bar{M}\bar{A} = \bar{M}\bar{B} = \bar{A}\bar{B}$ with three locally nilpotent subgroups $\bar{A}$, $\bar{B}$ and $\bar{M}$. Hence $\bar{G}$ is locally nilpotent by [2], Theorem 6.3.8. But then the factor group $G/(N \cap X)$ is also locally nilpotent, since it is embedded into the direct product $(G/N) \times (G/X)$ of two locally nilpotent subgroups G/N and G/X. As $X/(N \cap X)$ is torsion-free and non-trivial, the Prüfer rank of $N \cap X$ is less than the Prüfer rank of X. This contradicts the choice of X. The lemma is proved.

Lemma 2.3. *Let the group G be an extension of a finite abelian group by an locally nilpotent group and suppose that $G = MA = MB = AB$ with three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M. Then G is locally nilpotent.*

Proof. Let X be a finite abelian normal subgroup of G with minimal order such that the factor group G/X is locally nilpotent. Then $[X, G] = X$ and by a theorem of Robinson (see [7], Corollary 3.5) the group G splits over X. Therefore there exists a subgroup H of G such that $G = H \ltimes X$. Obviously $C_H(X)$ is a normal subgroup of G and the factor group $\bar{G} = G/C_H(X)$ is finite. Since $\bar{G} = \bar{M}\bar{A} = \bar{M}\bar{B} = \bar{A}\bar{B}$ is a trifactorized group with nilpotent subgroups$\bar{A}$, $\bar{B}$ and $\bar{M}$, the group $\bar{G}$ is nilpotent by a result of Kegel (see [2], Corollary 2.5.11). Hence G is locally nilpotent, because it is embedded in the direct product $(G/X) \times (G/C_H(X))$. The lemma is proved.

The proof of the following lemma can be found in [4], Lemma 7.

Lemma 2.4. *Let $G = AM$ be the product of a subgroup A and a locally nilpotent normal subgroup M, and let M_1 and M_2 be subgroups of M such that $\langle M_1, A\rangle$ and $\langle M_2, A\rangle$ are locally nilpotent. Then also $\langle M_1, M_2, A\rangle$ is locally nilpotent.*

Lemma 2.5. *Let the group $G = MA = MB = AB$ be the product of three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G. If M has an ascending G-invariant series with minimax factors and the factors $A/(A\cap M)$ and $B/(B\cap M)$ are finitely generated, then G is locally nilpotent.*

Proof. By hypothesis the subgroup M has an ascending G-invariant series $1 = M_0 \subseteq M_1 \subseteq \ldots \subseteq M_\gamma = M$ whose factors are abelian and either finite or torsion-free minimax groups. There exists a least ordinal α such that G/M_α is locally nilpotent. If $\alpha = 0$, then G is locally nilpotent and the lemma is proved. Therefore let $\alpha > 0$. If α is not a limit ordinal, $G/M_{\alpha-1}$ is an extension of an abelian minimax group which is either finite or torsion-free by a locally nilpotent group. By Lemma 2.2 and Lemma 2.3 the factor group $G/M_{\alpha-1}$ is locally nilpotent, a contradiction. Hence α must be a limit ordinal and $M_\alpha = \bigcup M_\beta$ where $\beta < \alpha$.

By hypothesis there exist elements $a_1, \ldots, a_s$ of A and $b_1, \ldots, b_t$ of B such that $A = (A \cap M)\langle a_1, \ldots, a_s\rangle$ and $B = (B \cap M)\langle b_1, \ldots, b_t\rangle$. Moreover, there exist elements $a'_1, \ldots, a'_t$ of A, $b'_1, \ldots, b'_s$ of B and $m_1, \ldots, m_s$, $m'_1, \ldots, m'_t$ of M such that $b'_i = a_i m_i$ and $b_j = a'_j m'_j$ for $1 \le i \le s$ and $1 \le j \le t$. Put $A^* = \langle a_1, \ldots, a_s, a'_1, \ldots, a'_t\rangle$, $B^* = \langle b_1, \ldots, b_t, b'_1, \ldots, b'_s\rangle$ and $M^* = \langle m_1, \ldots, m_s, m'_1, \ldots, m'_t\rangle$. Then we have

$$\langle A^*, B^*\rangle = \langle A^*, M^*\rangle = \langle B^*, M^*\rangle.$$

Since G/M_α is locally nilpotent, the group $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle/\langle A^*, M^*\rangle \cap M_\alpha$ is nilpotent and so the intersection $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle \cap M_\alpha$ is finitely generated as an $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle$-operator group. Hence $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle \cap M_\alpha = \langle A^*, M^*\rangle \cap M_\beta$ for some ordinal $\beta < \alpha$. Then the factor group $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle M_\beta/M_\beta$ is nilpotent. Passing to the factor group G/M_β we may even suppose that $M_\beta = 1$. Then the subgroup $\langle A^*, M^*\rangle$ is nilpotent and hence the subgroup $\langle A \cap M, A^*, M^*\rangle$ is locally nilpotent by Lemma 2.4. Similarly also $\langle B \cap M, A^*, B^*\rangle$ is locally nilpotent. Since $\langle B \cap M, B^*, M^*\rangle = \langle B \cap M, A^*, M^*\rangle$, another application of Lemma 2.4, yields that the subgroup $\langle A \cap M, B \cap M, \langle A^*, M^*\rangle\rangle$ is locally nilpotent. Now we have $A = (A \cap M)A^*$, $B = (B \cap M)B^*$ and

$$\langle A \cap M, B \cap M, \langle A^*, M^*\rangle\rangle = \langle A \cap M, B \cap M, \langle A^*, B^*\rangle\rangle = G.$$

Thus G is locally nilpotent. This contradiction proves the lemma.

Lemma 2.6. *Let the group $G = MA = MB = AB$ be the product of three locally nilpotent subgroups A, B and M, where M is normal in G and has an ascending G-invariant series with minimax factors. If M is non-trivial, then there exists a non-trivial normal subgroup K of G which is contained in M such that its factorizer $X = X(K)$ in G is locally nilpotent. If G is locally nilpotent, then K can be chosen as a cyclic central subgroup of G.*

Proof. It follows from the hypothesis that the subgroup M is hypercentral and has a non-trivial center Z if $M \neq 1$. Moreover, there exists a subgroup K of Z such that K is either a finite minimal normal subgroup of G or a torsion-free minimax group on which G acts rationally irreducibly. The factorizer $X(K)$ in G is locally nilpotent by [2], Theorem 6.3.7. In particular, if G is locally nilpotent, then K is a cyclic central subgroup of G.

3. Proof of the theorem

Let L be a normal subgroup of G contained in M such that the factorizer F of L in G is locally nilpotent, and L is maximal with these properties. If $L = M$ we are done. Assume that $L \subset M$ and consider the factor group $\bar{G} = G/L$. Then $\bar{G} = \bar{A}\bar{B} = \bar{A}\bar{M} = \bar{B}\bar{M}$, where the images modulo L are indicated by bars. By Lemma 2.6 there exists a subgroup K of M which is normal in G and properly contains L such that the factorizer $\bar{X} = X(\bar{K})$ in $\bar{G}$ is locally nilpotent. Let X denote the full preimage of $\bar{X}$ in G. Then the subgroup X is the factorizer of K in G which satisfies the hypotheses of the theorem and is not locally nilpotent. Thus, without loss of generality we may assume that $G = X$. Then the factor group $\bar{G} = \bar{A}\bar{B} = \bar{A}\bar{K} = \bar{B}\bar{K}$ is locally nilpotent. Repeating the above arguments we may assume by Lemma 2.6 that $\bar{K}$ is a cyclic central subgroup of $\bar{G}$. Obviously in this case the intersection $\bar{A} \cap \bar{B}$ is a normal subgroup of $\bar{G}$. Therefore its full preimage $F = AL \cap BL$ is a locally nilpotent normal subgroup of G and so is contained in the Hirsch-Plotkin radical R of G. In particular the intersection $A \cap B$ lies in R. Clearly $G = AB = AR = BR$. It is easy to see that the factor groups $\bar{A}/(\bar{A} \cap \bar{B})$ and $\bar{B}/(\bar{A} \cap \bar{B})$ are cyclic. Therefore the factor groups $A/(A \cap R)$ and $B/(B \cap R)$ are also cyclic and hence the group G is locally nilpotent by Lemma 2.5. This contradiction proves the theorem.

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(Received December 28, 1995)