

## FRATTINI SUBGROUPS AND $\Phi$ -CENTRAL GROUPS

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$\Phi$ -central groups are introduced as a step in the direction of determining sufficiency conditions for a group to be the Frattini subgroup of some finite  $p$ -group and the related extension problem. The notion of  $\Phi$ -centrality arises by uniting the concept of an  $E$ -group with the generalized central series of Kaloujnine. An  $E$ -group is defined as a finite group  $G$  such that  $\Phi(N) \leq \Phi(G)$  for each subgroup  $N \leq G$ . If  $\mathcal{H}$  is a group of automorphisms of a group  $N$ ,  $N$  has an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series  $N = N_0 > N_1 > \dots > N_r = 1$  if  $x^{-1}x^a \in N_j$  for all  $x \in N_{j-1}$ , all  $a \in \mathcal{H}$ ,  $x^a$  the image of  $x$  under the automorphism  $a \in \mathcal{H}$ ,  $j = 0, 1, \dots, r-1$ .

Denote the automorphism group induced on  $\Phi(G)$  by transformation of elements of an  $E$ -group  $G$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ . Then  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{I}(\Phi(G))$ ,  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi(G))$  the inner automorphism group of  $\Phi(G)$ . Furthermore if  $G$  is nilpotent, then each subgroup  $N \leq \Phi(G)$ ,  $N$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , possess an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series. A class of nilpotent groups  $N$  is defined as  $\Phi$ -central provided that  $N$  possesses at least one nilpotent group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H} \neq 1$  such that  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{I}(N)$  and  $N$  possesses an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series. Several theorems develop results about  $\Phi$ -central groups and the associated  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series analogous to those between nilpotent groups and their associated central series. Then it is shown that in a  $p$ -group,  $\Phi$ -central with respect to a  $p$ -group of automorphism  $\mathcal{H}$ , a nonabelian subgroup invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  cannot have a cyclic center. The paper concludes with the permissible types of nonabelian groups of order  $p^4$  that can be  $\Phi$ -central with respect to a nontrivial group of  $p$ -automorphisms.

*Only finite groups will be considered* and the notation and the definitions will follow that of the standard references, e.g. [6]. Additionally needed definitions and results will be as follows: The group  $G$  is the *reduced partial product* (or reduced product) of its subgroups  $A$  and  $B$  if  $A$  is normal in  $G = AB$  and  $B$  contains no subgroup  $K$  such that  $G = AK$ . For a reduced product,  $A \cap B \leq \Phi(B)$ , (see [2]). If  $N$  is a normal subgroup of  $G$  contained in  $\Phi(G)$ , then  $\Phi(G/N) \cong \Phi(G)/N$ , (see [5]). An elementary group, i.e., an  $E$ -group having the identity for the Frattini subgroup, splits over each of its normal subgroups, (see [1]).

1. For a group  $G$ ,  $\Phi(G) = \Phi$ ,  $G/\Phi = F$  is  $\Phi$ -free i.e.,  $\Phi(F)$  is the identity. The elements of  $G$  by transformation of  $\Phi$  induce auto-

morphisms  $\mathcal{H}$  on  $\Phi$ . Denoting the centralizer of  $\Phi$  in  $G$  by  $M$ ,  $G/M \cong \mathcal{H} \cong \mathcal{A}(\Phi)$ ,  $\mathcal{A}(\Phi)$  the automorphism group of  $\Phi$ . Then if  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$  denotes the inner automorphisms of  $\Phi$ , one has  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi) \leq \Phi(\mathcal{H})$  and by a result of Gaschütz [5, Satz 11],  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$  normal in  $\mathcal{A}(\Phi)$  implies that  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi) \leq \Phi(\mathcal{A}(\Phi))$ .

Supposing first that  $M \not\leq \Phi$ , there exists a reduced product  $G = MK$  such that  $M \cap K \leq \Phi(K)$  and  $M\Phi(K)/M \cong \Phi(G/M) \cong \Phi(\mathcal{H})$ . Moreover  $M\Phi/M \cong A \leq F$ . Thus  $A$  is normal in  $F$  and the elements in  $A$  correspond to the identity transformation on  $\Phi$ . Thus  $F/A \cong G/M\Phi$  corresponds to a subgroup of outer automorphisms of  $\Phi$ , namely  $F/A \cong \mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$ . Since  $F$  is  $\Phi$ -free, there exists a reduced product  $F = AB$  such that  $A \cap B \leq \Phi(B)$  and  $F/A \cong B/A \cap B$ . By combining these latter statements,  $\mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(\Phi) \cong B/A \cap B$ . Moreover  $\Phi(B/A \cap B) \cong \Phi(B)/A \cap B \cong \Phi(\mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(\Phi)) = \Phi(\mathcal{H})/\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$ , i.e.,  $\Phi(B)/A \cap B \cong \Phi(\mathcal{H})/\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$ . However note that if  $\Phi(K) \leq \Phi(G)$ , then  $M\Phi(K)/M \leq M\Phi(G)/M \cong \mathcal{I}(\Phi) \leq \Phi(\mathcal{H})$ . Thus  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi) = \Phi(\mathcal{H})$ .

Now suppose that  $M \leq \Phi$ . Then  $\Phi(G/M) \cong \Phi(G)/M \cong \Phi(\mathcal{H})$ . Since  $M = Z$ ,  $Z$  the center of  $\Phi$ , and  $\Phi/Z \cong \mathcal{I}(\Phi)$  again it follows that  $\mathcal{I}(\Phi) = \Phi(\mathcal{H})$ .

**LEMMA 1.** *A necessary condition that a group  $N$  be the Frattini subgroup of an  $E$ -group  $G$  is that  $\mathcal{A}(N)$  contains a subgroup  $\mathcal{H}$  such that  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{I}(\Phi)$ .*

**COROLLARY 1.1.** *A necessary and sufficient condition that the centralizer of  $\Phi$  in an  $E$ -group  $G$  be the center of  $\Phi$  is that  $G/\Phi \cong \mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(\Phi)$ .*

Using the notation of the above,  $G/M\Phi \cong \mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(\Phi) \cong T \leq F$ . However  $G/\Phi \cong F$  elementary implies  $F = ST$ ,  $S \cap T = 1$ ,  $S$  normal in  $F$  and  $F/S = T$ . Then:

**THEOREM 1.** *Necessary conditions that a nilpotent group  $N$  be the Frattini subgroup of an  $E$ -group  $G$  is that  $\mathcal{A}(N)$  contains a subgroup  $\mathcal{H}$  such that*

- (1)  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{I}(N)$ , and
- (2) *there exists an extension of  $N$  to a group  $M$  such that  $M/N \cong \mathcal{H}/\mathcal{I}(N)$ .*

A sufficiency condition may well be lacking since  $M/N$  elementary only implies that  $\Phi(M) \leq N$ ; equality is not implied.

Let  $K$  denote a normal subgroup of an  $E$ -group  $G$  such that  $\Phi < K \leq G$  and that  $M$  is the  $G$ -centralizer of  $K$ . If  $M \not\leq \Phi$  but  $M\Phi < K$  properly,  $M\Phi/\Phi \cong \mathcal{I}(K)$ . On the other hand  $K < M\Phi$  implies  $M\Phi/M \cong$

$\Phi/M \cap \Phi \cong \Phi/K \cap M \cong (K \cap M)\Phi/K \cap M \cong \mathcal{S}(K)$ . Thus  $\Phi(G/M) \cong \Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{S}(K)$ ,  $\mathcal{H}$  the group of automorphisms of  $K$  induced by transformation of elements in  $G$ . Summarizing:

**THEOREM 2.** *If  $K$  is a subgroup normal in an  $E$ -group  $G$ ,  $\Phi < K \leq G$ , and  $M$  is the  $G$ -centralizer of  $K$ , then  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{S}(K)$ ,  $\mathcal{H}$  the group of automorphisms of  $K$  induced by transformation of elements of  $G$ , if and only if  $K \leq M\Phi$ , i.e.,  $K = \Phi Z$ ,  $Z$  the center of  $K$ .*

On the other hand if  $K$  is a subgroup of  $\Phi$ , the following decomposition of  $\Phi$  is obtained:

**THEOREM 3.** *If a subgroup  $K$  of  $\Phi$  normal in an  $E$ -group  $G$  has an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$  induced by transformation of elements of  $G$  with  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{S}(K)$ , then  $\Phi = KB$ ,  $B$  the centralizer of  $K$  in  $\Phi$ , and  $K \cap B \neq 1$  unless  $K = 1$ .  $\mathcal{K}$  denotes the automorphism group of  $B$  induced by transformation of elements of  $G$ , then  $\Phi(\mathcal{K}) = \mathcal{S}(B)$ .*

*Proof.* Denote the  $G$ -centralizer of  $K$  by  $M$ . Then  $G/M \cong \mathcal{H}$  and  $MK/M \cong K/Z \cong \mathcal{S}(K)$ ,  $Z$  the center of  $K$ . Since the homomorphic image of an  $E$ -group is an  $E$ -group, then  $\mathcal{H}$  is an  $E$ -group and  $\mathcal{H}/\mathcal{S}(K)$  is an elementary group. Hence  $G/KM$  is an elementary group which implies that  $\Phi \leq KM$  since  $G$  is an  $E$ -group.  $B = M \cap \Phi$  is normal in  $G$  and it follows that  $\Phi = KB$ . Since  $K$  is nilpotent, the center of  $K$  exists properly unless  $G$  is an elementary group.

Symmetrically  $K$  is contained in the  $G$ -centralizer  $J$  of  $B$ . Then as above  $JB/J$  is mapped into  $\Phi(\mathcal{K})$  and since  $G/JB$  is elementary, the mapping is onto, i.e.,  $JB/J \cong \Phi(\mathcal{K}) \cong B/J \cap B \cong \mathcal{S}(B)$ .

**REMARK 1.** Note that in Theorem 3, each subgroup  $K$  contained in the center of  $\Phi$  and normal in  $G$  satisfies the condition  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{S}(K)$  and so  $\mathcal{H}$  is an elementary group.

For normal subgroups  $N$  of a nilpotent group  $G$ , transformation by elements of  $G$  on  $N$  induce a group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$  for which a series of subgroups exist,  $N = N_0 > N_1 > \dots > N_r = 1$ , such that  $x^{-1}x^a \in N_i$ ,  $a \in \mathcal{H}$ ,  $x \in N_{i-1}$ . Following Kaloujnine [8],  $N$  is said to have an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series. In general  $E$ -groups do not have this property on the normal subgroups except in the trivial case of  $\mathcal{H}$  the identity mapping. If  $N$  is nilpotent and  $\mathcal{S}(N) \leq \mathcal{H}$  then the series can be refined to a series for which  $|N_{i-1}/N_i|$  is a prime integer.

A group  $N$  does not necessarily have an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series for each subgroup  $\mathcal{H} \leq \mathcal{A}(N)$  even if  $N$  is nilpotent. For example if  $N$  is

the quaternion group and  $\mathcal{H}$  is  $\mathcal{A}(N)$ ,  $N$  has only one proper characteristic subgroup.

Combining Lemma 1 with the above one has:

**THEOREM 4.** *A necessary condition that a group  $N$  be the Frattini subgroup of a nilpotent group  $G$  is that  $\mathcal{A}(N)$  contains a nilpotent subgroup  $\mathcal{H}$  such that*

- (1)  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{F}(N)$  and
- (2)  $N$  possesses an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series.

The dihedral group  $N$  of order eight has an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series for  $\mathcal{H} = \mathcal{A}(N)$ , however  $|\Phi(\mathcal{H})| = 2$  and  $|\mathcal{F}(N)| = 4$ . There are Abelian groups which trivially satisfy (1) but not (2). So both conditions are necessary.

A  $\Phi$ -central group  $N$  will be defined as a nilpotent group possessing at least one nilpotent group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H} \neq 1$  such that

- (1)  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{F}(N)$  and
- (2)  $N$  possesses an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series.

$\Phi$ -central groups have the following properties:

**THEOREM 5.**

(1) *If  $N$  is  $\Phi$ -central with respect to an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ ,  $M$  a subgroup of  $N$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , and  $S$  a subgroup of  $N/M$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}^*$ ,  $\mathcal{H}^*$  the group of automorphisms induced on  $N/M$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ , then there exists a subgroup  $K$  of  $N$  containing  $M$ , invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , with  $K/M \cong S$ . Moreover  $\mathcal{H}^* \cong \mathcal{H}|_M$ ,  $\mathcal{M}$  the set of all  $a \in \mathcal{H}$  such that  $x^{-1}x^a \in M$ .*

(2) *If  $N$  is  $\Phi$ -central with respect to an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$  and  $M$  is a member of the  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series, then  $N/M$  is  $\Phi$ -central with respect to  $\mathcal{H}^*$ ,  $\mathcal{H}^*$  the group of automorphisms induced on  $N/M$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ .*

*Proof.* The proof of (1) relies on the fact that the groups considered are nilpotent and  $\mathcal{F}(N) \leq \mathcal{H}$ . The only additional comment necessary for (2) is that under a homomorphic mapping of a nilpotent group the Frattini subgroup goes onto the Frattini subgroup of the image (see [2]).

**THEOREM 6.** *Let  $N$  be a group  $\Phi$ -central under an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ . If  $M$  is a subgroup of  $N$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  then*

- (1)  $M$  possesses an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series,
- (2)  $M$  possesses a proper subgroup of fixed points under  $\mathcal{H}$ ,  
and
- (3)  $M$  can be included as a member of an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series of  $N$ .

*Proof.* As Kaloujnine [8] has introduced, a *descending  $\mathcal{H}$ -central chain* can be defined by  $N = N_0 \geq N_1 \geq \dots \geq N_j \geq \dots$  for  $N_j = [N_{j-1}, \mathcal{H}]$ ,  $[N_{j-1}, \mathcal{H}]$  the set of  $x^{-1}x^a$  for all  $x \in N_{j-1}$ ,  $a \in \mathcal{H}$ . A series occurs if for some integer  $r$ ,  $N_r = 1$ . Analogous to the corresponding proofs for nilpotent groups, a group possessing an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series, possesses a descending  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series,  $M$  possesses a proper subgroup of fixed points under,  $\mathcal{H}$  (the set corresponds to a generalized center of  $N$  relative to  $\mathcal{H}$ ) and  $M$  can be included as a member of an  $\mathcal{H}$ -central series of  $N$ . However  $M$  may not necessarily be a  $\Phi$ -central group.

Even though the notion of  $\Phi$ -centrality is derived from the properties of the Frattini subgroup of a nilpotent group, it is not a sufficient condition for group extension purposes e.g., consider the extension of cyclic group of order three to the symmetric group on three symbols.

Since  $\Phi(K)$  for a nilpotent group  $K$  is the direct product of the Frattini subgroup of the Sylow  $p$ -subgroups of  $K$  (see Gaschütz [5, Satz 6]), then the determination of the nilpotent groups  $N$  which can be the Frattini subgroup of some nilpotent group  $G$  reduces to the consideration of  $G$  as a  $p$ -group. The next section discusses several properties of  $\Phi$ -central  $p$ -groups.

2. *Only  $p$ -groups and their  $p$ -groups of automorphisms will be considered.*

LEMMA 2. (Blackburn [3].) *If  $M$  is a group invariant under a group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$  and  $N$  is a subgroup of  $M$  of order  $p^2$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , then  $\mathcal{H}$  possesses a subgroup  $\mathcal{M}$  of index at most  $p$  under which  $N$  is a fixed-point set.*

*Proof.*  $\mathcal{H}$  is homomorphic to a  $p$ -group of  $\mathcal{A}(N)$  and  $|\mathcal{A}(N)| = p(p-1)$  since  $\mathcal{H}$  is a  $p$ -group. The kernel has index at most  $p$ .

LEMMA 3. *A group  $N$ ,  $\Phi$ -central under the automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ , can contain no nonabelian subgroup  $M$  of order  $p^3$  and invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ .*

*Proof.* If  $M$  is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , then  $M$  contains a subgroup  $K$  of order  $p^2$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  by Theorem 6. By Lemma 2,  $\mathcal{H}$  possesses a subgroup  $\mathcal{M}$  of index at most  $p$  under which  $K$  is a fixed-point set. Since  $\mathcal{H}$  contains  $\mathcal{S}(N)$ ,  $K \leq Z(N)$ ,  $Z(N)$  the center of  $N$ . Consequently  $K \leq Z(M)$ ,  $M$  must be Abelian, and so a contradiction.

COROLLARY 3.1. (Hobby [7].) *No nonabelian  $p$ -group of order  $p^3$  can be the Frattini subgroup of a  $p$ -group.*

*Proof.* Denote the induced group of automorphisms on  $\Phi(G)$  by the elements of a  $p$ -group  $G$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ . Then  $\Phi(G)$  is  $\Phi$ -central under  $\mathcal{H}$ .

**COROLLARY 3.2.** *Each Frattini subgroup of order greater than  $p^3$  of a  $p$ -group  $G$  contains an Abelian subgroup  $N$  of order  $p^3$  and normal in  $G$ .*

**LEMMA 4.** *Let  $N$  be a group  $\Phi$ -central under an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ . A noncyclic Abelian subgroup  $M$  of  $N$ , invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and having order  $p^3$  contains an elementary Abelian subgroup  $K$  of order  $p^2$ , invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and a fixed-point set for  $\mathcal{F}(N)$ .*

*Proof.* If  $M$  is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and elementary Abelian,  $M$  contains an elementary Abelian subgroup  $K$  of order  $p^2$  and invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  by Theorem 6. On the other hand if  $M$  is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and of the form  $\{x, y \mid x^{p^2} = x^p = 1\}$ , the characteristic subgroup  $K = \{x^p, y\}$  in  $M$  has order  $p^2$  and is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ . In either case  $K$  is invariant under a subgroup  $\mathcal{M}$  of index at most  $p$  by Lemma 2. The result follows since  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{F}(N) \leq \mathcal{M}$ .

**COROLLARY 4.1.** *A noncyclic Abelian normal subgroup  $M$  of a  $p$ -group  $G$ ,  $|M| = p^3$ , and  $M \leq \Phi(G)$ , contains an elementary Abelian subgroup  $N$  of order  $p^2$ , normal in  $G$ , and contained in the center of  $\Phi(G)$ .*

**THEOREM 7.** *Let  $N$  denote a group  $\Phi$ -central under an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ . Each nonabelian subgroup  $M$  of  $N$ , invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , contains an elementary Abelian subgroup  $K$  of order  $p^2$  which is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and is a fixed-point set under  $\mathcal{F}(N)$ .*

*Proof.* Suppose  $M$  is a nonabelian subgroup of least order for which the theorem is not valid. By Lemma 3,  $|M| \geq p^4$ . Since  $\Phi(M) \neq 1$ , denote by  $P$  the cyclic subgroup of order  $p$ , consisting of fixed-points under  $\mathcal{H}$  and contained in  $\Phi(M)$ . One such subgroup always exists by Theorem 6. Then  $M/P \leq N/P$ , both are invariant under  $\mathcal{H}^*$ , and  $N/P$  is  $\Phi$ -central under  $\mathcal{H}^*$ ,  $\mathcal{H}^*$  the induced automorphisms on  $N/P$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ .

If  $M/P$  is Abelian, then  $M/P$  not cyclic implies that the elements of order  $p$  in  $M/P$  form a characteristic subgroup  $K/P$ , invariant under  $\mathcal{H}^*$ , which is elementary Abelian and  $|K/P| \geq p^2$ . Thus  $K/P$  contains a subgroup  $L/P$  of order  $p^2$  and invariant under  $\mathcal{H}^*$ . This implies that  $L$  is a noncyclic commutative subgroup invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  by Lemma 3.

For  $M/P$  nonabelian,  $M/P$  contains an elementary Abelian subgroup

$L/P$  of order  $p^2$  invariant under  $\mathcal{H}^*$  by the induction hypothesis. Again Lemma 3 implies that  $L$  of order  $p^3$  is a noncyclic commutative subgroup invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ .

By Lemma 4,  $K$  exists for  $L$  and hence for  $M$  in both cases.

**COROLLARY 7.1.** *A nonabelian subgroup invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  of a group  $N$ ,  $\phi$ -central under an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ , cannot have a cyclic center.*

**COROLLARY 7.2.** *A nonabelian normal (characteristic) subgroup of a  $p$ -group  $G$  that is contained in  $\Phi(G)$  cannot have a cyclic center.*

**REMARK 2.** Corollary 7.2 is stronger than the results of Hobby [7, Theorem 1, Remark 1] and includes a theorem of Burnside [2] that no nonabelian group whose center is cyclic can be the derived group of a  $p$ -group. Together with Lemma 5, the results, as necessary conditions, prove useful in determining whether or not a  $p$ -group could be the Frattini subgroup of a given  $p$ -group.

**LEMMA 5.** *Let  $N$  denote a group  $\phi$ -central under an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$ . An Abelian subgroup  $M \leq N$  of type  $(2, 1)$  and invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ , is contained in the center of  $N$ .*

*Proof.* The result holds for  $N$  Abelian so consider the case of  $N$  nonabelian. If  $M = \{x, y \mid x^{p^2} = y^p = 1\}$ , then as in Lemma 4,  $\{x^p, y\}$  is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$  and is contained in the center of  $N$ . Since  $M$  contains only  $p$  cyclical subgroups of order  $p^2$  and  $x^a \neq x^j$  for an integer  $j$  and  $a \in \mathcal{H}$ , it follows that  $x^a$  has at most  $p$  images under  $\mathcal{H}$ . Therefore the subgroup  $\mathcal{M}$  of  $\mathcal{H}$  having  $x$  as a fixed point has index at most  $p$  in  $\mathcal{H}$ . Since  $\Phi(\mathcal{H}) = \mathcal{I}(N) \leq \mathcal{M}$ , then  $x$  is fixed by  $\mathcal{I}(N)$  i.e.,  $x$  is in the center of  $N$ .

**COROLLARY 5.1.** *An Abelian subgroup  $M$  of type  $(2, 1)$ , normal in a  $p$ -group  $G$ , and contained in  $\Phi(G)$  is contained in the center of  $\Phi(G)$ .*

**THEOREM 8.** *The following two types of nonabelian groups of order  $p^4$  cannot be  $\phi$ -central groups with respect to a nontrivial  $p$ -group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$ :*

- (1)  $A = \{x, y, z \mid x^{p^2} = y^p = z^p = 1, [x, z] = y, [x, y] = [y, z] = 1\}$ .
- (2)  $B = \{x, y \mid x^{p^2} = y^{p^2} = 1, [x, y] = x^p\}$ .

*Proof.* Consider (1) and note that each element of order  $p^2$  is of

the form  $z^a x^b y^c$  for  $b \neq 0 \pmod{p^2}$ . Then  $(z^a x^b y^c)^p = x^{pb} y^{pc+ab(1+2+\dots+(p-1))} = x^{pb} y^{abp(p-1)/2} = x^{pb}$  for  $(b, p) = 1$ . Thus  $\{x^p\} = A^p$  is characteristic in  $A$  of order  $p$ . If  $A$  was  $\Phi$ -central with respect to an automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}$  then  $A/A^p$  would be  $\Phi$ -central with respect to the automorphism group  $\mathcal{H}^*$  induced on  $A/A^p$  by  $\mathcal{H}$ . This contradicts Lemma 3 if  $\mathcal{H}$  is nontrivial and so  $A$  cannot be  $\Phi$ -central with respect to a nontrivial  $p$ -group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$ .

Each maximal subgroup in (2) is Abelian, of order  $p^3$ , and type (2, 1). If  $B$  was  $\Phi$ -central under a nontrivial  $p$ -group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$  then one of these maximal subgroups, say  $M$ , is invariant under  $\mathcal{H}$ . By Lemma 5,  $M$  is contained in the center of  $B$  and thus  $B$  is Abelian. So  $B$  cannot be  $\Phi$ -central with respect to a nontrivial  $p$ -group of automorphisms  $\mathcal{H}$ .

**COROLLARY 8.1.** *The types (1) and (2) of  $p$ -groups of Theorem 8 cannot be Frattini subgroups of  $p$ -groups.*

**REMARK 3.** The remaining two types of nonabelian  $p$ -groups are of the forms

$$(3) \quad \{x, y, z \mid x^{p^2} = y^p = z^p = 1, [x, z] = x^p, [y, x] = [y, z] = 1\} \text{ and}$$

$$(4) \quad \{x, y, z, w \mid x^p = y^p = z^p = w^p = 1, [z, w] = x, [y, w] = [x, w] = 1\}.$$

Without attempting a classification it is sufficient to show the existence of  $p$ -groups  $G$  having  $\Phi(G)$  of form (3) or (4). For  $p > 5$ , the group  $G = \{x, y, z, w \mid x^{p^2} = y^{p^2} = z^p = w^p = 1, [y^p, z] = [y^p, x] = [x, w] = 1, [y^p, w] = [x, z] = [z, w] = x^p, [z, y] = y^p, [x, y] = z, [w, y] = x\}$ ,  $|G| = p^6$ , and  $\Phi(G)$  is of the form (3). Then for  $p = 5$ ,  $G = \{u, v, w, x, y, z \mid u^p = v^p = w^p = x^p = y^p = z^p = 1, [v, w] = [v, x] = [v, z] = [x, y] = 1, [v, y] = [x, w] = [w, y] = u, [w, z] = v, [x, z] = w, [y, z] = x\}$ ,  $|G| = p^6$ , and  $\Phi(G)$  is of type (4).

Groups  $G$  of order  $p^6$  other than those given in Remark 3 exist having nonabelian  $\Phi(G)$ . However for all such cases  $\Phi(G)$  contains a characteristic subgroup  $N$  of order  $p^2$  such that  $G/N$  is not of form (3) nor (4) i.e.,  $G$  cannot be the Frattini subgroup of any  $p$ -group. Remark 3 provides a ready source of examples of  $p$ -groups which are  $\Phi$ -central, or in particular are Frattini subgroups of some  $p$ -group. This offsets the conjecture that such a source consisted of  $p$ -groups of relatively "large" order. The examples raise the following question: If the group  $F$  is the Frattini subgroup of a group  $G$ , does there always exist a group  $G^*$  such that  $\Phi(G^*) \cong F$  and the centralizer of  $\Phi(G^*)$  in  $G^*$  is the center of  $\Phi(G^*)$ ?



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