

COHOMOLOGY AND FINITE SUBGROUPS OF PROFINITE GROUPS

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We prove two theorems linking the cohomology of a pro- p group G with the conjugacy classes of its finite subgroups.

Theorem 3. *The number of conjugacy classes of elementary abelian p -subgroups of G is finite if and only if the ring $H^*(G, \mathbb{Z}/p)$ is finitely generated modulo nilpotent elements.*

Theorem 5. *If the ring $H^*(G, \mathbb{Z}/p)$ is finitely generated then the number of conjugacy classes of finite subgroups of G is finite.*

1. PRO- p GROUPS AND ELEMENTARY ABELIAN PRO- p SUBGROUPS

Let G be an infinite pro- p group. Fix a fundamental system \mathcal{U} of open neighborhoods U of $1 \in G$ such that $\bigcap_{U \in \mathcal{U}} U = 1$ and each U is an open normal subgroup of G . For convenience, write $V \leq U$ for $V \subset U$ and $U, V \in \mathcal{U}$. For $U \in \mathcal{U}$, set $G_U = G/U$. Denote by $\varphi_{U,V} : G_V \rightarrow G_U$ the projection map with $V \leq U$. $\{G_U, \varphi_{U,V}\}$ is an inverse system and

$$G = \varprojlim G_U.$$

Let $\varphi_U : G \rightarrow G_U, U \in \mathcal{U}$, be the projection map. Let \mathcal{E} (resp. \mathcal{E}_U) be the set of elementary abelian pro- p subgroups (resp. p -subgroups) of G (resp. G_U). (We use the convention that $\{1\}$ is elementary abelian of rank 0.) It is clear that $\varphi_U(E)$ and $\varphi_{U,V}(F)$ are elements of \mathcal{E}_U , for every $E \in \mathcal{E}, F \in \mathcal{E}_V, V \leq U$. Denote by $\psi_U : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathcal{E}_U$ (resp. $\psi_{U,V} : \mathcal{E}_V \rightarrow \mathcal{E}_U, V \leq U$) the map induced from φ_U (resp. $\varphi_{U,V}$).

Proposition 1. *Given $V \in \mathcal{U}$, there exists $W \in \mathcal{U}$ with $W \leq V$ such that, for every $E \in \mathcal{E}_W, \psi_{V,W}(E) \in \text{Im } \psi_V$.*

Proof. Let F be an element of \mathcal{E}_V . Suppose that $F \notin \text{Im } \psi_V$. Then there exists $S \in \mathcal{U}$ with $S \leq V$ such that $F \notin \text{Im } \psi_{V,S}$. Since G_V is finite, there exists $W \in \mathcal{U}$ with $W \leq V$ such that $F \in \text{Im } \psi_{V,W}$ implies $F \in \text{Im } \psi_V$, for every $F \in \mathcal{E}_V$.

Let E be an arbitrary element of \mathcal{E}_W . Since $\psi_{V,W}(E)$ is an element of \mathcal{E}_V , it also belongs to $\text{Im } \psi_V$. The proposition is proved. \square

The following notation will be used. Let K be a (profinite) p -group. $H^*(K)$ will always denote the (continuous) cohomology of K with coefficients \mathbb{Z}/p . Denote by $I(K)$ the ideal of $H^*(K)$ consisting of elements which restrict trivially to every elementary abelian subgroup of K , and by \mathfrak{R}_K the nilradical of $H^*(K)$. Set

$$H(K) = \begin{cases} H^{ev}(K) & \text{for } p > 2, \\ H^*(K), & \text{for } p = 2 \end{cases}$$

and let $H^+(K)$ be the ideal of $H^*(K)$ consisting of elements of positive degrees. We have

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Proposition 2. *Given $\eta \in I(G)$, there exist $W \in \mathcal{U}$ and $\xi \in I(G_W)$ such that $(\varphi_W)^*(\xi) = \eta$. In particular, if $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, there exists $U \in \mathcal{U}$ such that $I(G) \subset (\varphi_U)^*(I(G_U))$.*

Proof. Let η be an element of $I(G)$. Since $H^*(G) = \varinjlim H^*(G_U)$, there exist V and $\zeta \in H^*(G_V)$ such that $\varphi_V^*(\zeta) = \eta$. Set $\xi = \varphi_{V,W}^*(\zeta)$ with W given in Proposition 1. Also $\varphi_W^*(\xi) = \eta$. We now prove that $\xi \in I(G_W)$.

Let E be an element of \mathcal{E}_W and set $K = \psi_{V,W}(E)$. By Proposition 1, there exists $M \in \mathcal{E}$ such that $\psi_V(M) = K$. Consider the commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} H^*(G_W) & \xleftarrow{\varphi_{V,W}^*} & H^*(G_V) & \xrightarrow{\varphi_V^*} & H^*(G) \\ \text{Res} \downarrow & & \text{Res} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{Res} \\ H^*(E) & \xleftarrow{(\varphi_{V,W}|_E)^*} & H^*(K) & \xrightarrow{(\varphi_V|_M)^*} & H^*(M) \end{array} .$$

As $\varphi_V|_M$ is a monomorphism and $\eta|_M = 0$, the right square of the diagram tells us that $\zeta|_K = 0$. So, by the commutativity of the left square, $\xi|_E = 0$. Hence $\xi \in I(G_W)$.

If $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, V can be chosen such that $H^*(G) = \text{Im}(\varphi_V)^*$. It follows from what we just proved that $I(G) \subset (\varphi_W)^*(I(G_W))$. \square

We can now deduce the profinite case of the following theorem of Quillen from the finite case, where many fairly elementary proofs are now known.

Theorem 1 (Quillen [8]). *$I(G) \subset \mathfrak{R}_G$. In other words, every element of $I(G)$ is nilpotent.*

Proof. Straightforward from Proposition 2, by noting that $I(G_W) \subset \mathfrak{R}_{G_W}$, by the finite case, as G_W is finite. \square

This result also appears in [9].

Proposition 3. *Suppose that there exist $U \in \mathcal{U}$ and $a \in G \setminus U$ with $\text{ord}(a) = p$. Set $b = \varphi_U(a) \in G_U$. Then there exists $\xi \in H^+(G_U)$ satisfying:*

- (a) $\xi|_{\langle b \rangle} \neq 0$;
- (b) $\varphi_U^*(\xi)|_{\langle a \rangle} \neq 0$. In particular, $\varphi_U^*(\xi)$ is not nilpotent in $H^+(G)$.

Proof. By [7, Theorem 2.7], there exists $\xi \in H^+(G_U)$ such that $\xi|_{\langle b \rangle}$ is not nilpotent. From the commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^*(G_U) & \xrightarrow{\varphi_U^*} & H^*(G) \\ \text{Res} \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{Res} \\ H^*(\langle b \rangle) & \xrightarrow{(\varphi_U|_{\langle a \rangle})^*} & H^*(\langle a \rangle) \end{array} ,$$

since $H^*(\langle b \rangle) \xrightarrow{(\varphi_U|_{\langle a \rangle})^*} H^*(\langle a \rangle)$ is an isomorphism, it follows that $\varphi_U^*(\xi)|_{\langle a \rangle}$ is not nilpotent. The proposition follows. \square

Theorem 2. *A pro- p group A is torsion-free if and only if $H^+(A) \subset \mathfrak{R}_A$.*

Proof. If A is not torsion-free, it follows from Proposition 3 that $H^+(A)$ contains a non-nilpotent element. If A is torsion-free, then $I(G) = H^+(A)$; hence, by Theorem 1, any element of $H^+(A)$ is nilpotent. \square

Corollary 1. (i) *A subgroup A of G is torsion-free if and only if $\text{Im}(H^+(G) \xrightarrow{\text{Res}} H^+(A)) \subset \mathfrak{R}_A$;*
(ii) *If $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is finitely generated, then G contains an open, normal, torsion-free subgroup U .*

Proof. (i) If A is torsion-free, it follows from Theorem 2 that $H^+(A)$ consists of nilpotent elements; hence any element of $\text{Im}(H^+(G) \xrightarrow{\text{Res}} H^+(A))$ is nilpotent. Conversely, suppose that A contains an element a of order p . By Proposition 3, there exists $\zeta \in H^+(G)$ such that $\zeta|_{\langle a \rangle}$, hence $\zeta|_A$, is not nilpotent.

(ii) Suppose that $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is finitely generated. Since $H^*(G) = \varinjlim H^*(G_V)$, there exists $U \in \mathcal{U}$ such that $H^*(G_U)/\mathfrak{R}_{G_U} \xrightarrow{(\varphi_U)^*} H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is surjective. Hence $\text{Im}(H^+(G) \xrightarrow{\text{Res}} H^+(U)) \subset \mathfrak{R}_U$. By (i), U is torsion-free.

The corollary follows. \square

Remark 1. The following example shows that the converse of Corollary 1(ii) does not hold. For every $n \in \mathbb{N}$, define \mathfrak{A}_n to be the procyclic group \mathbb{Z}_2 generated by e_n . Set $\mathfrak{A} = \hat{\bigoplus}_n \mathfrak{A}_n$ and let $\langle a \rangle \cong \mathbb{Z}/2$ act on \mathfrak{A} by ${}^a e_n = e_n^{-1}$. Define $G = \mathfrak{A} \rtimes \mathbb{Z}/2$. For every n , $\langle e_n a \rangle \cong \mathbb{Z}/2$ and $\langle e_n a \rangle$ is not conjugate with $\langle e_m a \rangle$ if $m \neq n$. Hence there are infinitely many conjugacy classes of elementary abelian subgroups of G . According to Theorem 3 below, $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is not finitely generated, although \mathfrak{A} is open, normal and torsion-free in G .

We will give a necessary and sufficient condition for $H^*(G)$ to be finitely generated as a ring. First we prepare.

Lemma 1. *Suppose that $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated and M is a finite $\mathbb{F}_p G$ -module. Then $H^*(G, M)$ is noetherian over $H^*(G)$.*

Proof. We prove by induction on $n = \dim_{\mathbb{F}_p} M$. Suppose that the lemma holds for $n - 1$. Consider the exact sequence of $\mathbb{F}_p G$ -modules

$$0 \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_p \xrightarrow{f} M \xrightarrow{g} N \rightarrow 0$$

with $N = M/f(\mathbb{F}_p)$. We then have the corresponding long exact sequence of cohomology

$$\dots H^{*-1}(G, N) \xrightarrow{\delta_*} H^*(G) \xrightarrow{f_*} H^*(G, M) \xrightarrow{g_*} H^*(G, N) \rightarrow \dots$$

By the inductive assumption, $H^*(G, N)$ is noetherian over $H^*(G)$, hence so is $\text{Im } g_*$. Pick elements ξ_1, \dots, ξ_m of $H^*(G, M)$ so that $\{g_*(\xi_1), \dots, g_*(\xi_m)\}$ is a set of generators of $\text{Im } g_*$. It follows that $H^*(G, M)$ is generated by ξ_1, \dots, ξ_m , as a module over $\text{Im } f_*$. Hence $H^*(G, M)$ is noetherian over $H^*(G)$. \square

Corollary 2. *The following are equivalent:*

- (a) *$H^*(G)$ is finitely generated;*
- (b) *G contains an open normal, torsion-free subgroup U such that $H^*(U)$ is finite;*
- (c) *there exists an open subgroup K of G such that $H^*(K)$ is finitely generated;*
- (d) *$H^*(K)$ is finitely generated, for any open subgroup K of G .*

Proof. The implication (b) \Rightarrow (a) was proved by Quillen ([7, Proposition 13.5]) using a spectral sequence argument. It is clear that (d) \Rightarrow (c) and (d) \Rightarrow (a). Suppose that $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated and K is open in G . By the Eckmann-Shapiro lemma, $H^*(K) = H^*(G, M)$ with $M = \text{Hom}_K(\mathbb{F}_p G, \mathbb{F}_p)$. Since M is noetherian as a \mathbb{F}_p -module, $H^*(K)$ is noetherian over $H^*(G)$, by Lemma 1. As $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, so is $H^*(K)$. In particular, if U is given as in Corollary 1 (ii), then $H^*(U)$ is finite dimensional, as $H^+(U) \subset \mathfrak{R}_U$. We then have (a) \Rightarrow (b) and (a) \Rightarrow (d).

Finally, suppose that K is open in G and $H^*(K)$ is finitely generated. It follows that K contains an open, normal, torsion-free subgroup U such that $H^*(U)$ is finite. As U is also open in G , U contains an open, normal subgroup V of G . Since V is torsion-free and open in U , $H^*(V)$ is finite. So $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated. The implication (c) \Rightarrow (a) is then proved. \square

Remark 2. In [7], it was proved that, if $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, then G has only finitely many conjugacy classes of elementary abelian pro- p subgroups. However the converse does not hold: the group

\mathfrak{A} given above has only one elementary abelian subgroup, which is the one of rank 0, while $H^*(\mathfrak{A})$ is an exterior algebra with an infinite number of generators of degree 1, hence is not finitely generated.

From now on, fix \mathcal{F} a set of representatives of conjugacy classes of elementary abelian pro- p subgroups of G . We now give a cohomological criterion for \mathcal{F} to be finite, as follows.

Theorem 3. *The following are equivalent:*

- (a) *There exists an open normal subgroup A of G such that $EA \neq FA$, for $E \neq F$ in \mathcal{F} ;*
- (b) *$H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is finitely generated (as a ring);*
- (c) *\mathcal{F} is finite.*

Proof. (a) \Rightarrow (c): Let \mathcal{S} be the set of subgroups of G_A . The map $f : \mathcal{F} \rightarrow \mathcal{S}, E \mapsto EA/A$ is then injective. As f maps \mathcal{F} injectively into the finite set \mathcal{S} , \mathcal{F} is finite.

The implication (c) \Rightarrow (a) is clear. We now prove (b) \Rightarrow (c). Suppose that $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is finitely generated. Let U be the open, normal, torsion-free subgroup of G as given in Corollary 1(ii). It follows from the proof of the corollary that, for every $V \leq U$, V is torsion-free and $H^*(G_V)/\mathfrak{R}_{G_V} \xrightarrow{(\varphi_V)^*} H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is surjective.

Let \mathcal{M} be a set of representatives of conjugacy classes of maximal elementary abelian pro- p subgroups of G and let E, F be two different elements of \mathcal{M} . Since U is torsion-free, it follows that φ_V maps E (resp. F) isomorphically to $\varphi_V(E)$ (resp. $\varphi_V(F)$), for every $V \leq U$. Furthermore, as $E \neq F$, there exists $W \leq U$ such that each of $\varphi_W(E), \varphi_W(F)$ is not conjugate (in G_W) to any subgroup of the other. According to [7, Theorem 2.7], there exist $\xi, \eta \in H^*(G_W)$ such that $\xi|_{\varphi_W(E)}, \eta|_{\varphi_W(F)}$ are not nilpotent, and $\xi|_{\varphi_W(F)} = 0, \eta|_{\varphi_W(E)} = 0$. Set $\xi' = (\varphi_W)^*(\xi), \eta' = (\varphi_W)^*(\eta)$. It follows that $\xi'|_E, \eta'|_F$ are not nilpotent, and $\xi'|_F = 0, \eta'|_E = 0$; in particular, ξ' and η' are not nilpotent. Since $H^*(G_U)/\mathfrak{R}_{G_U} \xrightarrow{(\varphi_U)^*} H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is surjective, there exist $\zeta, \theta \in H^*(G_U)$ such that $\zeta|_{\varphi_U(E)}, \theta|_{\varphi_U(F)}$ are not nilpotent, and $\zeta|_{\varphi_U(F)} = 0, \theta|_{\varphi_U(E)} = 0$. Also, by [7, Theorem 2.7], it follows that each of $\varphi_U(E), \varphi_U(F)$ is not conjugate to any subgroup of the other; in particular, $\varphi_U(E) \neq \varphi_U(F)$. So ψ_U maps \mathcal{M} injectively into \mathcal{E}_U . Hence \mathcal{M} is finite, and so is \mathcal{F} .

Finally, let us prove (c) \Rightarrow (b). Suppose that \mathcal{F} is finite. It follows that there exists $T \in \mathcal{U}$ such that, for every $E \in \mathcal{E}$, $\varphi_T|_E$ is an isomorphism, and ψ_T maps \mathcal{F} injectively into \mathcal{E}_T . For every $E \in \mathcal{F}$, the restriction map $\text{Res}_{\varphi_T(E)}^{G_T}$ induces an action of $H(G_T)$ on $H^*(\varphi_T(E))$, hence on $H^*(E)$; furthermore, by [4, Corollary 7.4.7], $H^*(E)$ is a finitely generated $H(G_T)$ -module. Besides, the inflation $(\varphi_T)^*$ also induces an action of $H(G_T)$ on $H^*(G)$ so that Res_E^G is a $H(G_T)$ -homomorphism, for every $E \in \mathcal{F}$. Set $\mathfrak{J} = \prod_{E \in \mathcal{F}} H^*(E)$. Since \mathcal{F} is finite, \mathfrak{J} is a finitely generated $H(G_T)$ -module. As $H^*(G)/I(G)$ is isomorphic to a submodule of \mathfrak{J} , it is also a finitely generated $H(G_T)$ -module. Furthermore, $I(G) \subset \mathfrak{R}_G$ implies that $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$ is, in turn, a finitely generated $H(G_T)$ -module. Since $H(G_T)$ is a finitely generated algebra, so is $H^*(G)/\mathfrak{R}_G$. \square

It has been pointed out to us by Henn that such a result can also be deduced from material in [6].

Let \mathcal{E} be the category with objects the elementary abelian pro- p subgroups of G and with morphisms from A to B defined to be the homomorphisms $\theta : A \rightarrow B$ of the form $\theta a = gag^{-1}$ for some $g \in G$. Set $\mathcal{L} = \varprojlim_{E \in \mathcal{E}} H(E)$. It is clear that the projection map

$$\prod_{E \in \mathcal{E}} H^*(E) \rightarrow \mathfrak{J} = \prod_{E \in \mathcal{F}} H^*(E)$$

induces a monomorphism, between $H(G)$ -modules, from \mathcal{L} to \mathfrak{J} . From the proof of the above theorem, \mathfrak{J} is finitely generated over $H(G)$. We then have

Proposition 4. *If \mathcal{F} is finite, then \mathcal{L} is finitely generated over $H(G)$. \square*

According to [8, Proposition 13.4], if \mathcal{F} is finite, the map

$$H(G) \xrightarrow{\text{Res}^G} \mathcal{L}$$

is an F -isomorphism. In other words, given $x \in I(G)$ and $y \in \mathcal{L}$, there exists an integer $n = n_{x,y}$ such that $x^n = 0$ and $y^{p^n} \in \text{Im Res}^G$. We now give a sufficient condition for Res^G to be a uniform F -isomorphism (*i.e.*, the integer n can be chosen independently of x and y).

Theorem 4. *If $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, then Res^G is a uniform F -isomorphism.*

Proof. Suppose that $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated. \mathcal{F} is then finite and the map $H(G) \xrightarrow{\text{Res}^G} \mathcal{L}$ is an F -isomorphism. By Proposition 4, \mathcal{L} is finitely generated over $H(G)$. So there exists an integer r such that $y^{p^r} \in \text{Im Res}^G$, for every $y \in \mathcal{L}$.

By Proposition 2, there exists $U \in \mathcal{U}$ such that $I(G) \subset (\varphi_U)^*(I(G_U))$. As G_U is finite, there exists an integer s such that $x^s = 0$, for every $x \in I(G)$. The theorem is then proved, by setting $n = n_{x,y} = \max(r, s)$. \square

2. PRO- p GROUPS AND FINITE p -SUBGROUPS

Let G be an infinite pro- p group. The purpose of this section is to prove the following

Theorem 5. *If $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, then G has only finitely many conjugacy classes of finite p -subgroups.*

An analogous result is known for discrete groups of finite virtual cohomological dimension over p (see [1], 13.2) and for analytic pro- p groups (where the hypothesis is vacuous, see [2]).

Our proof depends on some deep results on unstable algebras over the Steenrod algebra.

We will need:

Lemma 2. *If $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated and C is a finite central subgroup of G , then $H^*(G/C)$ is finitely generated.*

Proof. Without loss of generality, we may suppose that C is of order p . Write $K = G/C$ and let $z \in H^2(K)$ be the cohomology class classifying the central extension

$$1 \rightarrow C \rightarrow G \rightarrow K \rightarrow 1.$$

There exists then an open, normal subgroup L of K such that $\text{Res}_L^K(z) = 0$. Therefore the preimage H of L in G is isomorphic to $C \times L$. In other words, L can be considered as an open subgroup of G . By Corollary 2, $H^*(L)$, and so $H^*(K)$, are finitely generated. \square

For every subgroup P of G , denote by $N_G(P)$ (resp. $C_G(P)$) the normalizer (resp. centralizer) of P in G . We have

Lemma 3. *If P is a subgroup of G of order p , then:*

- (i) $N_G(P) = C_G(P)$;
- (ii) $H^*(C_G(P))$ and $H^*(C_G(P)/P)$ are finitely generated, provided that so is $H^*(G)$.

Proof. (i) follows from the fact that $N_G(P)/C_G(P)$ is embedded into $\text{Aut}(P)$ which is of order $p - 1$.

(ii) By Lemma 2, we need only prove that $H^*(C_G(P))$ is finitely generated. By Corollary 2, there exists U open, normal, torsion-free in G . Set $K = \langle U, P \rangle$. K is then of p -rank 1 (*i.e.* every elementary abelian subgroup of K is of rank at most 1), open in G and has finitely generated cohomology, by Corollary 2. Furthermore, $C_K(P)$ is open in $C_G(P)$. By Corollary 2, it suffices to prove that $H^*(C_K(P))$ is finitely generated. According to the theory in [3] (see also [7, Corollary 1.7]) the unstable algebra $T^V H^*(G)$ is noetherian and also $T^V H^*(G) = \prod_{(\rho)} H^*(C_K(\text{im}\rho))$, where the product is taken over conjugacy classes of homomorphisms $\rho : \mathbb{Z}/p \rightarrow K$. It follows that $H^*(C_K(P))$ is finitely generated. \square

Proof of Theorem 5. As $H^*(G)$ is finitely generated, it follows from Corollary 2 that there exists an open normal, torsion-free subgroup U of G . Define

$$n_G = \min\{n \mid |G/U| = p^n \text{ for some open, normal, torsion-free subgroup } U \text{ of } G\}.$$

We argue by induction on n_G . If $n_G = 1$, the conclusion follows, as every finite subgroup of G is elementary abelian of rank 1. Suppose that the theorem holds if $n_G < m$.

Assume that $n_G = m$. It is known that the number of conjugacy classes of elementary abelian p -subgroups of rank 1 of G is finite. Let $\{C_1, \dots, C_k\}$ be a set of representatives of such conjugacy classes. It is clear that, for any finite p -subgroup P of G , there exist $g \in G$ and i such that P^g contains C_i as a central subgroup. Let \mathcal{N}_i be the set of finite subgroups of G containing C_i as a central subgroup, $1 \leq i \leq k$. It is then sufficient to prove that the number of conjugacy classes in \mathcal{N}_i is finite, $1 \leq i \leq k$.

Fix such an i . Note that \mathcal{N}_i coincides with the set of finite subgroups of $K = C_G(C_i)$ containing C_i , hence is in 1-1 correspondence with the set of finite subgroups of $H = C_G(C_i)/C_i$. Therefore we need only prove that H has many finitely conjugacy classes of finite subgroups. Let U be open, normal, torsion-free in G with $|G/U| = p^{n_G}$ and set $V = U \cap K$. V is then open, normal, torsion-free in K and $|K/V| \leq |G/U| = p^{n_G}$. So $n_K \leq n_G$. As $n_H = n_K - 1 < n_G$, it follows from the inductive hypothesis that H has many finitely conjugacy classes of finite subgroups. The theorem is proved. \square

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