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**Autor:** Mikhailov, Roman / Passi, Inder Bir S.  
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### RESIDUALLY NILPOTENT GROUPS

by Roman MIKHAILOV and Inder Bir S. PASSI

In general, it is difficult to decide whether a given group is residually nilpotent; this is so even for rather simple looking one-relator groups [2]. There is thus need to develop general methods for checking residual nilpotence. Such an investigation will have wide impact in group theory and topology; for example, in the context of Baumslag's parafree conjecture [1], Whitehead's asphericity conjecture [4], etc.

We list here two problems on residual nilpotence (see also Kourovka Notebook 2006, Problem 16.65).

PROBLEM 52.1. If  $F$  is a free group with finite basis  $x_1, \dots, x_n$ , and  $r$  a basic commutator, then is the group  $\langle x_1, \dots, x_n \mid r \rangle$  residually nilpotent?

Let  $G$  be a residually nilpotent group. We say that  $G$  is *absolutely residually nilpotent* if for any  $k$ -central extension

$$1 \rightarrow N \rightarrow \tilde{G} \rightarrow G \rightarrow 1,$$

of  $G$ , i.e., a central extension satisfying  $[N, \underbrace{\tilde{G}, \dots, \tilde{G}}_{k \text{ terms}}] = 1$ , the group  $\tilde{G}$  is again residually nilpotent.

It would be of interest to investigate such groups; for instance, it can be shown that the following two statements are equivalent:

- (i) finitely-generated parafree groups are absolutely residually nilpotent;
- (ii) Baumslag's parafree conjecture:  $H_2(G) = 0$  for a finitely-generated parafree group  $G$ .

As a first step, on examining absolute residual nilpotence for one-relator groups, it turns out that *every central extension of a one-relator residually*

*nilpotent group is again residually nilpotent* [3]. We are thus motivated to raise the following:

PROBLEM 52.2. Is every one-relator residually nilpotent group absolutely residually nilpotent?

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Roman Mikhailov

Steklov Mathematical Institute  
Department of Algebra  
Gubkina 8  
Moscow, 119991  
Russia  
*e-mail*: rmikhailov@mail.ru

Inder Bir S. Passi

Centre for Advanced Study  
in Mathematics  
Panjab University  
Chandigarh, 160041  
India  
*e-mail*: ibspassi@yahoo.co.in