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# ON GROUPS WITH A STANDARD COMPONENT OF KNOWN TYPE, II

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In [3] we considered those finite groups G having a standard subgroup A, such that  $m_2(C_G(A)) > 1$  and A/Z(A) is of known type. The goal of this paper is to settle certain ambiguities that were not dealt with in [3]. In the case  $A \simeq G_2(4)$  we showed that G was "of Conway type", although we did not actually prove that  $G \simeq Co_1$ . For the case  $A/Z(A) \simeq L_3(4)$  we appealed to the results of Nah [7] to conclude that  $\langle A^G \rangle \simeq Suz$  or He. However, there were errors in [7] which put the results in question. Our main result is the following:

**Theorem.** Let A be a standard subgroup of the finite group G. Suppose that  $m_2(C_G(A)) > 1$  and  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4)$  or  $G_2(4)$ . Then one of the following holds:

- i)  $A \trianglelefteq G$ ;
- ii)  $A \simeq G_2(4)$  and  $\langle A^c \rangle \simeq Co_1$ ;
- iii)  $A \simeq L_3(4)$  or  $SL_3(4)$  and  $\langle A^{c} \rangle \simeq Suz$  or  $Suz/Z_3$ ; or
- iv)  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4), Z(A) \cong Z_2 \times Z_2, a and \langle A^c \rangle \cong He.$

The method of proof is to choose certain 2-groups in  $AC_G(A)$  and push-up their normalizers. Eventually, we determine the structure of the centralizer of a central involution at which point we can quote an appropriate recognition theorem.

Throughout the paper we use the following notation. A is a standard subgroup of G,  $R \in Syl_2(C_G(A))$  and m(R) > 1. We assume  $A \leq G$  and that G is a minimal counterexample to this theorem.

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## 1. Pushing-up and cores

We have  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4)$  or  $G_2(4)$ . In the first case let E, F be 2-subgroups of AR such that  $R \leq E \cap F$  and such that Z(A)E/RZ(A) and Z(A)F/RZ(A) are the two  $E_{16}$  subgroups in a Sylow 2-subgroup of RA/RZ(A). If  $A/Z(A) \cong G_2(4)$ , let  $A_1/Z(A)$  be the subgroup generated by all long root subgroups in a fixed system of root subgroups of  $G_2(4)$ . Then  $A_1/Z(A) \cong SL_3(4)$  and we may choose corresponding subgroups E and F of  $A_1R$ .

The first stage of the development of the 2-local structure of G is concerned with the groups  $N_G(E)$  and  $N_G(F)$ . In this section we study these groups and make certain other observations that apply to each of the possible configurations. In later sections we look at individual cases.

(1.1) (i) R is elementary abelian.

(ii) There exists  $g \in G - N(A)$  with  $R^g \leq C(R)$ . For any such  $g, R^g \leq AR$ .

Proof. The second assertion in (ii) follows from (20.1) of [2]. The rest of (ii) then follows from (3.3) of [3]. Also, (3.2) of [3] gives (i).

(1.2) Let X be a quasisimple group with Z(X) an elementary abelian 2-group and  $X/Z(X) \simeq L_3$  (4). Let H/Z(X) and K/Z(X) be the  $E_{16}$  subgroups in a Sylow 2-subgroup of X/Z(X). Then

- (i) H and K are elementary abelian;
- (ii)  $H \cap K = Z(HK)$ ; and
- (iii)  $N_x(H)$  (resp.  $N_x(K)$ ) is the split extension of H (resp. K) by  $L_2(4)$ .

Proof.  $N_x(H)/Z(X)$  is the split extension of H/Z(X) by  $L_2(4)$ , and H/Z(X) is the natural module for  $L_2(4)$ . In particular,  $N_x(H)$  is transitive on  $(H/Z(X))^{\ddagger}$ . Thus, each coset of Z(X) in H consists of involutions. This proves (i). (ii) follows from (i) and the fact that  $(H \cap K)/Z(X) = Z(HK/Z(X))$ . (iii) holds since a Sylow 2-subgroup of a complement to H/Z(X) in  $N_x(H)/Z(X)$  is conjugate to  $(H \cap K)/Z(X)$ .

(1.3) (i)  $R \simeq E_4$ .

(ii)  $R^{g}RZ(A)/RZ(A)$  is a root subgroup of RA/RZ(A), and for suitable choice of g, it is a long root subgroup.

(iii) If  $A/Z(A) \simeq G_2(4)$ , then Z(A) = 1.

(iv) If |Z(A)| is odd, then  $R^{g} \cap A = 1$  provided  $R^{g}$  projects to a long root subgroup of A/Z(A).

Proof. (i) follows from (ii). Suppose  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4)$ . Choose  $g \in G - N(A)$  with  $R^g \leq AR$ , and let  $1 \neq x \in R^g$ . By (1.2) we have x central in a Sylow 2-

subgroup, say D, of AR. Then  $D \leq N(C(A^g))$ . As D is generated by elementary subgroups of order  $2^4|R|$ , we conclude that  $D \leq A^g R^g \leq C(R^g)$ . (ii) follows. Suppose that |Z(A)| is odd. Then  $D \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(AR) \cap \operatorname{Syl}_2(A^g R^g)$  and  $D' = Z(D) \cap A = Z(D) \cap A^g$ . Consequently, (iv) holds.

Suppose  $A/Z(A) \simeq G_2(4)$ . Then (iii), (ii), and (iv) follow from (8.3), (8.9), and (8.6) of [3], respectively.

(1.4) NOTATION. If  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4)$ , let  $A_1 = A$ . If  $A/Z(A) \cong G_2(4)$ , then Z(A) = 1 and we let  $A_1$  be the group generated by all long root subgroups in a fixed system of root subgroups of A. In either case  $A_1$  is quasisimple and  $A_1/Z(A_1) \cong L_3(4)$ . In the second case  $A_1 \cong SL_3(4)$ . Choose a fixed Sylow 2-subgroup of  $A_1R$  and let E/R and F/R be the corresponding  $E_{16}$  subgroups. By (1.2) and (1.3)  $E \cong F \cong E_{64}$  and  $E \cap F = Z(EF)$ . Moreover, we may take  $g \in G$  such that  $E \cap F = R \times R^g$ .

Let  $\Omega = E^G \cup F^G$ . We will refer to elements of  $\Omega$  as *planes*, elements of  $R^G$  as *points*, and elements of  $(E \cap F)^G$  as *lines*.

(1.5) Suppose that |Z(A)| is odd. Then

(i) E-A is partitioned by its 16 points.

(ii)  $N(E) = P_0(N(E) \cap N(R))$ , with  $P_0 \leq N(E)$  and  $P_0/C_{P_0}(E) \cong E_{16}$ , regular on the 16 points of E.  $P_0 = O(C_C(E)) \times O_2(P_0)$ .

Proof. By (1.3) (iv) and (3.6) of [3],  $E \cap F$  contains 4 points and the nonidentity elements of these points partition  $(E \cap F) - A$ . Now E contains 5 lines that contain R, these being conjugate under  $N_{A,i}(E)$ . This proves (i).

Since  $R^{g} \cap A_{1}=1$ ,  $N_{A_{1}}(E)$  is transitive on the 15 points of E, other than R. Since  $E \cong E_{64}$ ,  $E \leq A^{g}R^{g}$  and  $N_{A^{g}}(E)$  is transitive on the 15 points of E other than  $R^{g}$ . Thus, N(E) is 2-transitive on the 16 points in E. The 16 points and 20 lines in E form an affine plane, so all but the last sentence of (ii) follows from Theorem 1 of [8].  $P_{0}=[N_{A}(E), P_{0}]C_{P_{0}}(E)$  and  $C_{P_{0}}(E)=EO(C_{G}(E))$  with  $[O(C_{G}(E)), N_{A}(E)] \leq [O(N_{G}(R)), N_{A}(E)]=1$ , so  $P_{0}=O(C(E)) \times O_{2}(P_{0})$ .

(1.6) Suppose |Z(A)| is even. Then

(i)  $R \leq A$ .

(ii) E contains 6 points.

(iii) N(E)/C(E) contains  $\hat{A}_6$ , the 3-fold cover of  $A_6$ , as a normal subgroup.

(iv) There is a 3-element acting as an outer diagonal automorphism of A and transitive on  $R^{\ddagger}$ .

Proof. By (3.6) of [3]  $E \cap F$  contains either 4 points or 2 points. In the first case we argue as in (1.5) to conclude that N(E) is 2-transitive on the 16 points of E and there exists  $D \leq N(E)$  with D inducing a regular normal subgroup on  $R^{c} \cap E$ . Then  $[D, E] \leq N_{c}(E)$  and one checks that  $E = [D, E] \times R$ . But then EF

splits over R, contradicting |Z(A)| even. Therefore,  $E \cap F$  contains exactly 2 points, E contains exactly 6 points, and (ii) holds.

Let  $L \in Syl_3(N_A(EF))$ . Then  $L \leq N_G(E \cap F)$ , so L stabilizes each of the two points in  $E \cap F$ . Therefore,  $R^g = [L, E \cap F]$ . By symmetry (iv) holds, and since |Z(A)| is even,  $R \leq A$ , proving (i). Now  $N(E) \cap N(R)$  contains a subgroup inducing  $A_5 \times Z_3$  on E, where the  $Z_3$  factor stabilizes each point in E. Since  $N_{A^g}(E)$  moves R, we conclude that N(E) induces  $S_6$  or  $A_6$  on the points of E. Since  $O^2(N(E))$  acts irreducibly on E as an  $F_2$ -space, and since N(E)/C(E)contains a normal subgroup of order 3, we see that E may be regarded as 3dimensional  $F_4$ -space for either  $3 \cdot A_6$  or  $A_6 \times Z_3$ . But  $SL_3(4) \geq A_6 \times Z_3$ , so the latter case is not possible. This proves (iii).

- (1.7) Let  $X \in N^*_c(E, 2')$  and  $Y = \langle A^{N(X)} \rangle$ . Then either
  - (i) X=1; or
  - (ii)  $Y/Z(Y) \cong Suz$ , He, or  $Co_1$ , and  $X = O(C_G(A))$ .

Proof. Suppose  $X \neq 1$ . Then  $X = \Gamma_{1,R}(X) \leq N(A)$ , and since  $\mathcal{U}_{N(A)}^*(E, 2') = \{O(C(A))\}, X = O(C(A))$ . Similary,  $X = O(C(A^g))$  for each  $g \in N(E)$ . As  $N_c(E) \leq N(A)$ , (ii) holds by minimality of |G|.

(1.8) Suppose G contains a 2-central involution, z, such that  $(C_G(z)/OC_G(z)))^{(\infty)}$  is isomorphic to the centralizer of a 2-central involution in one of the groups Suz, He, or Co<sub>1</sub>. Then  $O(C_G(z))=1$ .

Proof. We may assume that  $z \in E$  is a 2-central involution in N(A), and as  $C_G(z)^{(\infty)}$  is 2-constrained, z is not conjugate to an involution in R. As  $E \leq N(O_G(C(z)), (1.7)$  imples that  $O(C_G(z)) \leq O(C_G(L))$ . Suppose  $O(C_G(z)) \neq 1$ , let  $X=O(C_G(A))$  and  $Y=\langle A^{N(X)} \rangle$ . Then [X, Y]=1.

Suppose  $R \leq N(Y^g)$ . As  $|\operatorname{Aut}(Y^g): Y^g| \leq 2, R \cap Y^g$  contains an involution, r. Then  $E(C_Y(r)) \cong A$ , so that  $X^g \leq C(AR)$ . Thus  $X = X^g$  and  $Y = Y^g$ . That is, R fixes precisely one point in  $Y^G$ . Now suppose  $z \in N(Y^g)$ . Then z centralizes a  $Y^g$ -conjugate of  $R^g$ , and it follows from Gleason's lemma that  $\langle R^{C_g(z)} \rangle$ is transitive on the elements of  $Y^G$  fixed by z. But  $\langle R^{C_g(z)} \rangle \leq Y$ . So z fixes a unique element of  $Y^G$  and the result follows from Holt's Theorem [6].

For the remainder of this section we operate under the following hypotheses:

(1.9) (i) z is a 2-central involution in G;

(ii) There is an extraspecial subgroup  $X \le C_G(z)$  such that  $|X| = 2^7$  or  $2^9$  and  $\langle z \rangle \in Syl_2(C(X))$ ;

(iii) X is weakly closed in a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $C_G(z)$ , with respect  $C_G(z)$ ; and

(iv) If  $g \in C_G(z)$  and  $m(X \cap X^g) > 1$ , then  $X = X^g$ .

(1.10) Assume Hypothesis (1.9). Then X is strongly closed with respect to  $C_{G}(z)$  in a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $C_{G}(z)$ .

The proof of (1.10) will be carried out in a series of steps. Assume the result to be false.

(1.11) There exists  $g \in C_G(z)$  such that setting  $Y = \langle X, X^g \rangle$ ,  $B = N_X(X^g)$ ,  $D = N_{X^g}(X)$ , and  $I = X \cap X^g$ , the following hold:

- (i)  $Y/BD \cong L_2(2^n)$ ,  $Sz(2^n)$ , or  $D_{2n}$  for n odd;
- (ii) BD/I is the sum of natural modules for Y/BD; and
- (iii) I < D.

Proof. Use (2.4) of [12].

(1.12) 
$$I \cong Z_2, Z_4$$
, or  $Q_8$ .

Proof. This is (iv) of Hypotheses (1.9).

(1.13)  $I \cong Z_2$ .

Proof. Suppose otherwise and let bars denote images in  $C(z)/\langle z \rangle$ . We have  $m(\bar{X}) = m(\bar{B}) + m(\bar{X}/\bar{B}) = m(\bar{D}) + m(\bar{X}/C_{\bar{X}}(\bar{D}))$ . Also,  $m(\bar{D}) \ge m(\bar{X}/\bar{B}) = m(\bar{X}/C_{\bar{X}}(\bar{D}))$ . For  $\bar{d} \in \bar{D}^{\ddagger}$ ,  $[\bar{X}, \bar{D}] = \bar{B} = C_{\bar{X}}(\bar{d})$ , so by (7.6) of [2], B is abelian. We conclude from these facts that either  $|X| = 2^7$  with  $m(\bar{D}) = 3$ , or  $|X| = 2^9$  with  $m(\bar{D}) = 4$ . The first case is out since this would force each  $1 \neq \bar{d} \in \bar{D}$  to act on  $\bar{X}$  as a  $b_3$  involution of  $O_6^{\ddagger}(2)$ , whereas  $\Omega_6^{\ddagger}(2)$  contains no such involutions. Hence  $|X| = 2^9$ .

Now  $Y/BD \cong L_2(2^4)$  and BD/I is the natural module, so there exists a subgroup  $J \leq Y$  such that J induces  $Z_{15}$  on each of  $\overline{B}, \overline{D}$ , and  $\overline{X}/\overline{B}$ . Viewing  $J \leq \operatorname{Aut}(X)$ , we see that  $\operatorname{Aut}(X)/\operatorname{Inn}(X) \cong O_8^+(2)$ ,  $\overline{B}$  is a singular 4-space of  $\overline{X}$ , and  $\overline{D}$  is contained in the unipotent radical of the stabilizer in  $O_8^+(2)$  of  $\overline{B}$ . Let T be this unipotent radical. Then  $T^{\ddagger}$  consists of 28  $a_4$  involutions and 35 remaining involutions of type  $a_2$ . Also,  $T=D\times D_1$ , where  $D_1\cong E_4$  and J induce  $Z_3$  on  $D_1$ . Therefore,  $D_1^{\ddagger}$  consists of the 3  $a_4$  involutions fixed by  $O_5(J)$  and J acts semiregularly on the  $a_2$  involutions in T. This is numerically impossible.

(1.14) (i)  $Y=C_Y(I)\circ I$  if and only if  $I\simeq Q_8$ . (ii)  $O^2(Y) \leq C(I)$ . (iii) If  $Y=O^2(Y)I$ , then  $I\simeq Q_8$ .

Proof. If  $Y=C_Y(I)I$  and  $I\simeq Z_4$ , then  $X\leq Y\leq C(I)$ , a contradiction. On the other hand, if  $I\simeq Q_8$ , then  $Q=C_Q(I)I$ , so  $Y=C_Y(I)I$ . Thus (i) holds. (iii) follows from (i) and (ii), and (ii) follows from the fact that Y centralizes both  $\overline{I}$  and  $\langle z \rangle$ .

(1.15) |X:B| = 2.

Proof. Suppose false. Then Y/BD is a Bender group and  $Y=O^2(Y)I$ . By (1.14) (iii)  $I \cong Q_8$ , and by (1.14) (i)  $Y=C_Y(I)I$ . Set  $W=C_Y(I)$  and  $V=W\cap X$ . Then m(V)=4 or 6, and one of the following holds:

(a)  $|\bar{X}|=2^6$ ,  $W/O_2(W)\cong L_2(4)$ , and  $O_2(\bar{W})$  the natural module; or

(b)  $|\bar{X}|=2^8$ ,  $W/O_2(W)\cong L_2(8)$ , and  $O_2(\bar{W})$  is the natural module; or

(c)  $|\bar{X}|=2^8$ ,  $W/O_2(W)\cong L_2(4)$ , and  $O_2(\bar{W})$  is the sum of two copies of the natural module.

Set  $E=D\cap W$  and consider the action of  $\overline{E}$  on  $\overline{X}$ . Since  $E \leq C(I)$ , either  $\overline{E} \leq O_4^{\pm}(2)$  or  $\overline{E} \leq O_6^{\pm}(2)$ , according to  $|\overline{X}|=2^6$  or  $2^8$ . If (b) holds, then  $\overline{E}$  consists of  $b_3$  involutions in  $O_4^{\pm}(2)$ , whereas  $\Omega_4^{\pm}(2)$  contains no  $b_3$  involutions. If (c) holds then  $\overline{E} \cong E_{16}$  and  $\overline{E} \leq C(\overline{B})$ . Since  $\overline{B}$  is a 4-space in the 6-space  $\overline{V}$ ,  $\overline{E}$  centralize a proper non-degenerate subspace of  $\overline{V}$ . However,  $m(O^{\pm}(l,2)) < 4$  for l < 6. Therefore, (c) does not hold. Suppose (a) holds. Then  $O_2(W) \cong E_{32}$ ,  $B \cap W \cong E_8$ , and we may regard  $\overline{E} \leq O_4^+(2)$ . Then each  $\overline{e} \in \overline{E^*}$  is an  $a_2$  involution in  $O_4^+(2)$ , and so  $\overline{E} \leq \Omega_4^+(2) \cong S_3 \times S_3$ . But then  $\overline{E}$  is a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $\Omega_4^+(2)$ , whereas  $\Omega_4^+(2)$  contains  $c_2$  involutions. This is a contradiction.

(1.16)  $I \simeq Z_4$ .

Proof. Otherwise  $I \simeq Q_8$  and by (1.15)  $m(D\bar{X}/\bar{X})=3$  or 5, according to whether  $|\bar{X}|=2^6$  or  $2^8$ . By (1.14) (i),  $\bar{D}$  centralize  $\bar{I}$ , so  $\bar{D} \le O_4^{\pm}(2)$ , or  $O_6^{\pm}(2)$ , respectively. But  $m(O_4^{\pm}(2))=2$  and  $m(O_6^{\pm}(2))=4$ . This is impossible.

(1.17)  $I \cong Z_4$ .

Proof. Suppose  $I \cong Z_4$ . Then by (1.15), m(D/I) = m-2,  $m=m(\bar{X})$  while by (1.11),  $B/I = C_{X/I}(D)$ . This is impossible as  $(\operatorname{Aut}(X) \cap N(I))/C(X/I) \cong Sp_{m-2}(2)$  is of 2-rank m-3.

In view of (1.16) and (1.17), the proof of (1.10) is now complete.

### 2. Suz

In this section we assume that |Z(A)| is odd and  $A/Z(A) \simeq L_3(4)$ . That is  $A \simeq L_3(4)$  or  $SL_3(4)$ . We maintain the notation of §1. In addition, we set  $P = O_2(P_0)$ , where  $P_0$  is as in (1.5). Set  $Z = A \cap Z(EF)$  and  $S = FC_P(RZ/Z)$ .

(2.1) (i)  $E = C_{PF}(E);$ (ii)  $P/E = O_2(N_G(E)/E) \simeq E_{16}$  and  $P_0 = P \times O(C_G(E)),$  so  $P = O_2(N_G(E)).$ (iii)  $(S \cap P)/E \simeq E_4;$  and

(iv)  $S/E \simeq E_{16}$ 

Proof. These are all clear, given 1.5.

- (2.2) (i)  $S=N_{PS}(F);$ 
  - (ii)  $|F^{P}| = 4$ .
  - (iii) S is a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $C(Z) \cap C(RZ/Z) \cap N(E) \cap N(F)$ .
  - (iv)  $|\langle (F \cap A)^P \rangle| \ge 4^4$ .

Proof. Since  $S/E \simeq E_{16}$ ,  $EF \leq S$ . The groups E and F are the unique subgroups of EF isomorphic to  $E_{64}$ , and  $S \leq N(E)$ . Therefore,  $S \leq N(F)$ . (i) follows from this and the fact that  $S/E = N_{PS/E}(FE/E)$ . (ii) follows from (i). Let  $S \leq T$ , with T Sylow in  $C(Z) \cap C(RZ/Z) \cap N(E) \cap N(F)$ . As S is transitive on the points in RZ,  $T \leq SN_T(R)$ . But  $N_T(R) = EF$ , so (iii) holds.

To obtain (iv) let  $T = \langle (F \cap A)^P \rangle$ . Since  $TE/E = S/E \cong E_{16}$ , it will suffice to show that  $E \cap A \leq T$ . Suppose otherwise and let W = [P, I], where  $I \in$  $Syl_3(N_A(EF))$ .  $P/(E \cap A)$  is abelian since  $N_A(E)$  is transitive on  $(P/E)^{\mathfrak{g}}$ . Thus  $|W| = 4^4$  and  $W \cap R = 1$ . As  $Z \leq T$  and T is *I*-invariant,  $T \cap (E \cap A) = Z$  and  $T = (F \cap A)W_1$ , where  $W_1 = T \cap W$ . As *I* acts irreducibly on  $W_1/Z$  and on *Z*,  $W_1$  is abelian. Also  $W_1 = T \cap W \leq W$ . Choosing an appropriate conjugate of *F* we obtain  $W_2 \in W_1^{N(E)}$  with  $W_2 \leq W$  and  $W_1 \cap W_2 = 1$ . Therefore, *W* is abelian.

We show W is elementary abelian as follows. Let  $f \in (F \cap A) - Z$ . Let  $g \in P$  such that  $f^g = fw_1$ , with  $w_1 \in W_1 - Z$ . As  $f^g$  is an involution, f inverts  $w_1$ . If W is not elementary, then  $|w_1| = 4$  an Z letting g vary, f inverts  $W_1$ . Now let f vary and obtain a contradiction.

Consider N=N(W) and let bars denote images in N/W. The involutions in WR are in  $W \cup E$ , so  $R^c \cap WR = R^w$ . We conclude that  $\overline{N}$  has a standard subgroup  $\overline{L} \simeq L_2(4)$  with  $\overline{R} \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_{\overline{N}}(\overline{L}))$ . By [1],  $E(\overline{N}) \simeq L_2(4)$ ,  $A_9$ , HJ, or  $M_{12}$ . As  $|W|=2^8$  and 11 does not divide |GL(8,2)|,  $E(\overline{N}) \cong M_{12}$ . Suppose  $E(\overline{N}) \simeq A_9$ . Then  $\overline{R} \sim \overline{F}$  in  $\overline{N(W)}$  and it follows that  $R^c \cap A \neq \emptyset$ , which is not the case. Next, suppose  $E(\overline{N}) \simeq HJ$ . For  $f \in (F \cap A) - Z$ , we have [f, W] = $W_1 = C_W(f)$ , and  $\overline{f}$  is a 2-central involution of  $E(\overline{N})$ . Viewing  $\overline{N} \leq \operatorname{Aut}(W)$  we then have  $E(\overline{N}) = \langle C_{\overline{N}}(\overline{f}) | f \in (F \cap L) - Z \rangle \leq N(W_1)$ . This is impossible.

We are left with the case  $E(N) \simeq L_2(4)$ . Clearly, W is weakly closed in a Sylow 2-subgroup of N(W), and applying Theorem 4 of [5] we conclude that W is strongly closed in a Sylow 2-subgroup of C. The main theorem of [5] gives a contradiction.

Define  $P(F) = O_2(N_G(F))$ , so that (P, E) is symmetric to (P(F), F). By 2.2 (i) and (iii),  $S = FC_P(RZ/Z) = EC_{P(F)}(RZ/Z)$ .

(2.3) Let  $x \in P(F) - S$ ,  $F_0 = (E \cap A)(E^x \cap P)$ , and  $H = \langle P, P(F) \rangle$ . Then (i)  $E^x \cap E = Z$  and  $S = EE^x$  (ii)  $P \cap S = EF_0$  and E and  $F_0$  are the maximal elementary abelian 2-subgroups of  $P \cap S$ . Also  $E \cong F_0$ .

- (iii)  $F^{H} = \{F_{0}, F^{P}\}$  and  $E^{H} = \{E, (E^{x})^{P}\}.$
- (iv)  $\Omega \cap S = F^H \cup E^H$  and  $N_G(S)$  act on  $\{F^H, E^H\}$ .
- (v) H induces  $A_5$  on  $E^H$ .

Proof. Let  $h \in P-S$ .  $F \cap F^h \cap E = Z$  and  $F \cap F^h \leq E$ , so  $F \cap F^h = Z$ . Then  $|S| = |FF^h|$ , so  $S = FF^h$ . So (i) follows from (2.2) (iii) which guarantees symmetry between E and F. (i) implies (ii).

If  $U \cap P \neq 1$  for some point U in  $E^x$ , then  $U \cap F_0 \neq 1$ , so as  $m(F_0) = 6$ ,  $U \leq F_0$ and  $F_0$  is a plane. On the other hand if  $U \cap P = 1$  for each point U in  $E^x$  and each  $x \in P(F) - S$ , then  $\langle (E \cap A)^{P(F)} \rangle = F_0$  is of order 64, contradicting 2.2 (iii) and (iv).

So  $F_0$  is a plane. By (1.3)  $E \cap A$  intersects each point of G trivially, and so  $F_0 - (E \cap A)$  is partitioned by its points and  $E \cap A = F_0 \cap A^y$  for each point  $R^y \leq F_0$ .  $F_0E \leq P$  so by (ii),  $F_0 \leq P$ . Then  $P \leq O^{2'}(C(F_0 \cap A^y) \cap N(F_0)) = P(F_0)$ , so  $P = P(F_0)$ .

Let V be a plane in S. If  $V \leq P$ , then V = E or  $F_0$  by (ii). Suppose  $V \leq P$ .  $V = O^{2'}(C_G(V))$ , so  $Z \leq V$ . As  $V \leq P$  and  $P = C_{SP}(e)$  for  $e \in (E \cap A) - Z$ ,  $V \cap (E \cap A)$  = Z. If  $V \cap E \neq Z$ , then V contains some point  $R^j$  of E, for  $j \in P$ . Then  $RZ \leq V^{j^{-1}}$ , so  $V \in F^P$ . This leaves the case  $V \cap E = Z$ . The involutions in  $S \cap P$  are  $F_0^{\sharp} \cup E^{\sharp}$ . Hence  $|F_0: V \cap F_0| = 4$ , and as  $F_0 - E$  is partitioned by its points,  $V \cap F_0$  is a line. However, P is transitive on the lines in  $F_0$ , through Z, so  $V \cap F_0 \in (E^x \cup F_0)^P$ . It follows that  $V \in (E^x)^P$ . It has now been shown that

$$\Omega \cap S = \{E, F_0\} \cup F^P \cup (E^x)^P.$$

Notice that  $(E^x)^p$  is precisely the set of  $V \in S \cap \Omega$  such that  $V \cap E = Z$ , while  $F_0 \cap F = Z$ . By symmetry between E and F,  $\{F_0\} \cup F^p = (F) \cup (F^h)^{P(F)}$ , for  $h \in P - S$ . Therefore,  $\{F_0\} \cup F^p = F^H$ . By symmetry,  $E^H = \{E\} \cup (E^x)^p$ , and so (iii) and (iv) hold. (v) follows from (iii).

(2.4) S is special with Z(S) = Z.

Proof.  $E/Z \leq Z(S/Z)$ , so by (2.3) (i),  $[S, S] \leq Z$ . [R, S] = Z so  $[S, S] = \Phi(S) = Z$ .  $Z(S) \leq C_S(R) = EF$  with  $C_E(S) = Z_S$  so the lemma holds.

$$(2.5) \quad Z(SP/Z) = (E \cap A)/Z.$$

Proof. Set  $SP/Z = \overline{SP}$ . Then  $Z(SP/E) = (S \cap P)/E$  so  $Z(\overline{SP}) \le (S \cap P)/Z$ .  $C_{\overline{E}}(P) = C_{\overline{F}_0}(P) = (E \cap A)/Z$ , since P is transitive on the lines through Z on E and  $F_0$ . On the otherhand if  $x \in N_A(E)$  is of order 3 then  $C_{S \cap P}(x) = R$  and  $[S \cap P, x] = F_0$ , so as  $C_{\overline{R}}(\overline{SP}) = 1$ ,  $Z(\overline{SP}) = [Z(\overline{SP}), x] \le \overline{F}_0$ . Therefore  $Z(\overline{SP}) =$ 

# $C_{\overline{F}_0}(\overline{P}) = (E \cap A)/Z.$

(2.6) Choose notation as in (2.3) and set  $\overline{S} = S/Z$  and  $A(S) = \operatorname{Aut}(S)/C_{\operatorname{Aut}(S)}(\overline{S})$ . Then

(i) S is the central product of two copies of the Sylow 2-group of  $L_3(4)$ .

(ii)  $\overline{S}$  is an orthogonal space over GF(4) with  $(\overline{s}, \overline{t})=0$  if and only if [s, t]=1 and  $\overline{s}$  singular if and only if  $s^2=1$ . Aut $(S) \cap C(Z)$  preserves this structure and  $C_{A(S)}(Z) \cong O_4^+(4)$ . A(S) is  $Z_3 \times C_{A(S)}(Z)$  extended by a field automorphism of order 2, with  $O_3(A(S))$  inducing scalar action on  $\overline{S}$  corresponding to a generator of  $GF(4)^{\sharp}$ .  $C_{Aut(S)}(\overline{S}) = V = \overline{S} \times U$ , where  $\overline{S} \cong U = C_V(O_3(A(S)) \leq \operatorname{Aut}(S))$  and for  $z \in Z^{\sharp}$ , the map  $\overline{s} \to C_U(s\langle z \rangle)$  is a  $C_{A(S)}(Z)$ -isomorphism of  $\overline{S}$  with the dual of U.

- (iii)  $H/S \cong A_5$  and  $C_H(S) = Z \in Syl_2(C_G(S))$  and  $S \in Syl_2(C_G(\bar{S}))$ .
- (iv) H is irreducible on  $\overline{S}$  as a GF(4)-module.
- (v) S is the sum of two natural modules for  $S/H \simeq A_5$ , as a GF(2)-module.
- (vi)  $H \leq N_G(S)$ .

Proof. Let  $S_0 = \langle E \cap A, F \cap A \rangle$  and  $S_1 = \langle I, R \rangle$ , where I is  $F_0 \cap C(F \cap A)$ . Clearly  $S_0$  is isomorphic to a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $L_3(4)$  and this also holds for  $S_1$  as  $S_1 = IR$  and  $[i, R] = Z = Z(S_1)$  for  $i \in I - Z$ . Moreover, S is the central product of  $S_0$  and  $S_1$ , proving (i). (i) implies (ii); the first two sentences of (ii) are reasonably clear; we supply a proof of the rest. Let  $S = T_1 * T_2$  with,  $T_i \simeq S_0$ . Let  $E_{16} \simeq X_{ij} \le T_i$ ,  $i, j \in \{1, 2\}$ . Each  $v \in V^*$  acts faithfully on some  $X_{ij}$ , say X. As  $[v, S] \leq Z$ ,  $v \in C(Z)$ . This determines  $V/C_v(X)$  in  $GL(X) \simeq L_4(2)$ , and we find  $V/C_V(X) \leq E_{16}$ , and hence  $|V| \leq 2^{16}$ . On the other hand in the split extension of  $X_{ii}$  by  $L_4(2)$  there is  $U_{ij}$  with  $[U_{ij}, X_{i3-i}] = 1 = U_{ij} \cap T_i = [U_{ij}, y_{ij}]$ ,  $[U_{ij}, T_i] \leq Z$ , and  $U_{ij} \approx E_4$ , where  $y_{ij}$  is of order 3 with  $C_{T_i}(y_{ij}) = 1$ . Embed  $U_{ij}$  in Aut(S) by taking  $[U_{ij}, T_{3-i}]=1$ ; set  $U=\langle U_{ij}: i, j \rangle$ .  $[U_{ij}, U_{rs}] \leq C(T_1) \cap$  $C(T_2)=1$  for  $(i, j) \neq (r, s)$ , so U is elementary abelian. Similarly  $U \simeq E_{2^8}$  and  $U \cap \overline{S} = 1$ . So  $U\overline{S} \simeq E_{2^{16}}$  and as  $|V| \le 2^{16}$ ,  $V = U\overline{S}$ . Let y of order 3 with  $\langle y \rangle V | V = O_3(A(S))$ . Then  $\langle y \rangle V | C_v(X_{ij}) = \langle y_{ij} \rangle V | C_v(X_{ij})$ , so [y, U] = 1 and hence  $U = C_v(y) \leq \operatorname{Aut}(S)$ . Finally let  $z \in Z^*$ . If  $s \in S$  with  $[U, s] \leq \langle z \rangle$ , then as  $C_{Aut(S)}(z)$  is irreducible on  $\overline{S}$ ,  $[U, S] \leq \langle z \rangle$ , a contradiction. Thus  $|U: C_U(s\langle z \rangle)| = 2$ , completing the proof of (ii).

Since  $E \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(E))$ ,  $Z \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(S))$ .  $C_G(S) \leq N_G(R)S$  and  $N_S(R) = EF \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(EF/Z) \cap N(R))$  so  $S \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(\bar{S}))$ . Thus  $C_H(S) = XZ$ , where  $X = O(C_H(S))$ . By (1.7)  $X \leq Z(H)$ . We have |PS/S| = 4 and PS/S = [PS/S, u], when u is a 3-element in  $N_A(S)$ . So by (ii) together with (2.3) (v) and  $H = O^{2'}(H)$ , we have  $H/S \simeq A_5$ . Therefore, (iii) holds.

By (ii) one of the following holds: H/S stabilizes a nonsingular 1-space of  $\overline{S}$ , H/S stabilizes a pair of complementary totally singular 2-spaces of  $\overline{S}$ , or H/S is irreducible on  $\overline{S}$ . The first two cases do not occur because of (2.5). There-

fore, (iv) holds, and (iv) implies (v). Finally, (vi) follows from (2.3) (iv) and (1.7).

(2.7) Choose  $u \in N_A(S)$  with |u|=3 and  $[E, u] \neq 1$ , and let  $y \in N_H(R) \cap C(u)$  with |y|=3. Then  $u=xy^{\pm 1}$ , where |x|=3, x induces scalar action on S/Z as an  $F_4$ -module, and Z=[Z, x].

Proof. Z=[Z, u] and  $y \in C(Z)$ , so  $u \neq y$ . Also, u acts on H and acts nontrivially on PS/S. Hence  $u=xy^i$  with x of order 3 in C(H/S) and  $i=\pm 1$ . By (2.6) (v)  $H\langle x \rangle$  acts irreducibly on S/Z as an  $F_2$ -module, so Schur's lemma shows that x induces an  $F_4$  scalar on S/Z.

(2.8) Let  $T_0 \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(N_G(S))$  and  $\overline{T}_0 = T_0/Z$ . Then (i)  $\overline{S} = J(\overline{T}_0)$ ; (ii)  $T_0 \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(G)$ ; and (iii)  $Z \leq N_G(T_0)$ .

Proof. By 2.6. iii,  $S=C_{T_0}(\bar{S})$ . Thus if (i) fails there is a nontrivial elementary abelian 2-subgroup U of  $\operatorname{Aut}_G(\bar{S})$  with  $|U| \ge |\bar{S}: C_{\bar{S}}(U)|$ , which is impossible from the structure of  $\operatorname{Aut}(S)$  described in 2.6. ii.

Let  $g \in N_G(T_0)$ . We claim  $Z^g = Z$ . Either  $Z = Z(T_0)$ , in which case the claim is clear, or  $|Z: Z(T_0)| = 2$ .

In the latter case,  $Z(T_0) \leq Z^g$  and  $Z^g/Z(T_0) \leq Z(T_0/Z(T_0))$ . But using (i) and 2.6 (i), we see that  $Z/Z(T_0) = Z(T_0/Z(T_0))$ . This proves the claim, and so (ii) follows from (i).

(2.9) (i)  $P \cap \Omega = \{E, F_0^{N(E) \cap N(P)}\}$  has order 6.

(ii)  $P \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(E \cap A)).$ 

(iii)  $N_{G}(P)$  is transitive on  $P \cap \Omega$ .

Proof. Let  $V \in P \cap \Omega$  and B a point of V. Conjugating by  $N(E) \cap N(P)$ we may take  $B \cap S \neq 1$ . Then  $B \cap S \leq E$  or  $B \cap S \leq F_0$  by (2.3) (ii). As each elementary subgroup of N(R) of rank 6 is a plane through R,  $B \leq E$  or  $B \leq F_0$ , so  $V = (E \cap A)B = E$  or  $F_0$ . Hence (i) holds.

Clearly  $P \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(E \cap A) \cap N(E))$ . So if (ii) is false there is a 2-element  $g \in N(P) \cap C(E \cap A)$  such that  $E^g \neq E$ . Therefore,  $N(P)^{(P \cap \Omega)} = A_6$  or  $S_6$ . Let  $I = N(P) \cap C(E \cap A)$ . Then  $I^{(P \cap \Omega)} \neq 1$  and is normal in  $N(P)^{(P \cap \Omega)}$ . So,  $I^{(P \cap \Omega)} \geq A_6$  and this forces  $S \leq I$ , a contradiction. This proves (ii). (iii) now follows from (i), (ii), and the symmetry between E and  $F_0$ .

$$(2.10) \quad \Omega = E^{\mathsf{G}} \, .$$

Proof. See (2.9) and (2.3) (iii).

(2.11) Set  $K = O^2(N_G(P))$ . Then

- (i)  $K/PO(K) \simeq 3A_6$ .
- (ii)  $[y, K] \leq PO(K)$ .
- (iii)  $P/(E \cap A)$  is the natural module for K/PO(K).
- (iv)  $E \cap A$  is the natural module for  $K/PO(K) \langle y \rangle \simeq A_6$ .

Proof.  $N_{\kappa}(E)^{(P \cap \Omega)} \ge A_5$ , so by (2.9)  $K^{(P \cap \Omega)} = A_6$ .  $N_{\kappa}(E) \neq (N_{\kappa}(E) \cap C(E \cap A))K_{P \cap \Omega}$  so  $K \neq C_{\kappa}(E \cap A)K_{P \cap \Omega}$ . Hence  $K/C_{\kappa}(E \cap A) \cong A_6$  acts naturally on  $E \cap A$ .

 $(KP)_{P\cap\Omega} = P(N_{KP}(R)_{P\cap\Omega})$  while  $(N_{KP}(R)_{P\cap\Omega})/O(K)R$  acts faithfully on RZ, and hence is a subgroup of  $E_9$ . Thus KP/PO(K) is a subgroup of  $A_6 \times E_9$  or of  $3A_6 \times Z_3$ . Choose y as in 2.7.  $y \in N_H(R) \le N(E) \le N(P)$ , while by 2.6 parts (ii) and (v),  $(E \cap A)/Z = [P, E/Z] \le C_{P/Z}(y)$  and  $C_{P/Z}(y)$  is a complement to R in  $C_S(Z)$ . Thus  $[y, K] \le PO(K)$ , so  $P/E \cap A$  is a faithful GF(4)-module for K/PO(K), so  $K/PO(K) \le GL_3(4)$ . Then as  $K/PO(K) \le A_6 \times E_9$  or  $3A_6 \times Z_3$ , the lemma holds.

(2.12) Let  $PS \supseteq T_0 \in Syl_2(N_G(S))$ . Then

- (i)  $T_0 \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(G);$
- (ii)  $SP \leq T = T_0 \cap O^2(N_G(P)), |T_0: T| \leq 2, \text{ and } H\langle x \rangle T / S \cong S_3 \times A_5;$
- (iii)  $Z_2(T) = Z \neq Z(T);$
- (iv)  $E^{T} = \{E, F_{0}\};$  and
- (v)  $P \leq T_0$ .

Proof. (i) is just (2.8) (ii).  $(E \cap A)/Z = Z(PS/Z)$ , so  $E \cap A \leq T_0$ . Thus (v) follows from (2.9) (ii). By (2.11) and (1.7),  $O^2(N_G(P)) = I \times O(C(R))$  where  $y \in I$  is the split extension of P by  $A_6/Z_3$ . Let J be the setwise stabilizer in  $O^2(N_G(P))$  of  $\{E, F_0\}$ .  $PS \leq T = T_0 \cap J \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(J)$ , while with (2.11) (ii),  $\langle y \rangle (N_A(S) \cap N(P))O(C(A))$  contains a Hall 2'-group of J, so  $J \leq N(S)$ .  $J/O_2(J)O(C(A)) \cong Z_3 \times S_3$  with  $[y, J] \leq O_2(J)O(C(A))$ , so  $JH/SO(C(R)) = S_3 \times A_5$ . Of course  $JH = \langle X \rangle TH$ .  $T_0JH/S \leq S_3 \times S_5$ , so  $|T_0: T| \leq 2$ . Hence (ii) and (iv) hold. Finally J induces  $S_3$  on Z, so  $Z \neq Z(T)$ . On the otherhand  $Z_2(T) \leq C_{HT}(S/Z) = S$  while by (2.6) (i), Z(S/Z(T)) = Z/Z(T). Hence (iii) holds.

(2.13) Let  $K = HT\langle x \rangle$ . Then K is the semidirect product of  $N_K(\langle x \rangle)$  with S and  $N_K(\langle x \rangle)$  is determined up to conjugation in Aut(S), so that the isomorphism class of K is determined.

Proof.  $C_S(x)=1$  and  $C_K(S)=Z$ , so K is the semidirect product of  $N_K(\langle x \rangle)$ with S by a Frattini argument and we may regard K as a subgroup of  $W=N_{Aut(S)}(\langle x \rangle)$ . Choose notation as in 2.6. ii and set  $W^*=W/U$ . By 2.6. ii and (v), and as the 1-cohomology of the natural module for  $A_5$  is trivial, U is transitive on the complements to U in UH. Thus it remains to show  $K^*$  is determined up to conjugacy in  $W^*$ , since  $C_U(H)=1$ . Let  $t \in T$  invert x with  $t^2 \in S$  and  $[H, t] \leq S$ . As  $C_{W^*}(t^*)^{\infty} \neq 1$ , t interchanges the components of  $W^*$ , and then as t inverts x,  $t^*$  is determined up to conjugacy in  $W^*$ . Then  $K^* = E(C_{W^*}(t^*)) \langle t^* \rangle \langle x^* \rangle$  is determined up to conjugacy in  $W^*$ .

(2.14) (i) There exists a unique subgroup Q of T isomorphic to the central product of three quaternion groups and invariant under  $\langle y \rangle$ .

- (ii)  $Q \trianglelefteq HT$ .
- (iii)  $|E \cap A: E \cap A \cap Q| = 2.$

Proof. Let D=Suz. By (2.13) we may take  $HT\langle x \rangle \leq D$ . Set  $\langle z \rangle = Z(T)$ ,  $C=C_D(z)$  and  $Q=O_2(C)$ . Then  $Q \simeq (Q_8)^3$ . Set  $\tilde{C}=C/\langle z \rangle$  and  $C^*=C/Q$ . Suppose  $B \leq T$  with  $B \simeq Q \mp B$ . Then  $\tilde{B} \simeq E_{64}$ , so  $|B^*| \geq |\tilde{Q}: C_{\tilde{Q}}(B)|$ . So as  $C^* \simeq \Omega_6^-(2)$  acts naturally on  $\tilde{Q}, E_8 \simeq B^* \leq O_2(C_{C^*}(Z(T^*)))$  with  $B^* = C_{C^*}(B^*)$ . Suppose  $\langle y \rangle \leq N(B)$ . Set  $C_{C^*}(Z(T^*)) = K^*$  and  $\bar{K} = K^*/Z(T^*)$ . Then  $\bar{B}$  is a 4-subgroup of  $\bar{K}$  invariant under  $\langle \bar{y} \rangle$ , so  $\bar{B} = Z(\bar{T}^*)$  for some  $k \in C_K(y)$ , or  $B^* \simeq Q_8$ . As  $B^* \simeq E_8$ , the first case holds. But then  $B^* \mp C_G(B^*) \simeq E_{16}$ . Thus Q is uniquely determined.

As  $Q \leq C \geq HT$ ,  $Q \leq HT$ .  $(Q \cap S)/Z$  is an irreducible GF(2)-module of S/Z of rank 4 for H/S, so  $(E \cap A \cap Q)/Z = C_{Q \cap S/Z}(P)$  is of order 2, and (iii) holds.

- (2.15) Set  $K=O^2(N_G(P))$  and  $\langle z \rangle = Z(T)$ . Then
  - (i)  $T \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(K)$ .
  - (ii)  $E \cap A \cap Q = Z_3(T) \cap E \cap A$ .
  - (11i)  $Q \leq C_{\kappa}(z)$ .

Proof.  $T_0 \leq N(K)$  by (2.13) and  $T \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(K)$  from the definition of T. By (2.11) (iv),  $Z_3(T) \cap E \cap A$  is a hyperplane of  $E \cap A$ . By (2.14) (iii),  $E \cap A \cap Q$ is a hyperplane of  $E \cap A$  in  $Z_3(T)$ , so (ii) holds. Then  $[Q, Z_3(T) \cap E \cap A] \leq \langle z \rangle$ , so  $Q \leq O_2(C_K(z))$  by (2.11) (iv). But  $C_K(z) = O_2(C_K(z))C_K(\langle z, y \rangle)$ , and for  $g \in C_K(\langle z, y \rangle)$ ,  $Q^g \leq T$  and  $y \in N(Q^g)$ , so  $Q = Q^g$  by (2.14) (i). Thus  $Q \leq C_K(z)$ .

(2.16) Set  $M = \langle T^{N(Q)} \rangle$ . Then  $M/QO(Z(M)) \cong \Omega_6^-(2)$  acts naturally on  $Q/\langle z \rangle$ .

Proof. Out  $(Q) \cong O_6^-(2)$  with HT/Q a maximal parabolic of E(Out(Q)). So by (2.15) (iii),  $\text{Out}_M(Q) \cong \Omega_6^-(2)$ .  $C_M(Q) = O(M) \langle z \rangle$  and by (1.7),  $O(M) \leq Z(M)$ .

- (2.17) (i) M is transitive on  $Z^{\mathcal{C}(z)} \cap Q$ 
  - (ii)  $N(Z) \cap C(z)$  is transitive on the C(z)-conjugates of Q containing Z.

Proof. (2.16) implies (i) and (i) implies (ii),

(2.18) (i)  $N_G(Z) = HT_0 \langle x \rangle O(N_G(Z))$  with  $HT \leq N_G(Z)$ . (ii) If  $g \in C(x)$  and  $m(Q \cap Q^g) > 1$ , then  $Q = Q^g$ . Proof. Set X=N(Z),  $\bar{X}=X/Z$ . Then by (2.8),  $\bar{S}=J(\bar{T}_0)$ , so  $\bar{S}$  is weakly closed in  $N_{\bar{X}}(\bar{S})$ . We next show  $\bar{S}$  to be strongly closed. If not by Corollary 4 of [5], there is  $\bar{B} \leq \bar{S}$  and  $g \in X$  such that  $\bar{D}=\bar{B}^{\bar{s}} \leq \bar{S}$  and for  $d \in \bar{D}-\bar{S}$ ,  $m([\bar{S}, d]) \leq m(\bar{D}/\bar{D} \cap \bar{S})$ . But  $m([\bar{S}, t]) \geq 2$  for each involution  $t \in T_0 - S$  by (2.6), so  $m(\bar{D}/\bar{D} \cap \bar{S}) > 1$ . Hence by (2.6) there is  $d \in \bar{D} - \bar{S}$  with  $m([\bar{S}, d]) = 4$ , so  $m(\bar{D}/\bar{D} \cap \bar{S}) \geq 4 > m(T_0/S)$ , a contradiction.

So  $\overline{S}$  is strongly closed. Now by Goldschmidt's fusion Theorem [5], and the action of H on  $\overline{S}$ ,  $\overline{SO}(\overline{X}) \leq \overline{X}$ . By (1.7),  $S \leq X$ , so (i) follows from (1.7) and (2.6).

Choose g as in (ii). Then as  $m(Q \cap Q^g) > 1$ , we may take  $Z \le Q^g$ . So by (2.17) we may take  $g \in X$ . Now as  $C_X(z) = C_H(z)T_0O(N(Z))$  with [HT, O(C(Z))] = 1 and  $Q \le C_H(z)T_0, Q = Q^g$ .

Set 
$$X = C(z), \ \tilde{X} = X/\langle z \rangle, \ N_X(Q)^* = N_X(Q)/Q$$
.

(2.19) Q is weakly closed in X.

Proof. If  $g \in X$  with  $Q \neq Q^g \leq N(Q)$ , then  $\tilde{Q}^g \approx E_{64}$ , so as  $N_X(Q)^* \approx O_6^-(2)$  or  $\Omega_6^-(2)$  acts naturally on  $\tilde{Q}$ ,  $m(Q \cap Q^g) > 1$ . This contradicts (2.18) (ii).

We can now obtain a contradiction. By (2.18) (ii), (2.19), and (1.10), Q is strongly closed in  $C_{c}(z)$ . So by Goldschmidt's fusion theorem [5],  $QO(X) \leq X$ . Then (2.16) and (1.8) imply O(X)=1, and  $M \leq X$ . By Theorem 2 in [11], and Theorem B of [10], we have  $\langle A^{c} \rangle \cong Suz$ , which we are assuming false.

# 3. *Co*<sub>1</sub>

In this section we assume  $A/Z(A) \simeq G_2(4)$  and obtain a contradiction; we continue the notation in §1. In particular, let  $A_1 \simeq SL_3(4)$  be as in (1.4) and  $\langle x \rangle = Z(A_1)$ . Inaddition we set  $B = E(C_G(x))$  By (1.3) (iii) Z(A) = 1.

(3.1) B=3Suz, the covering group of the Suzuki group.

Proof. This follows from (8.14) of [3] and the result established in §2.

Since  $A_1$  is standard in B and  $R \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_B(A_1))$  the entire analysis of §2 applies to the triple  $(R, A_1, B)$ , replacing (R, A, G). We will make use of the subgroups Z, E, F, P, Q, and T as defined in §1 or constructed in §2. Then  $E \cap A$  is the direct product of two long root subgroups of  $A(\operatorname{or} A_1)$ . Let  $B_0 = C_B(z)'$ , for  $z \in Z^{\sharp}$ . Then  $Q \leq B_0$  and  $B_0/Q \approx \Omega_6^-(2)$ .

(3.2) Let  $I = N_A(E \cap A)$ .

- (i)  $I=D(J\times\langle x\rangle)$ , where  $D=O_2(I)$  and  $J\simeq SL_2(4)$ .
- (ii)  $(E \cap A) = Z(D)$ ,  $D/(E \cap A)$  is elementary of order 4<sup>3</sup>, and  $D/(E \cap A)$

is generated by the images of 3 short root subgroups.

(iii)  $Z(DJ/(E \cap A)) = U_{\sigma}(E \cap A) = U_{\sigma}(E \cap A)/(E \cap A)$  for  $U_{\sigma}$  a short root subgroup.

- (iv)  $[D, U_{\sigma}] = E \cap A$ .
- (v) I/D acts indecomposably on  $D/(E \cap A)$ .
- (vi) I/D acts on  $D/U_{a}(E \cap A)$  as on the natural module for  $GL_{2}(4)$ .

Proof. These facts are elementary consequences of the Chevalley commutator relations for  $G_2(4)$ .

(3.3) (i)  $E-(E \cap A)$  is partitioned by the sixteen members of  $R^G \cap E = \Delta$ . (ii)  $N(E) = D(N(E) \cap N(\langle x \rangle))$ . In particular  $N(E)^{\Delta} = (N(E) \cap N(\langle x \rangle))^{\Delta}$ ,  $N_B(E)^{\Delta} \leq N(E)^{\Delta}$ , and  $N_B(E)^{\Delta}$  is  $GL_2(4)$  acting on its natural module.

(iii)  $\hat{P}=PD=O_2(N(E)\cap C(E\cap A))\in \operatorname{Syl}_2(N(E)\cap C(E\cap A))$  and  $\hat{P}^{\Delta}=P^{\Delta}$  is regular.

(iv)  $C_{P}(E) = DC_{P}(E) = D \times R$ .

Proof. (i) is just (1.5) (i).  $X = N(E) \cap N(\langle x \rangle)$  is transitive on  $\Delta$ , so  $N(E) = X(N(E) \cap N(R))$ . By a Frattini argument and (3.2) (i),  $N(E) \cap N(R) = DN_x(R)$ , so N(E) = DX. Now (ii) follows, and implies (iii) and (iv).

- (3.4) (i)  $\hat{P}=DP$  with  $D \cap P=E \cap A$ .
  - (ii)  $D = [\hat{P}, x].$
  - (iii)  $Z(\hat{P}/(E \cap A)) \ge U_{\alpha}R(E \cap A)/(E \cap A).$
  - (iv)  $[\hat{P}, \hat{P}] \leq U_{\alpha}(E \cap A).$

Proof. By (3.3) (iii),  $\hat{P}=DP$ , while  $D\cap P=C_{P\cap A}(E)=E\cap A$ . By (i),  $[\hat{P}, x] \leq D$ , while by (3.2), D=[D, x], so (ii) holds. J acts on  $C_{D/(E\cap A)}(P)$ , so by (3.2),  $[U_{\alpha}, P] \leq E \cap A$ . Of course  $[P, R] \leq E \cap A$ , so (iii) holds. Then (3.2) (vi) implies  $[P, D] \leq U_{\alpha}(E \cap A)$ , while by (3.2) (ii),  $[D, D] \leq E \cap A$ , and by (2.11) (iii),  $[P, P] \leq E \cap A$ . Hence (iv) holds.

$$(3.5) \quad D = O_2(C_G(P)) \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(P)).$$

Proof. We first show that [D, P] = 1. Choose  $Y \le C_G(x)$  such that |Y| = 3, Y is transitive on  $R^{\ddagger}$  and [R, A] = 1 (for example  $Y = \langle y \rangle$ , with y as in (2.11)). Then  $Y \times \langle x \rangle$  contains a subgroup  $Y_1$  of order 3 such that  $Y_1 \le C_G(A)$ . Then  $Y_1$  acts on  $\hat{P}$ ,  $[Y_1, D] = 1$  and  $[Y_1, P] = P$ . Therefore,  $[P, Y_1, D] = [P, D]$ ,  $[Y_1, D, P] = [1, P] = 1$ , and  $[D, P, Y_1] \le [D, Y_1] = 1$ . By the 3-subgroups lemma, [P, D] = 1.

Finally,  $C_{\mathcal{G}}(P) \leq C_{\mathcal{G}}(R)$  so that  $C_{\mathcal{G}}(P) = C(P) \cap C(R) = C_{\mathcal{D}}(P)O(C(A)) = DO(C(A))$  by (1.7), so the lemma holds.

(3.6) Let 
$$T_1 = T \cap J \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(J)$$
,  $V_0/(E \cap A) = C(T_1) \cap D/E \cap A)$ , and  $V = [V_0, \langle x \rangle]$ .

Then V contains a unique  $\langle x \rangle$ -invariant subgroup  $Q_0$  such that  $Q_0 \simeq Q_3$  and  $Z(Q_0) = Z(Q)$ .

Proof. The action of  $J \times \langle x \rangle$  on  $D/(E \cap A)$  is easily determined from the Chevalley commutator relations. The group  $V_0$  is the product of  $E \cap A$  together with the product of two short root subgroups, where the short roots add to a long root. Then V is the group generated by these two short root subgroups.

The group  $V/Z(V) \simeq E_{16}$  and  $Z(V) = C_V(x)$  is a long root subgroup. Since  $\langle x \rangle$  acts without fixed points on V/Z(V),  $\langle x \rangle$  stabilizes precisely five 4-subgroups of Y/Z. Aside from the images of the two short root subgroups, there are three subgroups each having preimage containing a unique  $\langle x \rangle$ -invariant  $Q_8$  and having center of order 2 in Z(V) = Z. Since  $Z(Q) \leq Z$ , the result follows.

- (3.7) (i)  $T \leq C_G(Q_0)$ .
  - (ii)  $Q_0Q$  is extraspecial of order 2<sup>9</sup>.
  - (iii)  $Q_0 \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_G(Q)).$
  - (iv)  $B_0 \leq C_G(Q_0)$ .

Proof. By (3.5) and the fact that  $PT_1 riangleq T$ , we have  $T \le N(V_0)$ . Since also  $T \le C(x)$ , by (3.6),  $T \le N(Q_0)$ . As  $\langle x \rangle \times T$  acts on  $Q_0$ , we necessarily, have (i). In particular,  $Q \le C(Q_0)$ , proving (ii).

Let  $C=C_{c}(Q)$  and suppose  $Q_{0} \notin \operatorname{Syl}_{2}(C)$ . Consider  $N_{c\langle r \rangle}(Q_{0}\langle r \rangle)=N$ , where  $r \in R^{\sharp}$ . First we claim that  $Q_{0}\langle r \rangle$  has index at most 2 in a Sylow 2-subgroup of N. So suppose otherwise and let  $Y=C \cap N \cap C(r)$ . Then  $|C \cap N: Y| \leq 2$  so  $Q_{0}O(Y) < Y$  and  $Y \leq C(Q) < C(E \cap A \cap Q)$ . By (2.14) (iii),  $Y \leq DRO(C(A))\langle x \rangle$ . By (1.7)  $Y=(\langle x \rangle O_{2}(Y)) \times O(Y)$ . Now  $AR \cap C(Q) \leq AR \cap N(Q)$ , so it follows from (3.2) and  $Y^{\chi}=Y$ , that  $U_{\sigma} \leq Y$ . However, the commutator relations show  $U_{\sigma} \leq N(Q_{0})$ , a contradiction. Therefore, the claim holds. We conclude that  $N/Q_{0}\langle r \rangle$  has a 2-complement of index 2.

Both N and  $Q_0 \langle r \rangle$  are invariant under  $\langle x \rangle \times E$ . By (1.7) and the above claim we conclude that  $|N_c(\langle x \rangle)|$  is divisible by 4. As  $N(\langle x \rangle)/O(N(\langle x \rangle)) \leq Aut(Suz)$ , this is impossible. This establishes (iii).

To obtain (iv) consider the group C. If  $O(C) \neq 1$ , the assertion follows from (1.7) and the structure of  $Co_1$ . Suppose O(C)=1. If E(C)=1, then  $C=Q_0\langle x \rangle$  and (iv) holds. If  $E(C) \neq 1$ , then  $O^{2'}(C) \cong SL_2(q)$  for some  $q \equiv 3,5$ (mod 8) and  $[Q_0, B_0] \leq [O^{2'}(C), B_0]=1$ .

(3.8) Let  $F = N_G(Q_0Q)^{(\infty)}$ . Then  $Q_0Q \leq F$  and  $F/Q_0Q \approx \Omega_8^+(2)$ .

Proof. By (3.7)  $\langle x \rangle \times B_0 \leq N_G(Q_0Q)$ . Let  $M = O^2(N_G(Q_0Q)/C_G(Q_0Q)/\zeta_s)$ . Then  $M \leq \Omega_8^+(2)$  and  $\langle x \rangle \times B_0$  induces a subgroup M isomorphic to  $Z_3 \times \Omega_6^-(2)$ . Easy arguments show that  $(Z_3 \times \Omega_6^-(2))\langle t \rangle = M_1$  is maximal in  $\Omega_8^+(2)$ , where  $\tau$  inverts the  $Z_3$  factor and induces a transvection on the  $\Omega_6^-(2)$  factor. It will suffice to show that M contains such an element  $\tau$  and  $M > M_1$ .

To get  $\tau$ , use the fact that  $N_A(\langle x \rangle)$  contains an involution inverting x. Thus  $M_1 \leq M$ . The argument in the first paragraph of the proof of (3.7) shows that  $[V, T] \leq V$ . Since  $\langle x \rangle$  acts irreducibly on  $V/Q_0Z$ ,  $[V, T] \leq Q_0Z \leq Q_0Q$ . Hence  $V \leq N_G(Q_0Q)$  and V induces on  $Q_0Q/\langle x \rangle$  a subgroup of M not contained in  $M_1$ . This proves (3.8).

(3.9)  $N_G(Q_0Q)/Q_0QO(N_G(Q_0Q) \cong \Omega_8^+(2)).$ 

Proof. Otherwise  $\langle x \rangle \times B_0 \langle g \rangle \leq C_G(x)$ , where g induces a transvection on  $Q/\langle z \rangle$ . On the otherhand  $N_G(\langle x \rangle)/O(N_G(\langle x \rangle) = \operatorname{Aut}(Suz)$ , so no such g exists.

(3.10)  $C_F(Z)$  contains a normal subgroup  $\hat{S}$  such that

(i)  $\hat{S}$  is special with  $Z(\hat{S})=Z$ , and  $\hat{S}$  is the central product of three copies of a Sylow 2-group of  $L_3(4)$ .

(ii)  $C_F(Z)/\hat{S} \simeq \Omega_6^+(2)$  has two noncentral chief factors on  $\hat{S}/Z$ , both of which are natural.

(iii)  $\hat{S}$  is weakly closed in  $N_G(\hat{S})$  with respect to  $N_G(Z)$ .

(iv)  $N_G(\hat{S})/\hat{S}O(C_G(\hat{S})) \cong S_3 \times \Omega_6^+(2)$  and  $C_F(Z)O(C(Z)) = N_G(\hat{S}) \cap C(Z)$ .

Proof. F acts on  $Q_0Q/\langle z \rangle$  as the natural module for  $\Omega_8^+(2)$  and the image of Z is a singular point. So  $N_F(Z)/Q_0Q$  is a parabolic subgroup of  $\Omega_8^+(2)$  isomorphic to  $Q_6^+(2)$  on its natural module. Set  $U=C_{Q_0Q}(Z)$  and  $\hat{S}=O_2(C_F(Z))$ . Then  $1 \leq Z \leq U \leq \hat{S} \leq C_F(Z)$  is a normal series with U/Z and  $\hat{S}/U$  the natural module for  $C_F(Z)/\hat{S} \simeq \Omega_6^+(2)$ . That is (ii) holds.

Next  $S = C_{\hat{s}}(x)$  and  $\hat{S} = S[\hat{S}, x]$ . Moreover by 2.6,  $B_1 = C_B(Z)^{\infty}$  is a subgroup of F acting as  $\Omega_4^-(2)$  on S/Z as the sum of two natural modules, and S is the central product of two copies of the Sylow 2-group of  $L_3(4)$ . Also there is  $g \in C_F(Z)$  with  $[\hat{S}, x] \leq C_{\hat{s}}(x^g) = S^g$ , so  $[\hat{S}, x]$  is isomorphic to a Sylow 2-group of  $L_3(4)$ . As  $[\hat{S}, x, B_1] = 1$ ,  $S = [S, B] \leq C([\hat{S}, x])$ . Therefore (i) holds.

 $V = \hat{S}/Z$  is elementary abelian and if  $g \in N(Z)$  with  $\hat{S}^{g} \leq F$  and  $\hat{S} \neq \hat{S}^{g}$ , then  $V \neq V^{g}$  and  $m(V^{g}/V \cap V^{g}) = m(V/V \cap V^{g}) \geq m(V/C_{V}(V^{g}))$ , which is impossible by (ii). Thus  $\hat{S}$  is weakly closed in F with respect to N(Z).

Let  $j \in Q_0Q - C(Z)$  be an involution. Then [Z, j] = z and  $[j, C_F(Z)] \leq C_{Q_0Q}(Z) \leq \hat{S}$ , so  $j \in N(\hat{S})$  and  $\langle C_F(Z), j \rangle / \hat{S} \simeq Z_2 \times \Omega_6^+(2)$ . However from (i), Out $(\hat{S})$  is the extension of  $Z_3 \times O_6^+(4)$  by a field automorphism, so as  $[Z, j] \neq 1$ , j induces a field or graph-field automorphism, and as j centralizes  $C_F(Z)/\hat{S}$ , it is the former. In particular  $C_F(Z)/\hat{S} = E(\text{Out}(\hat{S})) \cap C(j)$  is maximal in  $E(\text{Out}(\hat{S}))$ , so if  $N_G(\hat{S})^{\infty} \neq C_F(Z)$ , then  $N_G(\hat{S})^{\infty}/\hat{S} \simeq \Omega_6^+(4)$ . But then as RZ/Z and  $(E \cap A)/Z$ are singular points in  $\hat{S}/Z$ ,  $RZ \in (E \cap A)^{N(\hat{S})}$ , contradiction.

So  $C_F(Z) = N_G(\hat{S})^{\infty}$ , and hence by (1.7),  $N_G(\hat{S}) \cap C(Z) = C_F(Z)O(N_G(\hat{S}))\langle t \rangle$ , where either t=1 or t induces a GF(4)-transvection on  $\hat{S}/Z$ . In the latter case t acts on  $\langle j, U \rangle = Q_0 Q$ , and (3.9) supplies a contradiction. In particular the second part of (iv) holds. In addition as  $\hat{S}$  is weakly closed in F with respect to N(Z), (iii) holds. There is an element of order 3 in A acting nontrivially on Z, so by (iii) and a Frattini argument some 3-element in  $N(\hat{S})$  is nontrivial on Z, so that the proof of (iv) is complete.

(3.11) (i)  $\hat{S} = O_2(C_G(Z)).$ (ii)  $N_G(\hat{S})$  contains a Sylow 2-group of G.

Proof. Claim  $\hat{S}$  is strongly closed in  $N(\hat{S})$  with respect to C(Z). Assume not. By 3.10,  $\hat{S}$  is weakly closed, while  $V = \hat{S}/Z$  is an elementary subgroup of  $C(Z)^* = C(Z)/Z$ . So by Theorem 4 in [5] there is  $U \le V$  and  $W = U^g \le N(V)$  such that  $m([V, w]) \le m(W/W \cap V)$  for each  $w \in W$ . But by 3.10,  $m([V, w]) \ge 4$  for each involution  $w \in N(V)/V$ , so  $m(W/W \cap V) \ge 4$ . As  $(N(V) \cap C(Z)^*)/V \cong \Omega_6^+(2)$ has 2-rank 4,  $m(W/W \cap V) = 4$  and  $WV/V = O_2(X/V)$  where X is the stabilizer of a singular point of V. Now if  $w \in W - V$  then  $m(C_V(w)) = 8$ , so by symmetry between V and  $V^g$ ,  $m(W) \ge 8$ . Thus  $m(C_V(W)) \ge m(V \cap W) \ge 4$ , impossible as  $m(C_V(W)) = 2$ .

So the claim is established. Now by Goldschmidt's fusion theorem [5] and (1.7) and (3.10) (iv), (i) holds. Moreover if  $I \in Syl_2(N_G(Z))$ , then  $Z = Z_2(I)$ , so (3.10) (iii) and (i) imply (ii).

(i) If  $g \in C(z)$  and  $m(Q_1 \cap Q_1^g) > 1$ , then  $Q_1 = Q_1^g$ .

(ii)  $Q_1$  is weakly closed in a Sylow 2-subgroup of  $C_c(z)$ .

Proof. Suppose  $g \in C(z)$  and  $m(Q_1 \cap Q_1^{\ell}) > 1$ . By (3.8) we may assume  $Z \leq Q_1 \cap Q_1^{\ell}$ , and applying (3.8) to  $N(Q_1^{\ell})$  we may take  $g \in N(Z)$ . By (3.11) and (3.10)  $C_G(z) \cap N(Z) = C_F(Z) \leq j > O(N(Z))$  and by (1.7)  $[O(N/Z)), C_F(Z) \leq j > ]=1$ . Since  $C_F(Z) \leq j > N(Q_1)$  we conclude that  $g \in N(Q_1)$ , proving (i).

To prove (ii), suppose  $g \in C(z)$  and  $Q_1^g \leq N(Q_1)$ . By (3.9)  $Q_1^g Q_1/Q_1 \leq \Omega_8^+(2)$ . If  $Q_1^g \neq Q_1$ , then by (i)  $m(Q_1 \cap Q_1^g) = 1$ , so  $(Q_1^g \cap Q_1)/\langle z \rangle$  is an anisotropic 1-space or 2-space. In the first case  $m(Q_1^g Q_1/Q_1) = 7$  and  $Q_1^g Q_1/Q_1$  is a subgroup of  $Sp_6(2)$ , while in the second case  $m(Q_1^g Q_1/Q_1) = 6$  and  $Q_1^g Q_1/Q_1$  is a subgroup of  $O_6^-(2)$ . In either case we have a contradiction.

As in §2 we can now reach a contradiction. By (3.12) and (1.10),  $Q_1$  is strongly closed in  $C_G(z)$ , so by Goldschmidt's fusion theorem [5]  $Q_1O(C_G(z)) \leq C_G(z)$ . By (1.7) and (1.8)  $O(C_G/(z)=1)$ . Finally, (3.9) and Patterson's theorem [9] yield  $G \simeq Co_1$ , which we have assumed to be false.

<sup>(3.12)</sup> Let  $Q_1 = Q_0 Q$ .

## 4. He

In this section we assume |Z(A)| is even. By (1.6)  $Z_2 \times Z_2 \cong R \in Syl_2(Z(A))$ .

(4.1) (i) N(E)/C(E) contains 3A<sub>6</sub> and induces S<sub>6</sub> on R<sup>c</sup> ∩ E. Similarly for F.
(ii) There is an element g of order 3 and an involution y such that (g, y)≈S<sub>3</sub> and (g, y) induces S<sub>3</sub> on R.

Proof. By (1.6) N(E)/C(E) and N(F)/C(F) contain  $3A_6$ . By (1.7)  $N(E)^{(\infty)} = EL$ , where  $L \cong 3A_6$  and  $\langle g \rangle = Z(L)$  acts as an outer diagonal automorphism of A. Now  $C_A(g) \cong A_5$  and we may assume that  $F_1 = F \cap C_A(g) \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(C_A(g))$ . Set  $J = N_L(F_1) \cong S_4 \times Z_3$ . Then  $EJ \leq N(C_E(F_1)F_1) = N(F)$ .

Let bars denote images in N(F)/C(F) and suppose  $\overline{N(F)}=3A_6$ . Then  $\overline{EJ} \simeq S_4 \times Z_3$  and  $Z(\overline{EJ}) = Z(\overline{N(F)})$ . This forces  $\langle \overline{g} \rangle = Z(\overline{N(F)})$ , whereas  $[\overline{E}, \overline{g}] = \overline{E}$ . Consequently N(F) induces  $S_6$  on  $R^c \cap F$ . By symmetry, (i) holds. Consequently,  $N(E) \cap N(R)$  induces  $S_5$  on  $R^c \cap E - \{R\}$ . and (ii) follows.

(4.2) Let S = EF and  $y \in S_1 \in Syl_2(N(S))$ . Then either (i)  $S_1 \in Syl_2(G)$  and  $S_1/S \simeq E_4$ , or (ii)  $S_1/S \simeq D_8$  and  $E \sim F$  in N(A).

Proof. Let  $S_2=N_{S_1}(E)$ . By 4.1,  $S_2/S \cong E_4$ . As E and F are the unique elementary abelian subgroups of S of order  $2^6$  we conclude either  $S_1/S \cong D_8$  or  $S_1=S_2$ . In the first case  $E \in F^{N(S)}$  and as N(E) is transitive on  $R^G \cap E$ , N(R) is transitive on  $E^G \cap N(R)$ , so  $E \in F^{N(A)}$  and (ii) holds. In the second case we show  $S=J(S_1)$ , to conclude  $S_1 \in Syl_2(G)$ , so that (i) holds. If not there exists  $E_2^6 \cong U \leq S_1$  with  $U \neq E$  or F. Then

$$(*) \qquad |\operatorname{Aut}_{U}(E)| \geq |E: C_{E}(U)|.$$

But by 4.1.i, the representation of  $\operatorname{Aut}_{G}(E)$  on E is determined and (\*) forces  $\operatorname{Aut}_{U}(E) = \operatorname{Aut}_{F}(E)$ , so that  $U \leq UE = FE = S$ .

 $(4.3) \quad S_1 \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(G).$ 

Proof. Suppose otherwise and let  $g \in N(S_1) - S_1$  with  $g^2 \in S_1$ . Then  $S^g \neq S$ . Let  $Z = Z(S) = E \cap F$ . If  $Z^g = Z$ , then g stabilizes the two element set  $R^G \cap Z$ . So, for some  $s \in S_1$ ,  $gs \in N(R)$  and it follows that  $g \in S_1$ . Suppose, then, that  $Z^g \neq Z$ .

We have Z = S', so  $Z^{g} = (S')^{g}$ . By (4.2)  $|E^{g} \cap S| \ge 2^{4}$  and so either  $(E^{g} \cap S)Z$  or  $(F^{g} \cap S)Z$  is elementary of order at least 2<sup>5</sup>, say the former. Therefore,  $(E^{g} \cap S)Z \le E$  or F and  $S^{g} \le N(E)$  or N(F). Apply (4.2) to conclude that  $Z^{g} = (S^{g})' \le S$ . Now  $S \cap S^{g} \le C(ZZ^{s})$  and  $ZZ^{g} \le E$  or F. Since  $|S^{g}S: S| \le 4$  we necessarily have  $|S \cap S^{g}| = 2^{6}$  and  $|S^{g}S: S| = 4$ . Then  $S \cap S^{g} = E$  or F, so  $g \in N(E)$  or N(F). But this is not the case.

(4.4) (i)  $N_G(S)/SO(C(S)) \cong S_3 \times S_3$  or  $S_3 \wr Z_2$ 

(ii) The structure of  $S_1$  is uniquely determined by  $|S_1| = 2^{10}$  or  $2^{11}$ .

Proof. Let  $A(S) = \operatorname{Aut}(S)/C_{\operatorname{Aut}(S)}(S/Z(S))$ . As  $S \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(A)$  and  $E_4 \cong R \in \operatorname{Syl}_2(Z(A))$  with  $A/Z(A) \cong L_3(4)$ , we may calculate in A to determine  $Z(S) = E \cap F$  is partitioned by

$$\{R, R_0\} \cup \{[E, s]: s \in S\}$$

where  $R_0 = [Z(S), x]$  and x is of order 3 in  $N_A(S) - Z(A)$ .  $N_G(S) \le N_G(Z(S))$ , so  $N_G(S)$  acts transitively on the two member set  $R^G \cap Z(S) = \{R, R_0\}$  and  $|N_G(S): N(R) \cap N_G(S)| = 2 = |\operatorname{Aut}(S): N_{\operatorname{Aut}(S)}(R)|$ .  $\operatorname{Out}_{\operatorname{Aut}(A)}(S) \cong S_3 \times S_3 \cong$ A(S/R) and  $N_{A(S)}(R)$  is isomorphic to a subgroup of A(S/R), so  $A(S) \cong S_3 \setminus Z_2$ and  $N_{A(S)}(R) \cong S_3 \times S_3$ .  $\operatorname{Out}_{N(E)}(S) \cong S_3 \times S_3$ , so (i) holds.

Let  $T \in Syl_3(A \langle g \rangle \cap N(S))$ , and choose T so that  $S_1 = SN_{S_1}(T)$ .  $C_S(T) = 1 = C(T) \cap C_{Aut(S)}(S/Z(S))$  as T is irreducible on S/Z(S). Thus the product is semidirect and  $N_{S_1}(T) \leq A(S) \approx S_3 \wr Z_2$ . Next by 4.2,  $N_{S_1}(T) \approx E_4$  or  $D_8$ , and in the former case  $N_{S_1}(T) \leq N(E)$ . Thus  $|S_1| = 2^{10}$  or  $2^{11}$ ,  $TN_{S_1}(T) = N_{A(S)}(E)$  or A(S), and  $S_1T$ , and hence also  $S_1$ , is uniquely determined by  $|S_1|$ .

(4.5) (i)  $S_1$  is isomorphic to a Sylow 2-group of He or Aut(He).

(ii)  $S_1$  contains a unique extraspecial 2-subgroup Q of order  $2^7$  with  $Z(Q) = Z(S_1)$ .

(iii)  $Q \leq N(E) \cap N(F)$ .

(iv) 
$$S_1/Q \simeq D_8$$
 or  $D_{16}$ .

(v)  $Q \simeq (D_8)^3$ .

Proof. (i) follows from (4.4) and the fact that the results obtained so far apply to *He* and Aut(*He*). In particular we can embed  $S_1$  as a Sylow 2-group of  $G_1=He$  or Aut(*He*). Let  $\langle z \rangle = Z(S_1)$ ,  $C=C_{G_1}(z)$ , and  $Q=O_2(C)$ . Then (iii), (iv), and (v) follow from the structure of  $G_1$ . Moreover  $C/Q \simeq L_3(2)$  or  $PGL_2(7)$ , with E(C/Q) acting on  $V=Q/\langle z \rangle$  as the sum of the natural module and its dual. In particular this forces  $V=J(S/\langle z \rangle)$ , so Q is unique, and (ii) holds.

(4.6) Let 
$$\langle z \rangle = Z(Q)$$
,  $X = E$  or  $F$ , and  $I_X = O^{2'}(C(z) \cap N(X))$ . Then

- (i)  $I_X \simeq E_{64}(S_4 \times Z_2)$ .
- (ii)  $I_x \leq N(R)$ .
- (iii)  $|Q \cap X| = 16$ .
- (iv)  $Y = \langle I_E, I_F \rangle \leq N(Q)$ .

Proof. By (4.1) and (1.7)  $O^{2'}(N_G(X)) = L \cong S_6/Z_3/E_{64}$ , and E(L|X) acts naturally on X. In particular  $I_X = C_L(z) \cong E_{64}(S_4 \times Z_2)$ . As  $S_1 \cap N(X) \leq N(R)$ ,

M. Aschbacher and G. Seitz

(ii) holds. By (4.5) (v),  $m(X \cap Q) \leq 4$  and by (4.5) (iv),  $m(X/X \cap Q) \leq 2$ , so (iii) holds. By (iii),  $QX/X \cong E_8$ , so as  $L/X \cong S_6/Z_3$ ,  $N_L(QX)/X \cong Z_2 \times S_4$ . As  $\langle z \rangle = Z(QX), \langle z \rangle \leq N_L(QX)$ , so  $I_X = N_L(QX)$ . Hence (iv) holds.

- (4.7) (i)  $Y/Q \simeq L_3(2)$ .
  - (ii)  $Q/\langle z \rangle$  is the sum of the natural module for Y/Q and its dual.
  - (iii)  $N(Q)/QO(N(Q)) \simeq L_3(2)$  or  $PGL_2(7)$ .

Proof. By (1.7) we may take O(N(Q))=1. Embed  $S_1$  in  $G_1$  as in 4.5, and adopt the notation of that lemma. Let  $V_1$  and  $V_2$  be the two E(C/Q)-chief factors in  $V=Q/\langle z \rangle$ . Then EQ/Q centralizes a hyperplane  $E_1$  of  $V_1$  and a point  $E_2$  of  $V_2$ , with  $E_1E_2=[V, E]$ . As  $[E, Q] \leq E \cap Q \cong E_{16}, E_1E_2=(E \cap Q)/\langle z \rangle$ . In particular each member of E-Q induces an involution of type  $a_2$  on V, and EFinduces automorphisms in  $\Omega_6^-(2)$  on V. Therefore  $Y=\langle E^Y, F^Y \rangle$  induces automorphisms in  $\Omega_6^-(2) \cong A_8$  on V.  $EFQ=S_1 \cap YQ$  with  $EF/Q\cong D_8$  and  $Y=O^{2'}(Y)=O^2(Y)$ , so  $YQ/Q\cong A_6$ ,  $A_7$ , or  $L_3(2)$ . However there is one class each of  $A_6$ 's and  $A_7$ 's and two classes of  $L_3(2)$ 's in  $A_8$ . As the involutions in EFQ/Q are of type  $a_2$ , we conclude (i) and (ii) holds. Similarly as  $S_1/Q\cong D_8$ or  $D_{16}$  and  $Y/Q\cong L_3(2)$  is a transitive subgroup of  $N_G(Q)^{\infty}/Q \leq A_8$ , (iii) holds.

(4.8) Q is strongly closed in  $S_1$  with respect to C(z).

Proof. By (4.5) (ii), Q is weakly in  $S_1$  with respect to C(z). Set  $\overline{N}(Q) = N(Q)/QO(N(Q))$  and  $C(z)^* = C(z)/\langle z \rangle$ , so that  $V = Q^* \simeq E_{64}$ . Assume Q is not strongly closed. By (2.4) of [12], there exists  $g \in C(z)$  such that, setting  $L = \langle Q, Q^g \rangle$ ,  $B = N_Q(Q^g)$ ,  $D = Q^g \cap N(Q)$ , and  $I = Q \cap Q^g$ , the following hold: (1)  $L/BD \simeq L_2(2^n)$ ,  $Sz(2^n)$ , or  $D_{2m}$ , m odd;

- (2) BD/I is the sum of natural modules for L/BD; and
- (3)  $I \neq D$ .

 $m(\overline{D}) \leq m(\overline{S}) = 2$ . But by Corollary 4 in [5],  $m([V, d]) \leq m(\overline{D})$  for each  $d \in D-I$ , while by (4.7),  $m([V, s]) \geq 2$  for each  $s \in S_1 - Q$ . Hence  $m(\overline{D}) = 2$  and m([V, d]) = 2 for each  $d \in D-I$ . By (4.7) it follows that  $\overline{D} \leq E(\overline{N}(Q))$  and that  $[D, V] = C_V(D)$  is of rank 3. But B = [Q, V]I, so  $B^* = C_V(D)$  is of codimension at most 2 in V, a contradiction.

(4.9) (i)  $Q = F^*(C_G(z))$ . (ii)  $C_G(z)/Q \simeq PGL_2(7)$ .

Proof. By 4.8 and Goldschmidt's fusion theorem [5],  $QO(C(z)) \leq C(z)$ . By (4.7) and (1.8) O(C(z))=1. If C(z)=Y, then by [4],  $G \simeq He$ , contrary to our assumption that G is a counter example to the Main Theorem. So (4.7) completes the proof.

(4.10) 
$$G \neq O^2(G)$$
.

Proof. All involutions in EF are fused to z or  $r \in \mathbb{R}^{\mathfrak{k}}$  in  $N_{G}(E)$  and  $N_{G}(F)$ . All involutions in Y are fused into EF under Y. But by (4.9) (ii)  $|S_{1}|=2^{11}$ , so as  $\mathbb{R}^{c} \cap Z(S)$  is of order 2,  $|S_{1} \cap N(\mathbb{R})|=2^{10}$ . In particular some involution  $t \in S_{1} \cap N(\mathbb{R}) - Y$  induces a graph-field automorphism on A. Then  $[\mathbb{R}, t]=1$ and  $C_{A}(t)/\mathbb{R} \cong E_{9}Q_{8}$ . Then  $m_{3}(C_{G}(t))>1$ , so by (4.9)  $t \notin z^{c}$ . Hence if (4.10) is false,  $t \in r^{c}$  by Thompson transfer. As  $[\mathbb{R}, t]=1$ , this contradicts (1.1).

As G is simple, (4.10) yields a contradiction. This completes the proof of the Main Theorem.

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