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PP 79 87 ON NUMBERS SMS FOR WHICH THE

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# On numbers n for which the prime factors of $\sigma(n)$ are among the prime factors of n

Florian Luca

#### Introduction

For any positive integer n let

$$rad(n) := \prod_{p \mid n} p. \tag{1}$$

At the West Coast Number Theory Conference in San Diego, December 2000, Jean-Marie De Koninck asked for all the positive integers n for which

$$\sigma(n) = \operatorname{rad}(n)^2 \tag{2}$$

holds, where  $\sigma(n)$  is the sum of divisors of n. Note that n=1 and n=1782 are solutions of the above equation. In this note, we look at the numbers n such that all the prime factors of  $\sigma(n)$  divide n. If we do not impose any condition on the exponents of the prime factors of  $\sigma(n)$ , i.e., if we only require  $\operatorname{rad}(\sigma(n)) \mid \operatorname{rad}(n)$ , then we cannot say much except for the fact that there are infinitely many such n (take, for example,  $n := \prod_{p < x} p$  where x > 2 is any large real number). We thus put an upper bound on the exponents of the prime factors of  $\sigma(n)$ , say K, and we investigate the set of positive integers n such that  $\sigma(n) \mid \operatorname{rad}(n)^K$ .

Our main result shows that if  $T \geq 1$  is any given positive integer, then there are only finitely many effectively computable values of n satisfying the above divisibility relation and for which  $\omega(n) \leq T$  holds, where  $\omega(n)$  is the number of distinct prime factors of n.

### Theorem.

Let K, L, and T be fixed positive integers. If n is a positive integer with  $\omega(n) = T$  and such that

$$\sigma(n) = am,\tag{3}$$

holds with some positive integer  $a \leq L$  and some positive integer m with  $m \mid rad(n)^K$ , then

$$n < \exp((M \cdot T!)^{2^T}), \tag{4}$$

where M is any positive constant such that  $M \geq K + \log L$ .

In particular, for any  $T \geq 1$ , there exist only finitely many positive integers n satisfying relation (2) and for which  $\omega(n) \leq T$ , and all such n satisfy

$$n < \exp\left((2T!)^{2^T}\right).$$

Recall that a number n is called multiply perfect if  $n \mid \sigma(n)$ . When  $\sigma(n) = 2n$ , the number n is called perfect. It is known that if n is a multiply perfect number having  $\omega(n) \leq T$ , then n can be

bounded in terms of T. In fact, from the comments on problem B1 in [1], we learn that Pomerance showed that if n is odd and perfect and has  $\omega(n) \leq T$ , then

$$n < \exp\left((\log 4T) \cdot (4T)^{2^{T^2}}\right),\,$$

and that the above upper bound on n has been improved by D.R. Heath-Brown (see [3]), who showed that if n is an odd number with  $\omega(n) \leq T$  and  $\sigma(n) = an$ , where a is a rational number, then  $n < (4d)^{4^T}$ , where d is the denominator of a. Note that our upper bound (4) is quadruple exponential in T, while Heath-Brown's bound on the size of an odd perfect number with at most T prime factors is only triple exponential in T. We also point out that the analogous problem of finding positive integers n such that  $\phi(n) = (\operatorname{rad}(n))^K$ , where  $\phi$  is the Euler function, was treated in [2]. There, it is shown that for each K the above equation has finitely many effectively computable solutions n, and if  $N_K$  denotes the number of such, then  $N_K \geq \exp(cK \log K)$  holds for all  $K \geq 1$ , where c is some positive constant.

## The Proof

The Proof of the Theorem. We proceed by induction on  $\omega(n) = T$  to show that if n satisfies (3), then the inequality

$$L\mathrm{rad}(n)^K < \exp((M \cdot T!)^{2^T}) \tag{5}$$

holds. When T=1, then  $n=q^e$  holds with a prime number q and a positive integer e, and since  $\sigma(n)$  and q are coprime, relation (3) implies that  $q \leq q^e \leq \sigma(n) \leq L$ . Thus,

$$L\operatorname{rad}(n)^K = Lq^K \le \exp(\log L + K \log L) < \exp(M^2). \tag{6}$$

Assume now that  $T \geq 2$  is a fixed positive integer, and that the inequality asserted at (5) holds for all positive integers n' with  $\omega(n') = T' < T$ , and for which  $\sigma(n')$  can be written under the form a'm' with some  $a' \leq L'$ , and some m' with  $m' \mid \operatorname{rad}(n')^{K'}$ , and with M replaced by  $M' := K' + \log L'$ . We write n as

$$n := q_1^{e_1} \cdot \ldots \cdot q_T^{e_T}, \tag{7}$$

with the convention that  $q_1 > q_2 > \ldots > q_T$ . From now on, we split the argument into several steps.

Step I. Assume that  $q_T \leq \max\{2, L\}$ .

Note that not both K and L can be 1, because if this were the case, then (3) would imply that  $\sigma(n) \mid \operatorname{rad}(n)$ , which is impossible for n > 1 because  $\sigma(n) > n \ge \operatorname{rad}(n)$  holds. Since  $q_T \le \max\{2, L\}$ , it follows that  $q_T \le L + 1$ . Write

$$L' := L \cdot (L+1)^K = \exp(\log L + K \log(L+1)).$$

One can easily check that since K and L are positive integers, then the inequality

$$\log L + K \log(L+1) < (\log L + K)^2 \le M^2$$

holds. Thus,

$$Lq_T^K \le L \cdot (L+1)^K = L' < \exp(M^2).$$

Writing  $n' := n/q_T^{e_T}$ , we infer from (3) that

$$\sigma(n') = a'm'$$

holds, where  $a' \leq aq_T^K \leq L' < \exp(M^2)$ ,  $m' \mid \operatorname{rad}(n')^K$ , and  $\omega(n') = \omega(n) - 1 = T - 1$ . With  $M' := \log L' + K < M^2 + K \leq 2M^2$  and the induction hypothesis, it follows that

$$L\operatorname{rad}(n)^{K} = Lq_{T}^{K}\operatorname{rad}(n')^{K} = L'\operatorname{rad}(n')^{K} < \exp((2M^{2})(T-1)!)^{2^{T-1}}) < \exp(M^{2^{T}}(2(T-1)!)^{2^{T-1}}) < \exp((M \cdot T!)^{2^{T}}),$$
(8)

which is precisely the desired inequality. In the above inequality (8), we used the obvious inequality  $2(T-1)! \le T!$ , which holds for all  $T \ge 2$ .

From now on, we assume that  $q_T > \max\{2, L\}$ . In what follows, we shall use induction on i for  $i = 1, 2, \ldots, T$  to find upper bounds on the exponents  $e_i$  for  $i = 1, \ldots, T$ .

Step II. An upper bound on  $e_1$ .

This is trivial to find by the following argument. We write

$$q_1^{e_1} < \sigma(q_1^{e_1}) = a_1 \cdot \prod_{j=2}^T q_j^{f_{1j}},$$
 (9)

where  $a_1 \leq L$ , and  $f_{1j} \leq K$  holds for all  $j = 2, \ldots, T$ . Thus,

$$q_1^{e_1} < Lq_1^{(T-1)K},$$

or

$$q_1^{e_1 - (T-1)K} < L.$$

Since  $q_1 > 3 > e$  (because  $q_T > 2$  and  $T \ge 2$ ), it follows that

$$e_1 - (T-1)K < \log L,$$

therefore

$$e_1 < (T-1)K + \log L \le MT < M \cdot T!.$$

Let  $E_1 := M \cdot T!$  be the upper bound on the exponent  $e_1$  of  $q_1$ . Assume now that  $1 \le i < T$ , and that we know the upper bounds  $E_1, E_2, \ldots, E_i$  on  $e_1, e_2, \ldots, e_i$ , respectively. We shall derive an upper bound  $E_{i+1}$  on the exponent  $e_{i+1}$ .

**Step III.** An upper bound on  $e_{i+1}$ : the nondegenerate case.

We shall first show, by induction on the paramater i, that as long as a certain determinant which we shall denote by  $\Delta_i$  and we shall define below does not vanish, then one may take  $E_i := (M \cdot T!)^{2^{i-1}}$ , and we shall return to the case in which this determinant vanishes later. From what we have just said above, this is certainly so when i = 1.

To prove what we have just said, we write

$$\sigma(q_l^{e_l}) = a_l \prod_{i=1}^T q_j^{f_{lj}}, \quad \text{with } l := 1, 2, \dots, i,$$
(10)

where, of course,  $f_{lj}$  are nonnegative integers for all  $l=1, 2, \ldots, i$ , and all  $j=1, 2, \ldots, T$  and with

$$\sum_{l=1}^{i} f_{lj} \le K$$

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for all  $l=1, 2, \ldots, i$ , and  $\prod_{l=1}^{i} a_l \leq L$ . In particular, both  $a_l \leq L$ , and  $f_{lj} \leq K$  hold for all  $l=1, 2, \ldots, i$ , and all  $j=1, 2, \ldots, T$ . The observation that we employ now is that

$$q^e < \sigma(q^e) < 2q^e$$

holds for all prime numbers  $q \geq 2$  and all positive integers e. In particular, by (9) and (10), we conclude that

$$\frac{a_l}{2} \cdot \prod_{j=1}^T q_j^{f_{lj}} < q_l^{e_l} < a_l \prod_{l=1}^T q_j^{f_{jl}}$$
(11)

holds for all  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ . Taking logarithms in (11) and writing

$$X_l := \log q_l, \qquad A_l := \log \left(a_l \prod_{j=i+1}^T q_j^{f_{lj}} 
ight) - \log 2, \qquad B_l := A_l + \log 2,$$

we get that the following inequalities hold

$$A_l < e_l X_l - \sum_{j=1}^i f_{lj} X_j < B_l, \quad \text{for all } l = 1, 2, \dots, i.$$
 (12)

For each value of l between 1 and i, let  $L_l(x_1, \ldots, x_i)$  be the linear form on  $\mathbb{R}^i$  given by

$$L_l(x_1, \ldots, x_i) := e_l x_l - \sum_{i=1}^i f_{lj} x_j.$$
 (13)

Notice that since q does not divide  $\sigma(q^e)$  for any prime number q and any positive integer e, it follows that  $f_{ll} = 0$  holds for all l = 1, 2, ..., i. Let  $D_i$  be the  $i \times i$  matrix whose entries are  $D_i(l,l) := e_l$  for l = 1, 2, ..., i, and  $D_i(l,j) := -f_{lj}$  for all  $l \neq j$  with both l and j in the set  $\{1, 2, ..., i\}$ . That is, the lth row of the matrix  $D_i$  is

$$r_l := (-f_{l1}, -f_{l2}, \ldots, -e_l, \ldots, -f_{li}),$$

i.e., is the normal vector to the linear form  $L_l(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_i)$  for all  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ . Let  $\Delta_i$  be the determinant of  $D_i$ .

Assume that  $\Delta_i \neq 0$ . Obviously,  $|\Delta_i| \geq 1$  because all the entries of  $D_i$  are integers. We may therefore rewrite system (12) under the form

$$e_l X_l - \sum_{j=1}^i f_{lj} X_j = \lambda_l,$$
 for all  $l = 1, 2, ..., i,$  (14)

where  $\lambda_l$  is some number satisfying

$$|\lambda_l| < \sum_{j=i+1}^T f_{lj} \log q_j \le M(T-i) \log q_{i+1},$$
 (15)

for all  $l=1, 2, \ldots, i$ . Since  $\Delta_i \neq 0$ , it follows that system (14) is nonsingular, therefore we can solve it, by using Cramer's rule, for example. Since  $|\Delta_i| \geq 1$ , we use Cramer's rule together with

the assumed values of  $E_i$  on  $e_i$  (notice that  $E_i > E_{i-1} > ... > E_1 > K$ ), and we bound each involved determinant by the value of the permanent of the corresponding matrix constructed with the absolute values of the entries of the original determinant, to get

$$X_l < i! \cdot E_2 \cdot \dots \cdot E_i \cdot \max_{l=1}^{i} \{|\lambda_l|\} \le i! \cdot E_2 \cdot \dots \cdot E_i \cdot (\max_{l=1}^{i} \{\log a_l\} + K(T-i) \cdot \log q_{i+1}).$$
 (16)

In particular, we get that

$$\sum_{l=1}^{i} \log q_l < i! \cdot i \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i \cdot \left( \max_{l=1}^{i} \{ \log a_l \} + K(T-i) \log q_{i+1} \right). \tag{17}$$

Thus,

$$q_{i+1}^{e_{i+1}} = a_{i+1} \prod_{l=1}^{i} q_{l}^{f_{l,i+1}} \prod_{l>i+1} q_{l}^{f_{l,i+1}},$$

or

$$e_{i+1} \log q_{i+1} < \log a_{i+1} + K \sum_{l=1}^{i} \log q_l + K \sum_{l=i+2}^{T} \log q_l <$$

 $\log a_{i+1} + K \cdot i! \cdot i \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i \cdot (\max_{l=1}^i \{\log a_l\} + K(T-i) \log q_{i+1}) + K(T-i-1) \log q_{i+1}.$  (18) But is is easily seen that the right hand side of (18) is bounded above by

$$M^2 \cdot \log q_{i+1} \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i \cdot \left( (T-i+1)i \cdot i! + (T-i) \right) < M^2 \cdot \log q_{i+1} \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i \cdot T \cdot T!,$$

where in order to deduce the above inequality we used the fact that  $q_{i+1} > 2$ , and the inequality

$$(T-i+1)i \cdot i! + (T-i) \le T \cdot T!,$$

which holds for all  $i \leq T$ , and all  $T \geq 2$ . Thus, we get

$$e_{i+1} \leq M^2 T \cdot T! \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i$$
.

Recalling now that  $E_1 = M \cdot T!$  and that  $T \leq T!$ , we simply get

$$e_{i+1} \leq M \cdot T! \cdot E_1 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_i$$

or, after taking logarithms, we arrive at

$$\log e_{i+1} \le \log(M \cdot T!) + \log E_1 + \ldots + \log E_i.$$

Since the induction hypothesis is that  $E_l := (M \cdot T!)^{2^{l-1}}$  for all  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ , we simply get

$$\log e_{i+1} \le (1+1+2+\ldots+2^{i-1})\log(M\cdot T!) = 2^i\log(M\cdot T!).$$

Thus, we may indeed choose  $E_{i+1} := (M \cdot T!)^{2^i}$ .

If also  $\Delta_T \neq 0$ , then in this case the numbers  $\lambda_l$  simply satisfy  $|\lambda_l| \leq \log L \leq M$  for all  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, T$ , and now inequality (16) simply tells us that

$$X_l = \log q_l < M \cdot T! \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_T = E_1 \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_T,$$

therefore

$$L\operatorname{rad}(n)^K \le \exp(\log L + KE_1E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_T) < \exp(M \cdot T! \cdot E_1 \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_T) = \exp((M \cdot T!)^{2^T}),$$

which is the desired inequality.

It remains to study what happens when  $\Delta_i = 0$  holds for some  $i = 1, 2, \ldots, l$ .

Step IV. An upper bound on  $e_{i+1}$ : the degenerate case.

Let i be the first such index for which  $\Delta_i = 0$ . It is obvious that  $i \geq 2$ . In particular, the bounds  $E_l \leq (M \cdot T!)^{2^{l-1}}$  hold for all  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ . Since  $\Delta_i = 0$ , it follows that there exists a linear combination  $(\mu_1, \mu_2, \ldots, \mu_i)$ , with not all the  $\mu_l = 0$  for  $l = 1, \ldots, i$ , and such that if we denote by  $\mathbf{r}_l$  the lth row of the matrix  $D_i$ , then

$$\sum_{l=1}^{i} \mu_l \mathbf{r}_l = 0.$$

In particular, this leads to

$$\sum_{l=1}^{i} \mu_l L_l(X_1, \ldots, X_l) = 0.$$
(19)

Since

$$L_l(X_1, \ldots, X_l) = e_l X_l - \sum_{j=1}^i f_{ji} X_j,$$

it follows that

$$L_l(X_1, \ldots, X_l) = -\log\left(\frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}}\right) + B_l, \quad \text{for all } l = 1, 2, \ldots, i.$$
 (20)

So, relation (19) becomes

$$0 = -\sum_{l=1}^{i} \mu_{l} \log \left( \frac{\sigma(q_{l}^{e_{l}})}{q_{l}^{e_{l}}} \right) + \sum_{l=1}^{i} \mu_{l} B_{l},$$

or

$$\prod_{l=1}^{i} \left(\frac{\sigma(q^{e_l})}{q^{e_l}}\right)^{\mu_l} = \exp\left(\sum_{l=1}^{i} \mu_l B_l\right),\tag{21}$$

and we know that not all the numbers  $\mu_l$  are zero. We split the set  $\{1, 2, ..., i\}$  into two subsets I and J such that  $\mu_l \geq 0$  for  $l \in I$  and  $\mu_l < 0$  for  $l \in J$ . It is clear that I and J partition  $\{1, 2, ..., i\}$ , but one of them might be empty. Assume that  $I \neq \emptyset$ , for if not, we may change all the signs of the  $\mu_l$ s simultaneously. We may rewrite relation (21) as

$$\prod_{l \in I} \left( \frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}} \right)^{\mu_l} = \prod_{l \in J} \left( \frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}} \right)^{-\mu_l} \cdot u_i, \tag{22}$$

where  $u_i$  is a rational number which in reduced form can be represented as  $\alpha_i/\beta_i$ , with  $\alpha_i$  and  $\beta_i$  positive integers such that all their prime divisors are either smaller than L, or belong to the set

 $\{q_{i+1}, \ldots, q_T\}$ . Since  $q_T > L$ , and  $\sigma(q_l^{e_l})$  are positive integers for  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ , relation (22) implies that both

$$\prod_{l \in I} \left(\frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}}\right)^{\mu_l} \quad \text{and} \quad \prod_{l \in J} \left(\frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}}\right)^{-\mu_l}$$

are positive integers.

We now recall that since i is the first index where  $\Delta_i = 0$ , it follows that  $\mu_i \neq 0$ . So, we may assume, up to simultaneously changing all the signs of the  $\mu_l$  for  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ , that  $i \in I$ . So, by replacing all  $\mu_l$  with  $\min\{\mu_l, 0\}$  for  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i$ , it follows that

$$\prod_{l=1}^{i} \left(\frac{\sigma(q_l^{e_l})}{q_l^{e_l}}\right)^{\mu_l} = v_i \in \mathbf{Z},\tag{23}$$

where now all the  $\mu_l$ 's are nonnegative. We first find a better upper bound on  $E_i$ . Let  $E \ge \max_{l=1}^{i} \{e_l\}$ , and assume that  $E \ge K$ . We apply the absolute value inequality to bound  $|\Delta_i|$  by

$$|\Delta_i| > E^i - (i! - 1)K^2E^{i-2}$$

and since  $\Delta_i = 0$ , we get

$$E < i!^{1/2}K.$$
 (24)

We may now choose the vector  $(\mu_1, \ldots, \mu_l)$  to be one of the nonzero rows of the matrix  $D_i^*$  which is constructed with all the i-1-minors of the matrix  $D_i$ . In particular, we get that

$$\max_{l=1}^{i} \{\mu_l\} < (i-1)! E^{i-1} < (i-1)! (i!)^{(i-1)/2} K^{(i-1)}.$$
(25)

We now notice that equation (23) can be written as

$$v_i = \prod_{l=1}^{i} \left( 1 + \frac{1}{q_1} + \dots + \frac{1}{q_1 e_1} \right)^{\mu_1} \cdot \dots \cdot \left( 1 + \frac{1}{q_i} + \dots + \frac{1}{q_i^{e_i}} \right)^{\mu_i} = 1 + \sum_{j=1}^{N} \frac{1}{w_j}, \tag{26}$$

where

$$N := \prod_{l=1}^{i} (e_l + 1)^{\mu_l} - 1, \tag{27}$$

and the numbers  $w_j$  are positive integers strictly larger than 1, with the smallest one of them being  $q_i$ . It now follows right away from (26), that

$$q_i < N, \tag{28}$$

or

$$\log q_i < \log N < i \cdot \max_{l=1}^i \{\mu_l\} \cdot \log(E+1). \tag{29}$$

So,

$$\log L + K \sum_{i=1}^{T} \log q_{i} < \log L + K(T - i + 1) \cdot i \cdot \max_{l=1}^{i} \{\mu_{l}\} \cdot \log(E + 1).$$
 (30)

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Step V. The reduction to the induction hypothesis.

Combining inequalities (25), (26) and (30), we get that with

$$M' := M^{i}(i!)^{(i+1)/2}(T - i + 1)\log(Ki!^{1/2} + 1), \tag{31}$$

we have that if

$$a' := a \prod_{l=i}^{T} q_i^K,$$

then

$$\log a' \le M'. \tag{32}$$

So, with

$$n' := \frac{n}{\prod_{l=i}^T q_l^{e_l}},$$

we then have that

$$n' = \prod_{l=1}^{i-1} q_l^{e_l},$$

and

$$\sigma(n') = a'm',$$

where a' satisfies inequality (32), and  $m' \mid \operatorname{rad}(n')^K$ . At this point, the number n' has  $\omega(n') = i-1$ , but, moreover, none of the determinants  $\Delta_l$  for  $l = 1, 2, \ldots, i-1$  vanishes (because these determinants are the same as the ones coresponding to n), and also  $E_1 \leq E_2 \leq \ldots \leq E_{i-1} \leq E$ , where E satisfies inequality (24). With inequality (16), we now get that

$$X_1 = \log q_1 < (i-1)! \cdot E_2 \cdot \ldots \cdot E_{i-1} \cdot M' \le (i-1)! \cdot E^{i-2} \cdot M',$$

or

$$\begin{split} X_1 < (i-1)! M^{i-2}(i!)^{(i-2)/2} \cdot M^i(i!)^{(i+1)/2} (T-i+1) \log(Ki!^{1/2}+1) < \\ (i-1)! M^{2i-2}(i!)^{(2i-1)/2} (T+i-1) \log(Ki!^{1/2}+1). \end{split}$$

Since the inequality

$$i!^{1/2} + 1 < i^{(i+2)/2} < i^i$$

obviously holds for all  $i \geq 2$ , we get

$$\log(Ki!^{1/2} + 1) < i\log i + \log K < M \cdot i\log i,$$

and therefore we have

$$X_1 < M^{2i-1} \cdot i!^{i+1/2} \cdot (T-i+1) \cdot \log i.$$

Thus,

$$L \cdot \operatorname{rad}(n)^{K} < \exp(\log L + KTX_{1}) < \exp(M^{2i} \cdot i!^{i+1/2} \cdot T \cdot (T-i+1) \cdot \log i). \tag{33}$$

Since  $\log i < i \le T$ , and since  $(T - i + 1) \le T$ , we get that

$$i!^{i+1/2} \cdot T \cdot (T-i+1) \cdot \log i \leq i!^{i+1} \cdot T^3 < (T-1)!^{i+1} \cdot T^{i+2} < T!^{i+2},$$

because  $T \geq i+1$  and  $i \geq 2$ . Finally, since  $i \geq 2$ , we get that both inequalities

$$i+2 \le 2^i$$
, and  $2i \le 2^i$ 

hold, so from inequality (33) we conclude that

$$L \cdot \operatorname{rad}(n)^K \le \exp\left((M \cdot T!)^{2^i}\right). \tag{34}$$

Since  $i \leq T$ , from inequality (34) we get that

$$L \cdot \operatorname{rad}(n)^K \le \exp((M \cdot T!)^{2^T})$$

holds, and the Theorem is therefore completely proved.

#### Acknowledgements

I thank Jean-Marie De Koninck and Douglas Iannucci for useful correspondence on the problem treated in this paper. I would also like to thank the anonymous referee for suggestions which improved the quality of the paper. Part of this work was done while the author visited the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research in Mumbai, India during Summer, 2001. He would like the Institute for its hospitality, Professor T. N. Shorey for useful advice, and the Third World Academy of Sciences for support.

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Eingegangen am 21. Februar 2003