

The Acid-catalysed Hydrolysis of *O*-Methyl Dimethylthiophosphinate. Direct Evidence for Pentaco-ordinate Intermediate Formation in the Conversion of the P=S Ester into the P=O Ester

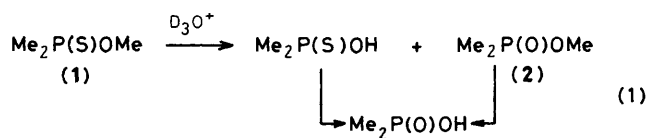
Robert D. Cook,*† and Marlene Metni †

Department of Chemistry, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

Hydrolysis of the title compound in strong acid leads not only to the phosphinic acid but also to methyl dimethylphosphinate which could only be formed by the intermediacy of a pentaco-ordinate species.

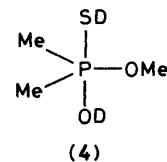
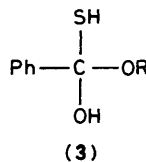
The hydrolysis of the title compound, (1), has been studied over the concentration range 25–85% D₂SO₄ at 75 °C. The reactions were followed by n.m.r. spectroscopy in a manner similar to that which has already been reported.¹ The most striking feature of this reaction is that (1) undergoes both loss of methanol and exchange of sulphur (equation 1).

Similar observations have been reported for the hydrolysis of thiobenzoates^{2,3} and thiobenzoic acids.⁴ Over a wide range of acid concentrations, the thiobenzoates hydrolyse by an A_{ac}2 mechanism with competitive loss of H₂S or alcohol from the



tetrahedral intermediate (3).^{2,3} The analysis of the kinetic data for the hydrolysis of (1) strongly supports the formation of a pentaco-ordinate intermediate of a type common to both processes.

The pH–rate profiles for the hydrolysis reactions of (1) are shown in Figure 1. The bell-shaped parts of the curves are typical for A₂ processes. In the lower part of the acidity range, the loss of methanol is faster than the exchange of sulphur which is contrary to that which is observed in thiobenzoates.^{2,3} In (1), exchange of sulphur only becomes significant above 50% D₂SO₄ and reaches a maximum in the bell part of the curve at 70% acid; the rate then passes through a minimum of 75% acid after which it increases quickly such that at 95%



† Address for academic year 1984–85 for R. D. C.: Scarborough College, University of Toronto, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1C 1A4. This work forms part of the M.S. thesis of M. M., American University of Beirut, 1984.

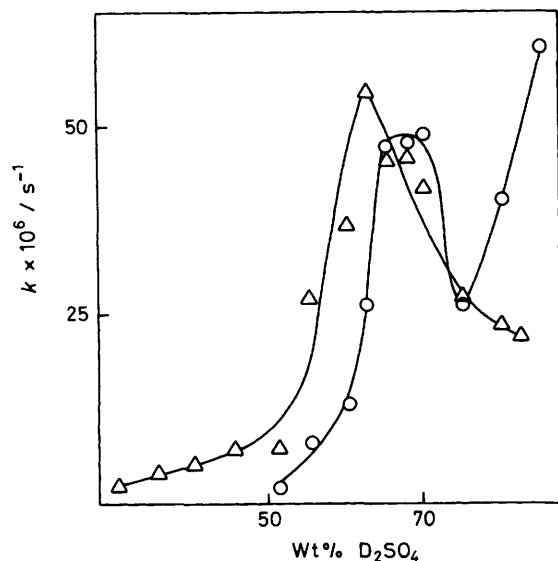


Figure 1. The rate profiles for *O*-methyl dimethylthiophosphate hydrolysis (Δ) and desulphurisation (\circ) reactions in D_2SO_4 at 75 °C.

Table 1. Data obtained from the acid hydrolysis of (1) and (2).^a

Compound	pK _a	A	B	C	D
(1)	-5.53	3.31	-0.21	0.82	6.56
(2)	-3.14	2.28	0.94	0.91	0.61

^a Analysis of rate data was by the following methods: A and B, Bunnett equation (w and w^* ; ref. 5); C, Bunnett-Olsen equation (ref. 6); D, Yates-McClelland equation (ref. 7) using a modified Hammett acidity function ($H_x = mH_o$), where $m = 0.49$ for (1) and 1.73 for (2).

D_2SO_4 and 75 °C complete conversion of (1) into (2) takes only a few minutes. Because of this fast exchange no hydrolysis of (1) is observed at these acidities. The product of the exchange reaction, (2), undergoes hydrolysis very slowly above 85% D_2SO_4 .¹

As well as the pH-rate profiles additional evidence for an A2 mechanism comes from the results of the analysis of the rate data using the Bunnett,⁵ Bunnett-Olsen,⁶ and Yates-McClelland⁷ equations (Table 1).

The concomitant loss of the sulphur and methanol in an A2 process can best be explained by the formation of a pentacoordinate intermediate like (4). We believe this to be the strongest evidence yet reported for the formation of intermediates during the reactions of nucleophiles with phosphinic acid derivatives.

The high acidity catalysis of the sulphur exchange reaction will be commented on elsewhere.

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