expand F in eq. 2 in a Taylor series about the value obtained from the initially specified parameters,  $F^0$ 

$$F' = F^{0} + \sum_{p} \frac{\partial F^{0}}{\partial X_{p}} \Delta X_{p} + \frac{1}{2!} \sum_{p,q} \frac{\partial^{2} F^{0}}{\partial X_{p} \partial X_{q}} \Delta X_{p} \Delta X_{q} + \dots \quad (4)$$

where the  $X_p$  values are the parameters K, A, and B which are to be optimized. If our initial assumptions of values for the latter are reasonable, we may truncate eq. 4 after the first-order sum term, which linearizes our statistical problem.

Therefore

$$F_{i}'(\text{comp.}) - F_{i}(\text{obsd.}) = \Delta F_{i}' = \Delta F_{i}^{0} + \sum_{p} \frac{\partial F_{i}^{0}}{\partial X_{p}} \Delta X_{p} \quad (5)$$
  
and

$${}^{1/2}\frac{\partial\sum_{i}(\Delta F_{i}')^{2}}{\partial X_{j}} = \sum_{i}\Delta F_{i}^{0}\frac{\partial F_{i}^{0}}{\partial X_{j}} + \sum_{i}\sum_{p}\frac{\partial F_{i}^{0}}{\partial X_{p}}\frac{\partial F_{i}^{0}}{\partial X_{j}}\Delta X_{p} = 0$$
(6)

Here,  $\partial F_i^0 / \partial A = (y^0 / [\mathbf{D}_0])_i$ ,  $\partial F_i^0 / \partial B = (([\mathbf{D}_0] - y^0) / [\mathbf{D}_0])_i$ , and  $\partial F_i^0 / \partial K = (\partial F_i^0 / \partial y) (\partial y / \partial K) = ((A - B) / [\mathbf{D}_0])_i (y^0 / P'(y^0))_i$ , where  $P'(y) = \partial P(y) / \partial y$ .

The problem is now one of solution of eq. 3 in terms of y and then of the simultaneous equations (6); the latter yield the values for  $X_p$ . Since  $X_{p'} = X_p + \Delta X_p$ , new values for A, B, and K are obtained. Using these, the procedure is repeated until either all parameters converge or the standard deviation for fitting converges within prespecified limits between consecutive cycles.

The procedures adopted have been illustrated for the special case of 1:1 SD complexing; however, several

other complexing situations of interest can also be considered upon minor changes in parts of the analysis. For example, for dimerization of the solute,  $K_{dissoen} = [D]^2/[D_2]$ , the only change required in the above analysis is in eq. 3, *i.e.* 

$$4y^{2} - (4[D_{0}] + K)y + [D_{0}]^{2} = P(y) = 0$$
 (7)

and in the partial derivatives,  $\partial F_i/\partial K$ , derived from it. Further, for cases where more than one process of importance occurs, *e.g.* 

$$S + D \Longrightarrow SD$$
  
 $2S \Longrightarrow S_2$ 

two equilibrium constants enter but eq. 1, 2, 5, and 6 still apply. With this understanding, the Fortran coded program constructed for use on the IBM 7094 (and later modified for the IBM 7074) was written as a main program with a set of subroutines one for each complexing case. The former, completely general for all cases of interest, accepts the initial parameter choices, sets up eq. 6, solves them, and tests the new parameter values. The subroutines generate only the appropriate partial derivative sums which are used in eq. 6.

The following statistical quantities are derived directly: the data variances,  $V_i = \Delta F_i$ , correct to the first-order sum term in  $\Delta X$ ; the parameter variances, equivalent to  $\sigma^2$ : goodness of fit (GoF) =  $\sum_i V_i^2/(ND - NP)$ , where ND is the number of data and NP the number of parameters fitted (the standard deviation of fitting is obtained from this quantity); the interparameter correlation coefficients,  $\rho_{pq}$ . The absolute value of this quantity is between 0 and 1; the closer to one, the stronger is the linear dependence of  $X_p$  on  $X_q$ .

## Carbalkoxynitrenes. The Photolytic Decomposition of Gaseous Alkyl Azidoformates<sup>1</sup>

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Contribution from the Department of Chemistry, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Received March 12, 1965

The photolytic decomposition of gaseous ethyl and methyl azidoformates has been studied with regard to carbalkoxynitrene formation and other modes of decomposition. Chemical trapping and product analysis show that the nitrenes are produced when light is used whose energy is above about 95 kcal./mole, but below 130 kcal. Transient spectra show absorption by NCO. From the appearance time of NCO and the dependence of the NCO spectrum on partial pressure of a chemical trapping agent, limits on the nitrene lifetime are set at about  $3 \times 10^{-1}$  and  $10^{-5}$  sec. At higher photolysis energies transient  $N_3$  is also observed, and the product pattern indicates that a transient but unobserved  $CO_2N_3$  may be present.

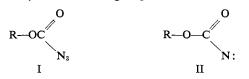
## Introduction

Transient polyatomic species supposedly containing monovalent nitrogen (nitrenes) have been identified in

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<sup>(2)</sup> National Institutes of Health Predoctoral Fellow, 1962–1964.
(3) Alfred P. Sloan Fellow. Department of Chemistry, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill. 60637

gas phase<sup>4,5</sup> and in solution.<sup>6,7</sup> The states and properties of these substances are still only understood at a primitive level, either in terms of electronic states or of gross reactivity. Following the demonstration<sup>7</sup> that azidoformates (I) decompose photolytically via a nitrene intermediate (II), we have investigated these particular systems in the gas phase in an attempt to



elucidate the properties and structure of moderately stable nitrenes. We have attacked the problem of identifying the transient intermediates by trapping them chemically, by analyzing the products, and by taking flash absorption spectra of the system after photolysis (flash-kinetic spectroscopy).

The first results of this investigation showed that flash photolysis of I gave a variety of transient products which seem to follow from more than one mode of decomposition of the photoexcited species.<sup>5</sup> The results did show that the nitrene II is probably present as a photolysis product. We report here on the subsequent study of photolyses of simple alkyl azidoformates and related species and present the conclusions that can be drawn and the new questions that have arisen from the results from the spectroscopic and analytical methods.

## Experimental

A. Apparatus. Flash photolyses were carried out with the equipment described in the preliminary account of this work and previously.<sup>5,8</sup> Both singlepass and multiple-pass optical cells were used, so that light paths between 0.3 and 3.2 m. could be obtained. The photolysis flash lamp was usually a helix of fused silica tubing 4 mm. in diameter surrounding the sample cell. Energies up to 3 kjoules were dissipated in the flash lamp; the first half-period of this dissipation as measured by a simple inductive loop lasted less than 10  $\mu$ sec. The spectral flash, a fused silica capillary, was triggered by a delay circuit whose initiating signal came from a photocell watching the photolysis lamp.

Some spectra were taken on a rotating drum-camera spectrograph, whose optical system was designed by Dr. Carl David. This spectrograph had a wave length coverage of only about 25 m $\mu$ , so that it was only useful for studying the time dependence of bands of known location. Other spectra were taken with a Bausch and Lomb medium quartz spectrograph and with a McPherson 2.217-m. concave grating spectrograph.

B. Photolyses. Materials for photolysis, the methyl and ethyl azidoformates and pivaloyl azide,  $(CH_3)_3C$ -

(4) See, for example, the NCO radical: R. Holland, D. W. G. Style, R. N. Dixon, and D. A. Ramsay, *Nature*, 182, 336 (1958); R. N. Dixon, *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. London*, A252, 165 (1960); *Can. J. Phys.*, 38, 10 (1960).

(5) R. S. Berry, D. Cornell, and W. Lwowski, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 85, 1199 (1963).

(6) W. Lwowski and T. W. Mattingly, Jr., Tetrahedron Letters, 277 (1962).

(7) W. Lwowski, T. J. Maricich, and T. W. Mattingly, Jr., J. Am. Chem. Soc., 85, 1200 (1963).

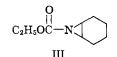
(8) R. S. Berry, G. N. Spokes, and R. M. Stiles, ibid., 84, 3570 (1962).

 $(CO)N_3$ , were supplied by Dr. Thomas Mattingly and were used without further purification. Liquid samples were degassed and then allowed to vaporize to pressures near their equilibrium, room-temperature pressures, about 20 torr. Argon, nitrogen, and  $CO_2$ each were used as moderating gases at pressures of about 0.5 atm. to keep the photolytic processes nearly isothermal. Carbon dioxide was the most effective stabilizer of the three.

Photolyses were carried out with the flash apparatus just described, and also with a photochemical reactor (Southern New England Ultraviolet Co.) in studies of products from continuous irradiation.

Yields, estimated from the amounts of stable products recovered, were only 1-2% when silica sample tubes were used, and lower when other tubes were substituted.

Chemical Trapping. Chemical trapping experi-С. ments were carried out with cyclohexene at a partial pressure of approximately 20 torr, and with an additional 0.5 atm. of carbon dioxide to ensure the removal of excess vibrational energy in the product. Both flash and steady photolyses were used. In the flash work, samples were subjected to several flashes of about 1.9 kjoules each. The contents were frozen in a cold finger at  $-190^{\circ}$  and dissolved in pentane. Steady photolyses were carried out for 2 hr. and the products were collected in CCl<sub>4</sub>. The solutions were injected onto a vapor chromatograph column (20% Dow)SF-96 on 40-60 firebrick at 150°). That material was collected whose retention time was that of 7-carbethoxy-7-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptane (III). Three such collections provided enough material to obtain an infrared spectrum. The principal bands, 2980, 2940, 2860, 1720, 1430, 1350, 1270, 1210, 1080, and 1010 cm.<sup>-1</sup>, were those of III.



D. Product Identification. Stable products were determined primarily by v.p.c. retention times. Determinations of  $N_2$  and  $H_2$  were entirely unambiguous with a single 5A (Analabs) Molecular Sieve column. For other materials, with the exception of acetaldehyde, two or three different columns were used, as indicated in Table I. No successful method was found for identifying traces of formaldehyde in our mixtures.

Transients were determined, so far as possible, from their ultraviolet absorption band spectra. The NCO spectrum was studied in detail by Dixon<sup>4</sup>; the N<sub>3</sub> radical spectrum was obtained by Thrush.<sup>9</sup> We have observed the bands listed in Table II. The intensity of the NCO absorption relative to that of N<sub>3</sub> was greater when CH<sub>3</sub>OCON<sub>3</sub> was photolyzed than when C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>-OCON<sub>3</sub> was used.

## **Results and Conclusions**

This discussion is most easily divided into two parts. First we examine the gross mechanism, draw some firm conclusions, and present one speculation which can be checked in a future experiment. Then we present a rather meager discussion of the electronic state of the nitrene intermediate.

(9) B. A. Thrush, Proc. Roy. Soc. (London), A235, 143 (1956).

 Table I.
 Products and the Chromatograph Columns Used for

 Product Analysis
 Product Analysis

| Products | Columns<br>Molecular Sieve 5A <sup>a</sup> |  |
|----------|--|--|
| N2       |  |  |
| $H_2$    | Molecular Sieve 5A <sup>a</sup>            |  |
| CH₄      | Activated charcoal-CX655 <sup>b</sup>      |  |
|          | Silica gel 28-200 mesh <sup>o</sup>        |  |
| $C_2H_6$ | Silica gel <sup>c</sup>                    |  |
|          | 30-ft. alumina°                            |  |
| $C_2H_4$ | Dimethylformamide, 20 ft.                  |  |
|          | 33% on firebrick <sup>c</sup>              |  |
| $CO_2$   | 25-ft. G.P. 58 silicone on                 |  |
|          | Anachrome A.B.S. <sup>a</sup>              |  |
|          | Dimethylformamide <sup>a</sup>             |  |
| CH3CHO   | Triscyanoethoxypropane                     |  |
|          | (3% on Anachrom A.B.S.) <sup>a</sup>       |  |
| CO       | Short Molecular Sieve 5A <sup>a</sup>      |  |
|          | Dimethylformamide <sup>a</sup>             |  |
|          | Charcoala                                  |  |
| $N_2O$   | 25-ft. silicone <sup>a</sup>               |  |
|          | Dimethylformamide <sup>a</sup>             |  |

<sup>a</sup> Obtained from Analabs. <sup>b</sup> Obtained from Doe and Ingalls. <sup>c</sup> Obtained from Fisher Scientific Co.

 Table II. Bands Observed in Photolyses of Methyl and Ethyl

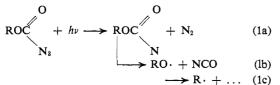
 Azidoformates and t-Butylcarbonyl Azide

| $\widetilde{{}^{2}\Pi - {}^{2}\Pi},$ | NCO <sup>a</sup> $\frac{1}{2\Pi - 2\Delta}$ , | ${}^{\mathbf{N}_{3}b}_{^{2}\Pi} - {}^{^{2}\Sigma^{+}},$ |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| mμ                                   | mμ  | mμ  |
| 315.0                                | 440.3   | 272.2   |
| 314.8                                | 438.9   | 272.0   |
| 305.1                                | 438.4   | 270.9   |
| 304.5                                | 435.1   |   |
| 296.4                                | 434.8   |   |
| 295.9                                | 416.7   |   |
| 294.8                                | 415.0   |   |
|                                      | 413.7   |   |
|                                      | 413.3   |   |
|                                      | 399.3   |   |
|                                      | 397.7   |   |

 $^{a}$  NCO bands observed in photolyses of methyl and ethyl azidoformates.  $^{b}$  N<sub>3</sub> bands observed in photolyses of azidoformates and *t*-butylcarbonyl azide.

From the flash-kinetic spectra alone, one result can be stated immediately. The photolytic decomposition of azidoformates has at least two mechanisms available. One involves C-N cleavage to give N<sub>3</sub> and requires at least 130 kcal./mole of photolytic energy. The second process can be initiated with a lower energy, something greater than about 95 kcal./mole, and has NCO as a primary product. Since neither transient nor stable products could be detected in photolyzed samples in Pyrex tubes, we conclude that 95 kcal./mole is a lower limit for photolytic decomposition of these compounds.

The conventional expectation in azide photolyses is the simple one, that the primary process is the loss of  $N_2$ . This process is entirely consistent with our findings and can account quite well for some of the observations. The paths available are



(a variety of possible transients) (1)

The direct observation of NCO, the chemical trapping of ROCON, and, among the products listed in Table I, the characteristic products of an alkoxy radical,<sup>10</sup> CH<sub>3</sub>CHO, H<sub>2</sub>, and CH<sub>4</sub> (even if  $\mathbf{R} = C_2H_5$ ), lead us to infer that processes 1a and 1b occur. This sequence also leads to production of N<sub>2</sub> and CO from the NCO. As yet we find no evidence suggesting the occurrence of (1c), the production of alkyl radicals in the secondary steps following loss of N<sub>2</sub>. The hydrocarbon products imply that alkyl radicals must be present, but we believe they probably come from another sequence, namely, sequence 2, discussed below.

The dependence of the chemical trap reaction on cyclohexene concentration gives us a lower limit for the lifetime of the nitrene formed in process 1a. The collision frequency of nitrene with cyclohexene at a minimum cyclohexene pressure for formation of III (2 torr) is about  $3 \times 10^6$  sec.<sup>-1</sup>, so that the minimum life of the nitrene must be about  $3 \times 10^{-7}$  sec. At the other limit, the appearance of intense NCO bands within 10  $\mu$ sec. after photolysis implies that this is a rough upper limit to the lifetime. (Because the yield of nitrene in the photolysis is so small, a significant fraction of the ROCON molecules must dissociate to give an observable NCO spectrum.) Therefore we can say that approximately  $3 \times 10^{-7} < \tau$ (ROCON)  $< 10^{-5}$  sec.

The second and higher energy mode of decomposition may proceed in a single step or in successive steps to give either of the over-all reactions (eq. 2a or 2b).

$$0 \longrightarrow RO \cdot + CO + N_3 \qquad (2a)$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \operatorname{ROC} & + h\nu' & \lambda < 2200 \text{ Å.} \\ & & & & \\ & & & & \\ & & & & \\ &$$

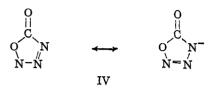
The appearance of  $CO_2$  and the hydrocarbons  $C_2H_6$ and  $C_2H_4$ , whether R is  $CH_3$  or  $C_2H_5$ , implies that reaction 2b is an important pathway. It may be the only one because, aside from N<sub>3</sub>, any product from eq. 2a can also be attributed to the sequence (1a), (1b). Moreover eq. 2a requires about 57 kcal./mole, compared with only about 6 for eq. 2b. The energy of the cleaved C-N bond is not known, but is probably at least 73 kcal. This sets a lower limit for the process 2a of about 130 kcal./mole, which is still consistent with the available energy coming from the photon. Nevertheless since the 130-kcal. requirement is only a lower limit, and since there is no direct evidence supporting the occurrence of eq. 2a, it is reasonable to expect that the dominant direction of the N<sub>3</sub>producing path is eq. 2b.

This does not yet account for all the observations, either the species produced or the dependence on simple variables. Specifically, the discussion so far leaves no place for the formation of N<sub>2</sub>O. Furthermore, it does not account for the dependence of the NCO/N<sub>8</sub> ratio on the alkyl group present in the carbalkoxy azide. We require one additonal hypothesis, a mechanism which accounts for both observations. We find such a mechanism potentially available if we examine the details of process 2 a little more closely.

In the process 2b, both a C-O bond and a C-N bond are broken. If the C-N bond were broken first,

(10) D. G. Adler, M. W. T. Pratt, and P. Gray, *Chem. Ind.* (London), 1517 (1955), and references cited therein.

or if both bonds were simultaneously broken, we would find no simple mechanism to account for the formation of N<sub>2</sub>O. If, on the other hand, the primary process leading to eq. 2b were cleavage of the alkyl-oxygen bond, then a mechanism is available. The transitory fragment  $CO_2N_3$  might well be invoked as the progenitor of N<sub>2</sub>O, proceeding through an intermediate IV which is capable of decomposing into N<sub>2</sub>O and NCO.



The lifetime of IV need only be long enough to permit the N-O bond to form, and we can present no evidence that such an intermediate is actually detectable. On the other hand the possibility is certainly open that  $CO_2N_3$  has a long enough life to be observed, for example in a time-of-flight mass spectrometer.

Finally we turn to the question of the electronic state and structure of the carbalkoxynitrenes. Certainly RO(CO)N is formed in a singlet state if the rule of spin conservation is obeyed. Otherwise, N<sub>2</sub> would necessarily appear in a triplet state. The half-life of the lowest triplet of N<sub>2</sub> is about  $10^{-2}$  sec.<sup>11</sup> and would have been detectable in absorption if it were present in our systems. In fact careful searching revealed no sign of the strong and well-known first positive bands of N<sub>2</sub> or any other absorption system of triplet nitrogen. We conclude that it is very unlikely that the initial state of RO(CO)N is triplet.

One other piece of negative evidence argues for the singlet assignment. When I ( $\mathbf{R} = C_2 H_5$  or  $C_6 H_5$ ) was photolyzed in a glass at low temperature, Smolinsky, Wasserman, and Yager found no evidence in the microwave (e.s.r.) region for any stable triplet corresponding to II.<sup>12</sup>

At this point we must examine in a little more detail the electronic structure of the singlet carbalkoxynitrene. The electronic levels are sketched in Figure 1. According to structure II, the level  $\pi_2$  is localized on nitrogen and  $n_1$  is localized on oxygen, while  $\pi_1$  is delocalized between C and O. An alternative structure is V, which differs from II only in degree—the degree to which  $\pi_2$  is delocalized between C and N,  $n_1$  is delocalized between O and N, and  $\pi_1$  is localized on



oxygen. (Incidentally, if  $\pi_2$  and  $n_2$  were degenerate, the ground state would be a triplet.) The structure V would lead us to expect only a single strong  $\pi_2 \rightarrow \pi_3$  excitation, probably at quite short wave lengths,

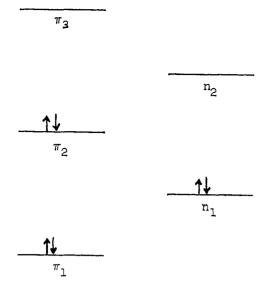


Figure 1. Orbital level scheme for the carbalkoxynitrenes. The orbitals are denoted as follows:  $\pi$  implies a linear combination of 2p orbitals of N, C, and (carbonyl) O whose axes are perpendicular to the NCO plane; n implies an orbital whose axis lies in the NCO plane; of these,  $\pi_1$  is largely on O or between O and C, bonding them together;  $\pi_2$  is rather localized on N or between N and C;  $\pi_3$  (normally empty) is the most antibonding  $\pi$ -orbital and is localized primarily on carbon;  $n_1$  is either localized on O or, if it overlaps enough with the in-plane p-orbital of N, becomes an O-N bonding orbital; and finally,  $n_2$  is either localized on N or is antibonding with respect to N and O.

and a weak  $\pi_2 \rightarrow n_2$  excitation. This is in somewhat better accord with our observations than the expectations from structure II.

The absorption spectra of transient species could only be investigated between about 900 and 250 m $\mu$ because the starting material is opaque between 250 and 200 m $\mu$  under our conditions. We did not observe any bands which could be attributed to the nitrene. Therefore we can only say that our evidence at hand is slightly more consistent with a singlet than with a triplet structure, and that of the possible singlets V again seems slightly more probable.

Obviously V is not a traditional nitrene structure at all. However since it differs from II only in degree and not in kind, we shall refer to both as nitrenes for convenience, at least until it is known which is the more accurate representation of the molecule.

We conclude by summarizing our more general conclusions. The photolytic decomposition of azidoformates I in the gas phase proceeds by two mechanisms. The low-energy mechanism produces a transient carbalkoxynitrene whose lifetime is between  $3 \times 10^{-7}$ and  $10^{-5}$  sec.; the evidence is weakly in favor of assigning the nitrene as a singlet, perhaps as V. The higher energy mechanism probably proceeds through a transient CO<sub>2</sub>N<sub>8</sub> intermediate whose lifetime is unknown.

Acknowledgments. We wish to thank Dr. James Dubrin for his assistance and advice in the chromatographic analyses and Dr. Thomas Mattingly for supplying the azidoformates.

<sup>(11)</sup> A. N. Wright, R. L. Nelson, and C. A. Winkler, Can. J. Chem., 40, 1094 (1962).

<sup>(12)</sup> G. Smolinsky, E. Wasserman, and W. A. Yager, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 84, 3220 (1962).